CHAPTER 1

The Slippery Road of Religious Education

1.0 Introduction

In this chapter I describe and discuss what the literature says about the multi-faith RE curriculum and also show the difference between a single religion and a multi-faith curriculum. Debates surrounding the multi faith curriculum are presented as well as how the phenomenological approach is used in a multi-faith RE curriculum. The merits and demerits of the phenomenological approach are presented. I discuss how RE is understood and practiced in different countries around the globe and also indicate the fluid nature of RE within the education system.

I deliberately draw extensively from the United Kingdom, mainly because Botswana is a former British colony and has adopted the education system of its "master", including the RE framework of the multi-faith RE curriculum. I describe and discuss the nature of RE as it is practiced in Southern African countries, particularly South Africa, Zambia and Namibia especially in their attempt to adopt a multi-faith RE curriculum in their education systems.

1.1 Exploring the meaning of the Multi-faith Religious Education curriculum

1.1.1 Background to the Study

The first major educational reform in post-independent Botswana was a commission in 1977 referred to as *Education for Kagisano* (literally translated means education for co-existence) which made several recommendations (Botswana Government, 1977). Among other things, it recommended that a new Religious and Moral Education (RME) programme was to replace Bible Knowledge as an optional subject at secondary school level. By educational reform I loosely mean a change that takes place in an education system. Popkewitz (2000:40) notes that the understanding of the concept reform depends on the time and context in which it is used and posits that it is "an event that articulates the productive nature of power rather than a solution to solve problems of teaching or

learning". Orozco-Gomez (2006) takes the point further when he says that a reform is usually viewed in terms of its envisaged benefits to the society which have to be visible and measurable.

The Religious and Moral Education (RME) curriculum that was recommended by the education commission was a conflation of Religious Education and Moral Education. This was a reform in the sense that the original content and approach of the curriculum changed since the programme had a very strong Christian influence, while both the religious and moral dimensions were based on Christianity. According to the commission, RME was introduced in order to help "develop the character" of school-going adolescents (Botswana Government, 1977:42) since Bible Knowledge was viewed as being inadequate in this regard (Mmolai, 1988). The resultant RME curriculum was largely a replica of a curriculum that was used in some East African countries, such as Uganda, Kenya, and Malawi (Chapman, 1981a; Sutcliffe, 1984). Consequently, when the RME curriculum was introduced in Botswana it used the same textbooks, worksheets and teachers' handbooks. This was an instance of policy borrowing which to a large extent was de-contextualized for Botswana, and this proved not to have been the best way of introducing a new RE curriculum in the Botswana context. That is why Walford (2003:63) says that "wrenching particular policies from their historic, economic, political and social roots can result in unanticipated consequences as those in the host country react to the new implant."

The RME curriculum was piloted in selected Botswana junior secondary schools in 1980 and was fully introduced to the rest of the junior secondary schools in 1981 (Mmolai, 1988). The curriculum was Christian-centred and teachers were expected to be active practitioners and exemplars of the Christian religion. Students too, were assumed to be devout Christians, because the curriculum was regarded as a tool to develop their faith in Christ (Chapman, 1981b). Furthermore, a neo-confessional didactic approach was advocated. Sutcliffe (1984:249) describes a neo-confessional approach as one where "religions other than the central one are recommended to be taught as tolerated extras". In other words, though the content and spirit of the curriculum was undoubtedly Christian in nature, reference could be made to aspects of other religious forms in order to strengthen a point that was made in the Christian religion. It is worth noting that historically, churches played a crucial role in education and national affairs in sub-Saharan Africa, and as a result the African governments easily accepted Christian religious education

(Sutcliffe, 1984). However, studies indicate that RME curriculum was unpopular amongst Botswana teachers mainly because it assumed that RE teachers and students were necessarily Christians. Studies (Morake, 1993; Seretse, 1990; Mmolai, 1988) show that teachers were uncomfortable with the curriculum whose clear intention was to openly indoctrinate students into the Christian faith. Another argument forwarded was that the programme tended to be an extension of the church and could therefore be taught by anyone who was a practising Christian and not necessarily a professional RE teacher (Morake, 1993). Since the curriculum was confessional in nature, both the status of the RE programme and the professional status of the RE teachers was to a large extent undermined.

The 1977 Education Commission was followed by the Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) of 1994. This commission recommended that RE be separated from Moral Education (Botswana Government, 1994). Religious Education and Moral Education (ME) hence became two discrete and distinct subjects. Of significance, too, is that the RE aspect maintained its status of being an optional subject at junior secondary school level in public schools, while the Moral Education dimension was elevated to a core subject status (Botswana Government, 1994). In the Botswana context, a core subject is a compulsory subject that has to be taken by all students, while an optional subject is one which students can choose to take or not to take. In an attempt to understand the reason for the separation of the two subjects, Seretse (2003) speculates that the separation was influenced by socio-political pressures, and a decline in moral conduct among the young people and that the change was not necessarily informed by any philosophical or educational considerations.

The development of the multi-faith RE curriculum was under the Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation (CD&E) of the Ministry of Education which is charged with spearheading curriculum development. The department set up a task force which was assigned to design a suitable RE curriculum for junior secondary schools. The task force came up with aims of RE which were drawn from the *Aims of the 10 year RE programme,* which were in turn drawn from the *Aims of the 10 Year basic Education Programme,* and they too were drawn from the *Curriculum Blueprint of the Ten Year Basic Education Programme.* The aims and the Curriculum Blueprint were drawn by the Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation (CD&E). The Curriculum Blueprint was drawn from the Revised National Policy on Education. Below are the aims

of the junior secondary multi-faith RE programme that were drawn by the Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation.

On completion of the three years of Junior Secondary Religious Education, students should be able to:
1. Respect people whose beliefs differ from their own and have an increased spirit of tolerance and cooperation in their everyday lives.
2. Investigate, analyse facts and draw conclusions on religious issues using English as a medium of instruction.
3. Be aware of the contribution religion makes towards the development of an understanding of the importance of family, its role and responsibilities.
4. Promote an enquiring and sympathetic approach to the study of religion, especially in its individual and corporate expression in the contemporary world.
5. Introduce students to the challenging and varied nature or religion and to the ways in which this is reflected in experience, belief and practice.
6. Acquire the religious knowledge and develop the religious skills necessary to lead a healthy life in harmony with nature.
7. Encourage students to reflect on religious responses to moral issues.
8. Enable students to recognise and appreciate the contribution of religion in the formation of values and behaviour patterns.
9. Help students to identify and explore questions about the meaning and purpose of life, and to consider such questions in relation to religious traditions.
10. Understand the rituals and symbolic actions of religion to help them cope with crises and change.
11. Enable students to recognise and appreciate the contribution of religion in the formation of patterns of belief and behaviour.

Source: (Botswana Government, 1995)

The task force comprised RE teachers, ministry of education officials, representatives from government colleges of education, the University of Botswana (the only university in Botswana by then), some registered religious bodies such as Botswana Christian Council, and the Botswana Muslim Association. However, there were no representatives from the traditional leaders, and the Buddhist Association although the invitation was extended to them as well. The Bhuddist Association, however, provided the task force with literature from their religion. It is not clear why the other stakeholders such as traditional leaders and the Hindu community did not get involved because the intention was to involve all the stakeholders. Black and Atkin (1996) note that in a democracy, education needs the support of society because innovations cannot succeed if there are basic disagreements about the goals of education amongst the interested parties.

It is important to note that there was no specific policy or a framework which could guide the task force as it developed an RE syllabus document. However, in their translation of the RNPE into a school level curriculum, the RE task force adopted a form of RE that was multi-faith in its content and phenomenological in its methodology (Botswana Government, 1995). By a multi-faith content, I mean an RE curriculum in which several religions are studied, while a phenomenological approach is one which aims to help students set aside their strongly held assumptions about different religions which could be mainly based on prejudice (Sutcliffe, 1984). With the phenomenological approach, students are expected to empathise with the practitioners of a religion that they are studying. By imagining how it is like to be a believer of a religion, it is assumed that the value of tolerance will be cultivated. In a similar vein, it is assumed that by empathising with practitioners of a religion the value of tolerance will be cultivated. In addition, the phenomenological approach is premised on the basis of a multi-faith and multi-cultural society (Hull, 1996). Since there was no RE policy to guide the task force, questions can be raised why this type of RE was introduced. Several speculations can be made, but the vital one is that Botswana is a former British colony and its education system is largely modelled on the British education system. Furthermore, since the RNPE did not provide any specific guidance for multi-faith RE teaching in secondary schools this lack of guidance allowed curriculum developers to develop a curriculum which they thought represented the spirit of the policy which is diversity and respect for persons. Could it be that it was the numerical strength of the educators that influenced the direction of the programme? Could it be that the government through its officers wanted to rubber stamp or 'engineer consent' from the teachers or was it because there was no RE policy in existence and as a result the task force was left with no choice but to be creative?

Though it has not been specified if the RE curriculum is a form of citizenship education the underlying intention was to bring diverse groups in Botswana to a common good such as promoting national unity. Black and Atkin (1996:13) say that:

> Innovations, in education stem from subtle and diffuse forces. At one level, a country's sense of itself pervades all social policy, education included. … If it [the country] is anxious to catch up with economic competitors it may try to emulate the curriculum that seems to be advancing those apparently more productive countries.

The above statements are in line with Tabulawa's (2004) suggestion that education reform in developing countries including Botswana do not want to be left behind in terms of globalisation and democracy. Even though various countries would not want to be left behind in terms of what is happening around the world, their context has to be taken on board especially the individuals involved, and in this context, namely teachers. Speaking from a post-apartheid South African perspective, Delport (2005) says that if there is social transformation, individuals need to have an inner and personal transformation which will have inevitably affected their mindset. She argues that for true social transformation to occur there has to be a shift of people's mindsets. Similarly, the introduction of the multi-faith RE curriculum could have affected RE teachers in various ways, because they needed inner and personal transformation to deal with it. While the multi-faith RE curriculum was a form of change, it is not clear the extent to which RE teachers were ready for the change.

Delport (2005) says that on an occasion of change individuals are expected to change their thinking and how they view reality, and that such change tampers with the individuals' identity, that is who they are. According to Delport (2005:204) transformation then becomes a daunting and complex undertaking, because it urges individuals to "depart from the security of the known and venture into the vastness of the unknown." Similarly, the RE teachers could have felt insecure irrespective of their religious persuasions or lack of it because they were expected to move away from a curriculum that they were used to and to the one that they did not know much about. Even though this is the situation, it has not been established that the RE teachers' attitudes, beliefs and perceptions were taken into consideration during this major curriculum shift in the Botswana education system.

On an occasion of change, people's beliefs, attitudes, perceptions and cognition tend to be emotionally influenced as shown by studies done by Sabini, Siepmann and Meyerrowitz (2000), Robinson (2000) and Schwarz (2000). For example, Schwarz (2000) argues that people's emotions can influence their decisions and that the outcome of their decisions can influence their emotions and that emotions emerge as people interact with the environment. Several studies (Fredrikson, 2000; Lerner & Kelterner, 2000; Schwarz, 2000; Sivia, 2000) indicate that decisions are largely informed by the affective experiences. Furthermore, a similar study on emotions that was carried out by Davidson & Burden (2001) confirm the assertion that emotional behaviours are likely to

be remembered more than non-emotional ones and this shows further that there is a relationship between affect and cognition. As Fredrikson (2000) further notes that even people's predictions about future happiness are often based on past affective experiences; that people tend to repeat in the future what they could have liked or enjoyed in the past, and avoid or fear any past negative or disliked experiences. The likely question is: To what extent are the emotions of RE teachers reflected in their teaching practices as they embraced a new curriculum?

If RE teachers' attitudes, beliefs and perceptions were not taken on board during that curriculum shift, then their practices were unlikely to have been in concert with the envisaged changes. Since their emotions were not considered, some of them could have felt empty or nostalgic due to the change. Delport (2005:204) says that in such a situation there is need for attitudinal transformation which means a "modification of certain existing objects, the disposal of certain past objects, and the acquisition of some new objects." According to Delport (2005), for transformation to take place one has to accept certain objects into what she refers to as an existing "anthology." As the new curriculum was introduced to RE teachers they had to modify their perspectives in order to accommodate it whilst at the same time remaining themselves. For example, they had to acknowledge and use student-centred practices in teaching various religions, something that was alien to them especially those who taught the single religion curriculum. For the newer teachers, they too studied a single religion type of RE at secondary schools and their teacher training programmes at colleges of education or universities emphasised Christianity.

However, scant attention in research is paid to how Botswana RE teachers are practically using the multi-faith RE curriculum in terms of content, teaching techniques, strategies, and resources. Equally important is that little is known regarding how the RNPE reform affected RE teachers in relation to their awareness and sensitivity towards issues of diversity within the micro-context of the school and macro-context of the wider society.

1.2 Studies done on multi-faith RE curriculum

From the research literature reviewed for purposes of this study there are few specific empirical studies on the classroom practices of teachers of multi-faith RE curriculum and one of them is a survey by Cox and Skinner (1990). Although surveys of this nature are able to provide a general understanding, they are unable to capture the real classroom practices. However, several scholars (Dagovitz, 2004, Denver, Whittaker & Byrnes, 2001, Wolf, 2004) maintain that the multi-faith RE curriculum is about teaching various religions, by stressing the importance of tolerance, respect for persons and mutual understanding in a contemporary and diverse world. They emphasise that RE should be a purely educational activity and not a devotional one and that it should promote students' understanding and respect for religious and non-religious traditions. Cush (1999) refers to this knowledge of learning about and reflecting on religions as "religious literacy." Roux (2005:472) takes the point further and explains that religious literacy is "the ability to develop a self-identification and to communicate with understanding" ones opinions about the world. Similarly, Grimmitt (2008) is of the view that religious literacy entails being able to articulate and explain to others your thoughts as well as your ideas in relation to religion. For religious literacy to happen, there should be knowledge and understanding of others in order to understand oneself – that is, one needs to have self-knowledge. This is what Hand & White (2004) refer to as having a dialogue, or being able to reflect, and that it is only from this standpoint of knowing oneself that one can be in a position to tolerate others.

Welingsky (2002) reveals that on the whole, teachers' classroom practices are rarely studied, and if it is done it is usually far removed from the classroom environment. Despite the different forms of RE, there tends to be inadequate empirical literature on teacher's understanding and implementation of the multi-faith RE curriculum, even in a country like Britain where it has been practiced since the 1970s (Jackson, 1999). Studies done in Britain mainly emphasise the philosophy of a multi-faith RE curriculum (Hull, 2005, 1996; Grimmitt, 1993, 1987, Jackson, 1999, 1997). They are few studies conducted on ways of teaching it, for example, in a collection of articles edited by Grimmitt (2000) entitled "Pedagogies of RE," the articles concentrated on the relationship between religion and education and how the two serve young people. In these studies, there is little reference to RE teachers' classroom practices.

Ferguson and Roux (2003) conducted a study on pre-service teachers' knowledge and skills on how to teach the multi-religious education curriculum in South African schools, and found that many of the teachers lacked the knowledge and skills to teach this curriculum. In a qualitative study in Britain, conducted with six RE student teachers, L'Anson (2004) concluded that teachers have a world-view of their own and certain expectations which are rarely satisfied by education authorities in terms of their beliefs and emotions. L'Anson (2004) says that since teachers have expectations that are not satisfied, this leads to a high degree of frustration because of the work environment which undermines their beliefs and emotions. In their study, Gommers and Hermans (2003), investigated RE teachers in Roman Catholic secondary schools in Australia and observed that the teachers' ideas influenced their classroom practice and that the teachers' ideas are informed by the socio-cultural environment of which teachers are a part. However, this study by Gommers and Hermans (2003) does not give a full insight into the teachers' perspectives since it was done on RE teachers in church schools where the Christian ethos of the school largely determined the way they taught and made sense of the curriculum. However, a different picture could have emerged had the study been conducted in a secular public school. Sikes and Everington (2001) conducted a study in the UK on new RE teachers and concluded that not much is known about RE teachers including their classroom practices because it is taken for granted that they teach a subject that everyone has an idea about.

When researching the attitudes of multi-faith RE teachers, in church schools in England, Cox and Skinner (1990) reported that teachers indicated that a multi-faith RE curriculum was educational in that it was concerned with personal, spiritual and moral growth of the students. They also indicated that in a contemporary pluralistic world, a multi-faith RE curriculum was necessary and inevitable. Research conducted in all of the above studies focused on the perspectives of teachers and not on how they implemented a multi-faith RE curriculum. These studies indicate only what teachers viewed as the aims of the multi-faith RE curriculum but did not show their successes and constraints in teaching it. The assertions that teachers made in various studies about their perceptions about RE may be confirmed by their classroom practice. This is the case because Vulliamy, Lewin & Stephens (1990) conclude that opinions at times differ from practice, hence it cannot be ascertained if the views of the teachers necessarily correlate with their teaching practices unless a way of finding out is devised. However, the phenomenological

approach with its variations is regarded as the most popular interpretation of the multi-faith RE curriculum in different countries.

1.3 RE as understood and practiced in different countries

Studies conducted in Europe, Australia and the United States of America, for example, focused mainly on students' and at times beginning teachers' perceptions of RE, but not on what teachers do in their classrooms (Schweitzer & Boscki, 2005; Homan, 2004; Leirvik, 2004; Scholefield, 2004; Gommers & Hermans, 2003; Nesbitt, 2001;). Furthermore, these studies are mainly on a Christian based form of RE curriculum. Most of the existing literature (White, 2005; Hull, 2004; Wright, 2004; Jackson, 1997) revolves around whether RE has a place or not in the curriculum, while other studies focus on the content and teaching approach that is, which religions should form the content and which approach teaching befits RE. Most of these studies were conducted in Britain, mainly because it is the country that pioneered the multi-faith type of RE.

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. According to him, there are three categories in which RE is viewed and taught. The first category is where there is a single religion type of RE curriculum which is supported and funded by the state and in most cases the religion is Christianity (Plesner, 2001). For example, in many Latin American countries, Catholic based RE is taught in public schools because of the strong influence of Catholicism (Sigmund, 2005).

In the second category, RE is not taught in public schools (Hull, 2005). For example, in the USA religion is kept out of and free from government controlled institutions, including public schools, which are prohibited by law from promoting religion or religious belief. The proponents of this separation are of the view that this is a healthy option because religious instruction has to be left to parents and the trained clergy. The assumption is that, the government is left out of religious debates in public school classrooms since the USA is an ethnically diverse and religiously pluralistic society. Issues that are related to religion may be taught in subjects such as Social Studies and

Literature (Grelle, 2005; Hull, 2005). Another country where RE is not taught in public schools and is regarded as a private matter which the family has to take care of is France. Similarly, RE is not taught in the Taiwanese province of the People's Republic of China, and in Russia because for a long time religion was suppressed in that part of the world and was blamed for indoctrination (Kozyrev, 2005; Ng, 2005). In these countries, RE has remained outside the scope of public education because it is suspect due to its assumed tendencies of indoctrinating students. Jensen (1998) notes that many countries in Europe, including the commonly called post-communist countries in Eastern Europe, have adopted this view about RE. In these countries, RE is not part of public education and is viewed as a private matter for parents and religious communities.

The third category of countries is where the state funds RE in public schools and is placed under the Ministry of Education (Hull, 2005). In this category RE is intended not to promote any particular religion by either converting students or strengthening their religious faith. Countries that fall under this category are Britain, especially England and Wales, Scotland, Denmark, Sweden and Norway. However, there are variations within this sub-category regarding how RE is perceived and practiced in public schools.

In this study, my interest is in Britain of which Botswana's educational system is similar. The Education Act of 1996 in Britain states that an RE agreed syllabus must "reflect the fact that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain" (British Government, 1996:213). RE in Britain, is said to be multi-faith, and it aims at enabling students to know mainly about Christianity and many other religions that are represented in that country. This is affirmed by the act of daily Christian collective worship in public schools (British Government, 1988). However, there is a clause that allows a parent to withdraw a child from this collective worship but has to give the school principal good reasons for doing so. In Britain there is a variant of the multi-faith RE whereby students are expected to share their own beliefs without embarrassment and ridicule (British Broadcasting Service, 2004; British Government, 1996).

Even though that is the ideal, the 1988 Education Reform Act (British Government, 1988) emphasised that Christianity was the main religious tradition in Britain and that could be the reason why Hull (2003) notes that it is difficult for politicians to accept the educational and not the religious status of RE. The main and national religion is Christianity which is viewed as the source of values. In England and Wales, RE is part of the basic curriculum that is studied by all students except those withdrawn by their parents. In Britain, the law allows RE to be taught in public schools and in some faith schools that are supported by government. Other religions found in Britain are explored in the classrooms but are not given the prominence accorded to Christianity. It is possible that Christians may ridicule other religions due to the prominence of their religion. Students who belong to religions other than Christianity can be victims of ridicule and embarrassment. Furthermore, the Education Act of 1996 (British Government, 1996) provides room for other major faiths that are practiced in Britain such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism as well as other "minor" religious traditions like Bahai faith, Jainism and Zoroastrianism and even for a secular philosophy such as humanism. While this is the case, Christianity is the religion that is mainly featured, whilst other faiths are studied alongside it in order to foster understanding and respect for the other religions that exist in Britain. How can understanding and respect be cultivated in a context where there is a "main religion? From a British perspective, Mantin (1999) observes that despite this revolution in the multi-faith RE, it tends not to have touched many secondary school classrooms. Furthermore, Christianity is still viewed as a determinant religious identity, and by so doing, the non-partisan nature of the curriculum is stifled.

In an environment where the Christian religion is elevated, respect of other religions is likely to be compromised. Furthermore, a partisan perspective is counter to the philosophy of a multi-faith RE curriculum. This is the likely reason why a spokesperson of the National Secular Society in Britain once 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). He cited incidents where students who were withdrawn from RE classes by their parents were made to sweep the school playgrounds whilst their peers were attending religious instruction classes. However, schools in Britain are not obliged by law to provide lessons for students who are withdrawn from worship by their parents, hence resulting in discriminating against such students as well as indirectly making RE compulsory. In this sense, Christianity as a

dominant religion tends to define what is religious in Britain. It is assessed as a more legitimate religion compared to others – a religion against which others are measured. 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 see as normal is represented in the classroom community."

In Britain, and especially in England and Wales, the stakeholders in RE are the local education authority (LEA) who comprise government officials and religious communities and this group is called the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) and consists of people who are sympathetic to the Christian religion. Furthermore, the government may also be indirectly sympathetic to Christianity since government officials sitting on the committee are likely to have studied theology at tertiary education level. Of significance, is that, before the 1944 Education Reform Act, RE in England and Wales was inspected by priests and church ministers, whilst other subjects were inspected by the national government inspectorate (Hull, 2005). The scenario has not changed much because in England and Wales, religious authorities have some influence over RE. For instance, presently they are part of the local education authority that designs and helps in the implementation of RE hence their numerical strength is likely to influence the nature of RE. Though this is the case, Hull (2005) downplays this reality when he says that though Christians in England and Wales are always in the majority, the committee that decides on RE matters has never used their influence to reject a syllabus. He further elaborates that, there is seldom if ever, a faith requirement when one is admitted in the colleges run by the churches. However, it is possible that since the Christians are in the majority, they are likely to influence decisions regarding the structure and implementation of RE. Equally important to note is that, members from religious communities would be there on the basis of their religious and not professional basis and possibly get involved in RE matters as a party with interests to protect.

According to Jensen (1998), until recently the training of RE teachers in England and Wales was left to church owned institutions that would determine the type of teachers they wanted to produce. If this is the case, this action runs counter to the spirit of a secular state which should not be seen to be aiding the interests of one religion at the expense of others. Since it is the representatives of the religious community who design the RE curriculum, this compromises the interests and ideals of a secular state. It is likely

that the interests, ideals and mission of the religious institutions that are hidden may re-surface.

Despite the above scenario, Hull (2005) still maintains that RE in England and Wales is secular because it is not under the control of any religious community except that the communities basically provide resources for their respective religions. Even though he sympathises with the situation, Hull (2005) observes that, this is a paradoxical situation because the subject RE is supposed to be engaged in a secular education system yet its content is the sacred or the religious. RE is secular in that it is concerned with general human issues and the educational progress of the students which may not necessarily be religious (Hull, 2005). Jensen (1998) challenges the secular perception held in many so-called secular states especially where Christianity is viewed as the only true religion.

Felderhoff (1985) indicates that a multi-faith RE 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. It is difficult to ascertain the claim that there is this affective development in students. However, the cognitive development tends to be more discernible than the affective, though it is difficult to separate the two. Similarly, it is not easy to establish that learners become autonomous, critical, reflective, and capable of interpreting situations critically due to exposure to a multi-faith type of RE. Multi-faith RE attempts to put into practice, liberal ideals, even though liberalism has been accused of promoting permissiveness in society, where there are no universal standards of behaviour since everything tends to be relative (Gutek, 2004).

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. Kay (2005) and Wright (2005, 2004) also note that multi-faith RE involves reflection and autonomy in students hence leading to citizens who are more responsible. In trying to understand what Watson, Kay and Wright say, there are three questions that can be asked in relation to the multi-faith RE. How do teachers bring about attitude, reflection and autonomy? To what extent have teachers been successful in their endeavours? Is the multi-faith RE curriculum a form of citizenship education? Wright (2005) particularly notes that the multi-faith RE classroom has to be dynamic because it employs open enquiry and debate, especially on

sensitive and controversial social issues. This is in contradistinction especially with the Christian based RE curriculum which may not allow diversity of views. Advocacy for a multi-faith RE curriculum emanates from liberalism which encourages diversity, free thought, free expression and worship.

1.3.1 Liberalism and multi-faith RE

Liberalism emphasises that human beings are capable of making progress in life, which is something that is desirable and that the human condition could be made better by reforming society, economics, politics and education (Gutek, 2004). In liberal thought human beings are said to be capable of solving most of the societal problems, and achieving unlimited progress provided they use reason. Gutek (2004) indicates that early liberal thinkers argued that education should cultivate informed and critical thinkers who use their reason rather than depend on superstition to understand reality and that a school should be a place of freedom of thought and expression and should also create a climate of multi-culturalism. Early liberal thinkers such as John Stuart Mill, Jean Jacques Rousseau, and John Locke were against the idea of an established religion, especially the church that was officially recognised by the state. They argued that church-related or controlled schools would not provide a form of education that would produce critical thinkers who would be industrious and competitive in a "modern" economy. Furthermore, they argued that schools were places where freedom of thought and expression were to be promoted, and that public schools were supposed to be free from religious control.

Gutek (2004) refers to John Stuart Mill, one of the architects of liberalism who believed that one condition of freedom and respect for people, also had to be open to a variety of ideas including unpopular or unconventional ones. On the whole, liberalism encourages change and reform, and that it should be done gradually and should not be revolutionary. Furthermore, there has to be a gradual improvement to the state of existing institutions to a point where good working order is to be attained rather than overthrowing them. Liberals also believed that public schools could become agencies that promoted gradual social change hence the emergence of a multi-faith RE today.

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When referring to a multi-faith RE curriculum, Watson (2004) notes that RE is an important subject that can bring about attitude and behaviour change to those exposed to it, because it engages in dialogue, reflection and how young people can become more responsible citizens. However, available literature does not provide any evidence that a multi-faith RE curriculum is capable of bringing about attitude and behaviour change. In addition to the possible strengths of a multi-faith RE curriculum, Kay (2005) and Wright (2005, 2004) advocate for the teaching of RE in schools and indicate that it makes a major contribution to education because it engages students in open enquiry, as well as in the promotion of autonomy and liberal values such as freedom and tolerance. Skeie (2003) says that a multi-faith RE curriculum is believed to unite people generally and that it equally influences peoples' worldview and that it can help shape the cultural heritage of people. In liberalism, public schools become agents that promote gradual social change as well as being multi-purpose institutions that have to remedy social ills as well as solve social problems and this tends to have been the role of RE in this instance. Similarly, Teece (2005) observes that multi-faith RE is liberal in nature since it is not meant to promote any particular religion in public schools. However, the British context seems to be different on this matter because Christianity is being deliberately promoted by being placed above other faiths. Speaking from a German perspective, Schweitzer (2005) is emphatic in his advocacy of RE as a curriculum subject, by suggesting that any educational system that does not have RE is incomplete, since the subject promotes respect for persons which is an important tenet in liberal education. However, it has not been established that students who have been exposed to the multi-faith RE curriculum have been found to be more respectful than those who are not exposed to it. Assuming that Teece (2005), Schweitzer (2005), Kay (2005) and Wright (2005 were correct in their advocacy for a multi-faith RE curriculum, the questions is: Do RE teachers need to possess any specialist form of knowledge, in terms of subject knowledge and pedagogical skills? A multi-faith RE is largely viewed as a tool that transmits knowledge and values that enable individuals to realise that they belong to the same communality of human beings (The United Nations High Commissioner on Human rights, 2001). However, in a situation where other religions are deliberately silenced, individuals cannot realise that they are part of the same communality and they cannot be proud of their own identity.

As already indicated, the literature which is largely liberal in nature indicates that education promises society that it can make people or individuals overcome conflicting beliefs. According to Boman (2006:545) education can act as "an instrument that can bring about certain ends and counteract social, moral, and cultural decline in society." To stress this point, Boman (2006) notes that education is meant to produce democratic citizens, who are free, rational, self-reflective and who can show respect towards others and have a sense of unity. In this regard, education promises society certain outcomes, such as being able to solve society's present and future conflicts, which for ages it has struggled to do. That could be what the multi-faith RE curriculum, which is basically a form of citizenship education and also liberal in nature could be promising the Botswana society. For example, the multi-faith RE is promising society that it is capable of making young people tolerant, respectful and autonomous of each other. Even though education in general makes promises to society, it has not fully succeeded in realising them. One main tenet in liberal education which is emphasized is tolerance. However, whether education has succeeded or not in promoting a sense of tolerance, and respect towards each other, especially with respect to RE, is an issue that needs further investigation.

1.4 Tolerance in the Religious Education curriculum

It can be observed that one way a diverse nation can survive is by practising a high degree of tolerance. The urge to be tolerant tends to be the ideal of many people around the world as shown in the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance (UNESCO, 1995). Tolerance should not be understood as the way a particular religious belief system understands reality, but it has to be about acceptance of those with different belief systems. This includes even those views that may not be religious. That is why it is reasonable to suggest that a particular religion be taught and emphasized because that will be imposing a "one size fits all" morality for everyone. Certainly such a move will not work at best, and at worst will create religious friction and animosity amongst adherents of the various religious traditions. For example, when a group tries to impose its values on others the result will inevitably be resentment, hatred and at worst violence. Such a scenario was vivid in sixteenth century Europe that was submerged in a bloodbath that was caused mainly by lack of religious tolerance. This intolerance led to several people being persecuted on the basis that they were either heretics or schismatics (Coffee, 2000; Levine, 2001).

It is in the principle of unity that the value of tolerance is deeply rooted where the diversity of different groups of people is celebrated because unity occupies a central position in human affairs. Despite the existing differences, people need to celebrate together the fact that they are different. It is for this reason that tolerance is viewed to be an important component of the RE curriculum since young people spend much of their time at school where there are differences, in terms of influence from peers and the environment. The school is a place where young people meet other students and teachers who are different from them, for example, in terms of ethnicity and at times even by race. It is against this background that there is need to integrate the teaching of tolerance in the curriculum.

Even though there are various conceptions of tolerance, it can be understood as consisting of valuing the right of another person to hold beliefs that are different from one's own. What is at issue is how one understands another's point of view, which he or she may disagree with. Tolerance may not necessarily mean indifference, but it is about awareness of the differences that exist (Vogt, 1997). It is rather about the respect towards each other's rights, especially the right to be different. In exercising tolerance, an opinion, act or lifestyle might be disapproved yet the other party has to exercise restraint towards what is different. Similarly, religious tolerance involves refraining from discriminating against those following a different religious faith, for example, in the Western world, tolerance is best exemplified by the Romans when they were at the peak of their conquest; and when they allowed conquered peoples to worship and even keep their local gods whilst they accepted the Roman gods as well (Levine, 2001). That is why Levine (2001) further posits that tolerance is presently one of the most attractive and widespread ideals and that it is a cornerstone of liberalism in terms of protection of human rights.

Some scholars (Mockus, 2002; Chowgule, 2000; Vogt, 1997; Pecker, 1996) agree that tolerance is a result of existing differences, because without differences there may not be any need to raise the issue of tolerance. It is when environments are plural or diverse that the issue of tolerance becomes relevant. That is the reason why a multi-faith RE is preferred since in multi-cultural and diverse societies there will naturally be some differences especially in terms of religious affiliation. Furthermore, the differences must be important enough to warrant consideration for tolerance. If the difference is not important, people involved may not care or may be indifferent about it. Tolerance then

becomes a way of reconciling the differences. As Vogt (1997) observes that compromise is a main factor in tolerance and that to compromise is *to settle for less than* [emphasis mine] what one wanted. Furthermore, tolerance then becomes the "intentional self-restraint in the face of something one dislikes, objects to, finds threatening, or otherwise has a negative attitude toward – usually in order to maintain a social or political group or to promote harmony in a group" (Vogt, 1997:3).

Mockus (2002) notes that tolerance is a possibility in the contemporary pluralistic societies, mainly because there are differences and further maintains that by being tolerant one does not deny his or her identity as some claim. He argues that if one recognises, for example, another's cultural tradition, that is not a form of cultural relativism that can lead to the weakening of one's interest in developing and strengthening one's own identity within a specific tradition. Despite the advocacy for tolerance, there are voices that are critical of its applicability. For example, Barnes & Wright (2003) doubt if a multi-faith RE curriculum whose aim is to promote tolerance and respect among people can be successful.

1.5 Limitations of tolerance

Even though tolerance is a catch word in liberal thinking, there are those who are suspicious of it. For example, Horner (2002) says that tolerance encourages indifference, and as such is a form of cowardice because issues have to be dealt with head on instead of people being hesitant. He further notes that tolerance is not a viable option since it is about *softening hard* (emphasis mine) and real issues which is futile and dishonest. Horner (2002) is of the view that people are scared of telling the truth, hence they hide behind tolerance. He argues that by being tentative in dealing with issues, it is not tolerance that is being promoted but relativism where everything and anything is said to be good and right and where nobody cares about anything. Despite Horner's position, it can be argued that tolerance is not a form of cowardice. For example, if people were to avoid what he terms cowardice there could be a likelihood of unending conflicts since no one would naturally want to be associated with any form of weakness.

Vogt (1997) contends that there is a case against tolerance, because it can be equated with relativism because society will have no form, where everything is accepted as good and that peace can be attained when people are united. He says that this form of unity is obviously through other people being coerced into accepting it. If people are forced into unity, they lose their identity because reality is about conflict and not peace which tolerance is trying to espouse. Tolerance then becomes a ploy that is used by the powerful and influential to impose their interests (Vogt, 1997). As the powerful stress tolerance and unity, the society generally becomes stable.

Macklin (1998) is of the view that although respect for cultural diversity mandates tolerance of beliefs and practices, in some situations excessive tolerance can have harmful effects. He argues that the conception of justice as equality challenges the notion that it is always necessary to respect all of the beliefs and practices of every cultural group. Even though there is disagreement on whether tolerance is good or not, it seems there is agreement between Vogt (1997), Horner (2002) and Mockus (2002) that education can positively affect the behaviour and attitude of students to some extent. That is the possible reason why the multi-faith RE curriculum has been premised on the concept of tolerance. However, it is important to note that tolerance is not necessarily a religious concept, but a secular one. The problem arises when tolerance is taught within a subject that has religion as its base. In religion, belief systems claim exclusive right to truth hence making tolerance an elusive concept.

1.6 The capability of education in changing students' attitudes and behaviour

Some studies (Hogan, 2005; Sliwiski, 2005; Pike, 2005; Hand & White, 2004; Alvey, 2005; Thompson, 2004; Cassel, 2002; Shapiro, 2000; Vogt, 1997) indicate that a liberal form of education can foster attitude and behaviour change. What these scholars may not agree on is the type of education or subject that can satisfactorily do that. It is clear from research that education may affect students positively, leading them to change their perceptions and behaviour (Roussi, 2002; Toh, 2002). That is largely the justification of multi-faith RE as a form of liberal education. This is not a new conception in terms of what education is capable of doing because even in ancient Greece, people generally thought so except Plato who disagreed and maintained that education can only make one clever and not necessarily good (Hall, 1996).

In a liberal context, schools in their role of educating the young in order to be responsible citizens, emphasise values such as respect for others, cooperation and learning to live in a diverse society (Allen and Coy, 2004; DeMoulin, 2002; Schwarz, 2000). Talking from an Irish perspective on identity and citizenship education, Waldron (2004) notes that education can enhance reciprocity and empathy among students. He also observes that education can enhance mutual respect especially in a pluralist democracy. Education can also enable individuals to stand outside their own cultural beliefs and certainties and respect the perspective of others. Furthermore, education can develop in children independent critical thinking, while at the same time remaining open to and respectful of the views of others. Education can help learners to be good and by cultivating tolerance as a virtue that schools can foster as well as enhance. In teaching core liberal values students can, in many ways, greatly improve their ability to appreciate, understand, and interact positively with those that may not be like them (Rayburn, 2004).

Burdett (2001:8) says that education can bring about change in students when he says that "learning must challenge, enrich and push the student to the very edge of what is possible. …. Learning is successful when it also impacts the way people feel and think." He is also of the view that education enables the student to explore new ways and areas they have never been in touch with before "giving the student the permission to be different" (Burdett (2001:8). "Different" here is used positively because it is in relation to the transformation of the student that comes about as a result of being exposed to some form of education. The "permission" is what Schecter (2004) refers to as the "need to doubt" which to him is synonymous with critical thinking. Several scholars (Alvey, 2005; Pang & Gibson, 2000; Tiana, 2002) are of the view that education is likely to change individuals for the good, especially by helping young people to learn to live peacefully together, tolerating and understanding each other. Tiana (2002) further suggests that, it is the role of education to prepare and produce responsible citizens and in this regard, education can bring about both attitudinal and behavioural changes.

Roussi (2002) says that education can foster a change in attitudes especially in terms of tolerance and co-existence, especially through History and Religious Education. As far as Religious Education is concerned Roussi (2002) posits that it teaches how individuals can relate to each other and live together as well as being able to promote the virtue of tolerance. Lewis (2001) is convinced that democracy and tolerance can be taught, and can

enable students understand and appreciate the pluralistic societies that they live in. Gorski (2000) posits that education can help learners to recognise and appreciate who they are as well as appreciate and accept those that are different from them.

Kazepides (1991:6) observes that embedded within education, is knowledge and understanding, which therefore "rules out superstitions, prejudices, doctrines, false beliefs," which are a main cause for misunderstandings and intolerance. He argues that if prejudices are ruled out, then there is a great possibility that the view of one who has been educated will not be distracted by myths that are related to superiority or inferiority. However, there seems to be no evidence that shows that if one is educated they cannot be prejudiced because what counts the most is the type of education that one would have been exposed to. However, liberal education attempts to stress the respect for people, and posits that if people can respect and tolerate each other, there is likely to be happiness among human beings.

Regarding the effect of education on attitudes and behaviour, Vogt (1997) postulates that prejudices and biases are generalisations that we make about other people, and that it is natural for people to be prejudiced or biased. He says that groups with visible markers of their status are particularly susceptible to bias and discrimination, which is why, when there are no outward signs people often create them. However, Vogt (1997) is convinced that education can enable people to have good relationships by arguing that a liberal type of education affects attitudes and behaviour. Prejudice and all forms of stereotypes need not be eliminated for people to tolerate, because tolerance is about knowing that there are prejudices (Vogt, 1997).

On the whole, Vogt (1997) says that education largely promotes tolerance and says that subjects such as Civic Education or Moral Education are the right vehicles for tolerance. However, he argues that there is no guarantee that students exposed to education will be tolerant even though "educational experiences influence students' tolerance in several ways. …. gives students information …. change(s) how they think, alter their personalities, and provide them with new social experiences" (Vogt (1997:246). He suggests that students can learn about tolerance and have knowledge of what it entails, even though that may not be a guarantee that they will change their attitudes and behaviour. He is of the view that the number of years that one spent schooling is a good and reliable predictor of tolerance.

Vogt (1997) further suggests that there is evidence that shows that a form of education, that uses Lawrence Kohlberg's "moral dilemma" approach, can promote moral development because moral reasoning has been shown to be permanent. He is convinced that "once students have attained a higher level of moral reasoning, they rarely slip back" (Vogt, 1997:195) as if their moral reasoning is at a lower level. He however, admits that the school is not the only place that can foster the spirit of tolerance; even though it has a unique position and role compared to other social institutions and other major social change agents because it can enable students to transcend their narrow definitions of identity.

In their study on tolerance, Holm & Venable (2004) found that in institutions of higher education, where there were courses on cultural diversity, students who took those courses tended to be more tolerant. They observed that students who were exposed to cultural diversity courses tended to appreciate other cultures, hence making them more open and tolerant. They further observed that, on the whole, the hatred, racial and cultural conflict that was mainly caused by ignorance was greatly reduced if students were exposed to a diverse environment. Venable (2004) makes the claim that a diverse group of students working under an open atmosphere tends to perform better because they tend to be aware of their differences which they consequently view positively. Masconi and Emmet (2003), Kalantzis, Cope & Harvey (2003) take the point further to indicate that a diverse group of students improve their self-concept and social concept and that such classroom conditions and types of curricular, generally lead to intellectual maturity. For this to happen, the classroom environment itself should be conducive enough and not threaten the social identity of the students and should allow students to concentrate on their main business which is learning (Sabini, Siepmann, Stein, and Meyerrowitz, 2000). A free environment is what teachers and students need because it is a stage when young people want to assert as well as identify themselves.

Potter (1999) suggests that there is need to respect and encourage all varieties of views since liberal democracy is mainly characterised by the existence of multiple points of views. She further indicates that when using a multi-faith approach in RE, there has to be critical thinking involved by both teachers and students. Similarly, Doble (2004) says that if RE encourages critical thinking, then, it can help students to understand the worth of religion and religious claims of adherents in terms of what they regard as truth. Exposure

to a multi-faith RE curriculum has to empower students to be able to question the way certain things are done in society and equally help students to be aware that lack of tolerance can be a result of frustration, impatience, fear, weakness and even despair. Teece (2005) argues that RE can enable students to be aware of the differences in truth claims and hence bias and prejudice which are barriers to tolerance. Vogt (1997) makes a similar point that education systems should be diverse enough so that they play a key role in enabling students to appreciate that they have common values that they share even though they are different. Consequently, Vogt (1997) then concludes that education can instill a sense of belonging to one's society, that is, it can cultivate in students a more inclusive notion of a society. If that happens, the chance to marginalise other religious viewpoints in one's society will be greatly reduced, because those distinctive features of diverse groups will not be viewed as a threat but will be maintained.

Verma, Zec & Skinner (1994) and Marsden (1997) emphasise the importance of the school as an institution that can help bring about tolerance when they say that schools can demonstrate how people from different ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds can live together happily and successfully. They argue that education, through schools can help create a cohesive and a multi-cultural society if it stresses differences and discourages conformity and uniformity which are the main cause of conflicts.

According to Clifford (1992), despite the political and religious differences within society, schools can be used to teach young people that even though they are different, they can co-exist and accept each other's differences and even to use differences as an opportunity to learn. Clifford (1992) further states that schools can help to promote a spirit of acceptance amongst school going children and even at higher academic institutions. He posits that schools can enable students to avoid animosities and prejudices because it is capable of teaching universal sympathy. However, RE could best be taught in colleges and universities where the students are cognitively mature in age. The older and more cognitively mature one is, the easier it is to make decisions that are related to cognition and affect since both improve as one matures (Clifford, 1992). Though it may not be correct that cognition and affect correlate positively with age, the two are inseparable since "affect and cognition are not independent processes; nor are they processes that can be separated …. They are part of the same reality in human experience" (Eisner, 1994:21).

However, there are those who are of the view that education does not necessarily change attitudes and behaviour. Studies by Wasonga (2005), Blumenfeld-Jones (2004), Masconi & Emmet (2003) and Littrel & Peterson (2001) show that education does not necessarily change people to become better or good. For example, Masconi and Emmet (2003) argue that education is guilty of giving people false hopes by making learners believe that the future is bright for them. Likewise, Blumenfeld-Jones (2004) argues that knowledge does not necessarily make one behave well or do good. Similarly, Wasonga (2005:71) says that information or knowledge can change a person's attitude only if that person "is not committed to the target attitudes or when attitudes are not connected to core beliefs" hence rendering education unhelpful in terms of attitude and behaviour change.

1.7 RE and diversity in the classroom

Diversity refers to human beings celebrating differences in their distinctiveness. It also involves the ability for one to learn from knowledge systems that are not indigenous to the local environment. Teachers are, therefore, expected to respect students from different backgrounds and learn from what students bring along with them into the school setting. While teachers are expected to understand and internalise the worldview of the students in a culturally diverse environment, very little is said as to where teachers get the skills and how that environment affects teachers. In their professional landscape teachers have no choice but to work with different students as well as to know and understand their students' socio-economic backgrounds (Holland, 2005; Hudson, 2002; Jones, 2004; Weinstein *et al*., 2004). In public schools, teachers are likely to teach children from middle and working class under the same roof, even though their social and economic realities are different. Lubienski's (2006:109) study on the importance of social class in terms of learning, shows that at least "in the US … middle class parents emphasised reasoning and discussion when teaching their children [whereas] working class children learned to be passive knowledge receivers and did not learn to de-contextualise knowledge and transfer it to other contexts." The point is taken further by Arnot and Reay (2004) who observe that social class may play a crucial role in schools because what generally happens in terms of images, voices and practices, make it difficult for children of marginalised classes to recognise themselves in the school. That is why teachers need to create a strong classroom community, one "which all students are affirmed as individuals and as learners" (Pugach, 2006:255). The question is: Is the

school environment friendly enough to allow diversity? Diversity is crucial in multi-faith RE classrooms, since its content and approach are mainly about diversity.

Though there are those who advocate for sensitivity towards diversity, there are voices that are against it (Stodsky, 1999; Glazer, 1996; Grimmitt, 1993). For example, Grimmitt (1993) observes that education is largely value laden and some values may not be compatible with those of religion. Adherents of religions have the fear that if religions are to be put on an equal footing, then there is the likelihood of relativism, which may water down basic beliefs found in the religious teachings (Grimmitt, 1993). Furthermore, adherents usually see treating religions as having equal claims to truth as a distortion of their own religious claim to provide absolute and exclusive truth. Grimmitt (1993) therefore concludes that tolerance and respect alone are not adequate since they may lead to indifference which may not be helpful in a pluralistic society and that tolerance enhances co-existence but not interaction and cooperation. Similarly, Glazer (1996) argues that there is a possibility that diversity can threaten national unity hence there is need to call for uniformity and assimilation of peoples within the boundaries of a nation state. Stodsky (1999) arguing from an American perspective says that teaching for a multicultural and diverse society is not necessary, since it is an illusion because it is rarely internalised by those to whom it is meant for. That is why he says that multiculturalism, as a form of education, is a waste of students' precious time since it is irrelevant.

1.8 Empowering teachers to teach about diversity

Teachers who teach diverse classes should be skilled to deal with such an environment by being ready to shed off their preconceived biases and should be willing to learn from the new environments that they find themselves in. Some studies (Wasonga, 2005; Hickey & Keddie, 2004; Calabrese, 2003; Lakomski, 2003; Schechtman, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Bush & Gamage, 2001; Edwards, Green & Lyons, 2000; Burdett, 1999; Ryan, 1999) suggest the need for teachers to be empowered in whatever way in order to be effective in diverse classrooms. Empowering teachers entails being exposed to skills that will enhance their teaching in diverse classrooms and this empowerment could take place during their pre-service training or when they are at work making their daily decisions. Furthermore, a study carried out by Edwards, Green & Lyons (2000) suggests that if

teachers are empowered, they tend to improve their performance since they will be satisfied with what they will be doing. Their satisfaction is at the same time carried over to their students resulting in learners' improved performance. In the same manner, if learners are happy with their performance, they will like school.

Jones (2004) says that teachers in diverse classrooms need to learn from the experiences of their students by linking culture with students' social contexts and curriculum content. How can this be done? Teachers need to understand that if they teach in diverse environments they need to recognise that their worldview is in most cases different from that of their students (Schecter, 2005; Edwards & Mulis, 2003; Lewis, 2001; Littrel & Peterson, 2001). It is only if teachers can realise this, that it might be easier for them to understand the worldview of the students in a culturally diverse environment. Teachers must have what McAllister & Irvine (2000) refer to as "cross-cultural competence" that is, whereby they know themselves in order for them to fit in diverse classroom environments. This leads to the conclusion by several scholars that diversity as a social issue tends to be very important in today's world and cannot be ignored (Allen & Coy, 2004; Bennet, 2001; Constantine and Yeh, 2001; Holcomb & Mcoy, 2001).

1.9 Learning "from" and learning "about" Religious Education

In a multi-faith RE curriculum, there is emphasis on two major aspects, that is *learning about* religion and *learning from* religion. Learning *about* religion emphasises students' knowledge and understanding of different religions, whereby students are exposed to religions in their own community and the world at large. Students also learn about the similarities and differences of these religions. Furthermore, students deal with religious ideas as expressed in various ways. In *learning from* religion, the starting point is the students, who are expected to bring to the learning environment their experiences in terms of their religious affiliation or lack of it, and in such a context, students are valued and viewed as unique.

Related to *learning about* and *learning from* religion which are the main tenets of a multi-faith RE curriculum, Puthanagady (1995) argues that there is a distinction between *faith* and *religion*. According to him, faith has to do with people whom God has revealed himself to, and as for him, what is most important is the relationship that people have

with God. Puthanagady (1995) proceeds to indicate that religion involves symbols, statements of faith and different rituals, and that there is no religion that is better than the other. He argues that there is a difference between *teaching about a faith* and *teaching about religion*. Teaching of religion and that of faith are different because in the former the concepts are clarified so much that even a non-believer can teach the faith, while in the latter one has to be involved in the experiences of those whom one is helping to form a faith (Puthanagady, 1995). For one to teach a faith, that person has to confess that faith as opposed to teaching religion which anyone can do irrespective of their religious convictions or absence. Puthanagady (1995) suggests that multi-faith RE is ideal for the promotion of tolerance and co-existence in a pluralistic society and that it can also encourage the search for common, cross-cultural values. He also points out that if religions are open towards each other, they are capable of building a community where differences are a point of complementarity and not of divergence and that religion is a collective expression of faith as well as a cultural reality.

In the South African context, *teaching religion* or teaching about a faith is understood to mean *nurturing of a faith* whilst *teaching about religion* is taken to be an objective study of religion (Ferguson & Roux, 2003). Of significance, is the assumption that multi-religious curriculum would be educational if the study of religion is to assist students to make informed choices of religion from a full range of choices, if they so wish to choose. Rhodes & Roux (2004:25) attempt to show the difference between *religion* and *faith* when they say that "faith is usually embedded in a religious commitment" and the difference they are attempting to make is on approach. For them, *teaching a faith* is synonymous with nurturing and fostering a faith, whilst *teaching about religion* is about knowing and understanding it, which according to them, is integral to the educational process. According to them, RE is the same as nurturing faith and it aims at educating students to become religious. In this study, I have used the term multi-faith RE to refer to a curriculum that encourages understanding and knowledge in religions and whereby students can reflect on their experiences with reference to religion in particular and to life in general. However, the term and the subject RE is understood and interpreted differently in various countries.

1.10 Religious Education in Southern Africa

It seems that very little has been documented on the history of RE in Southern Africa even though traces of RE can be found in history and anthropology (Tlou & Campbell, 1984; Schapera, 1938). Mgadla, (1994) observes that what is common in these countries is that in almost all of Southern African states, missionaries played a very important role in education, even though their main aim was to convert people into the Christian faith. The British colonisers were indifferent to the social welfare of the local people including education as evidenced by public schooling which was left to churches to educate the children of the locals. However, Seretse (2003) in her study on the teaching of RE and young people's beliefs, attempts to trace the history of RE in Southern Africa and notes that at present, most of the Southern African countries have a form of Religious Education even though it may bear different titles and emphases. For example, in Zambia RE is offered and examined at both primary and secondary schools and has shifted from a single religion content to one that incorporates other religions including African Traditional Religion. Other stances of life such as humanism and atheism are also included at least at secondary school level. The argument for including, for example, life stances has been that if religions or beliefs are studied so life stances can be studied as well. However, it is not clear why humanism and atheism have to appear in an RE curriculum in particular. However, one can argue that if religions are studied, it would be appropriate to study their absence as well.

In Namibia, RE whose content is Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and African Traditional Religion, is not examined but is offered as a promotional or enrichment subject. The question is: Why study only these religions if there are a dozen more religious traditions? RE was introduced in Namibia in order to address issues of diversity, as well as to foster mutual understanding, respect and tolerance among the school going youth (Seretse, 2003). At junior secondary school level (i.e. Grades 8 -10) and at senior secondary school level (i.e. Grades 11-12) emphasis is on contemporary moral issues as they relate to religious and non-religious matters. Seretse (2003).

In South Africa, the RE curriculum in primary and secondary schools falls under a broad learning Area called Life Orientation and is called *Religion Education*. However, Roux and Dupreez (2005) are of the view that the name *Religion in Education* should be used instead of Religion Education. They say that using the term and concept Religion in

Education is a broader notion that Religion Education because "Religion in Education involves amongst others developing philosophical ideas and theories in religion and education: carrying out empirical studies and research involving educators and students. Chidester (2003:38) says that religion education has been introduced as a "new model for nation building" since the old, single religion-based RE is still associated with apartheid that divided people along colour and race lines. He notes that religion can help build a society where individuals can identify themselves nationally, internationally and culturally. That is why he concludes that *Religion Education* was introduced in South African schools as a form of citizenship education, that is, where young people could be made aware of their multiple identities and could identify with those identities. Thus, the aims of a multi-faith curriculum are consistent with a liberal world-view that emphasizes liberty or freedom, equality and rationality (Jackson, 1997). A liberal education promotes tolerance, welcomes diversity, celebrates human ingenuity, encourages critical thinking, provides knowledge and fosters creativity (Glenn, Moss, Kaufman & Norlander-Case, 2005). In addition, RE has to be premised on the life-worlds of the students, that is, the realities of their social situations including the communities that they belong to (Skeie, 2010). Furthermore, a classroom is a place where one can find religious diversity because people belong to a global world hence Religion Education has to respond to the personal and collective identities of the students. In further justifying the reason for the existence of religion education, Chidester (2003) argues that religion education needs a space in the curriculum so that it can be taught and learnt in ways that recognise, affirm, and explore, creatively and critically the multiple identities of students in a plural South African society. Just like Citizenship Education, Religion Education is mainly informed by the principle of democracy where citizens need to be active, informed, willing and able to take responsibility for themselves and their communities. Religion Education aims at affirming the students' spiritual identities as well as enhancing their appreciation of the religious identities of others (Republic of South Africa, Department of Education, 2004).

The Religion Education Policy in South Africa suggests that through RE, education will have a dual mandate of celebrating diversity and enhancing national unity (Republic of South Africa, 1994, Department of Education, 2004). It is clear from the policy that the national priorities are not only tied to matters of religion, but go beyond them by including social responsibilities. While a multi-faith RE curriculum is preferred in the South African context, it is clear what students should do, yet not much is being said about how teachers are expected to actually teach. Furthermore, it is not surprising that

the term religious education would be objectionable in this context, bearing in mind the history of apartheid South Africa, where discriminatory practices were said to be justified by the Christian religion. The racial and class ideology found its educational expression in the policy of Christian National Education that was initiated in the 1800s was officially adopted by the National Party in 1948 after winning the elections (Sutcliffe, 1984).

The Christian National Education curriculum stressed the segregation of the school system based on language, especially English and Afrikaans, racial classification and unequal opportunities. The policy was based on the Calvinist Christian tradition which claimed that the diversity of races was God-given and that it was supported by Christian scriptures, hence allowing Afrikaans speaking whites to be viewed as trustees of all other groups in South Africa (Sutcliffe, 1984). It is against this background that after independence, the different provinces in South Africa were allowed to design syllabuses that were said to be relevant to their own situations, based on the national Religion Education policy. The understanding in the South African context, is that, *Religious Education* is about converting the students into a given faith tradition, and in this case, the faith tradition is Christianity, whilst *Religion Education* is understood to be learning "about religion" and is assumed to be an educational rather than a religious activity (Republic of South Africa, 2004). Religion Education is said to be "a non-confessional inclusive information study of religions … sometimes referred to as multi-religious education" (Ferguson & Roux, 2003:292). After exploring studies on RE in Southern Africa, the next focus is on studies done on multi-faith RE in Botswana.

1.10.1 Studies on multi-faith RE curriculum in Botswana

There has always been a close link between the state and religion among different ethnic groups in Botswana (Schapera, 1938) and History (Mgadla, 1994; Tlou & Campbell, 1984) hence religion and the state have always served each other. With the advent of colonisation which was later followed by independence, the relationship still continued. It is important to note that constitutionally, Botswana is a secular state, and is assumed to be built on the separation of state and religion, yet in practice this is not the case. Jensen (1998) argues from a European perspective that states that are referred to as secular are those that emerged from a predominantly single religion framework. He indicates that such states, especially in Western Europe and North America owe the separation of state

and religion to Christianity, where there was a history of conflicts that were caused by religion. However, he is of the view that the so-called secular states are not secular enough hence they still need to be secularised, so that there may be a genuine separation between state and religion. A similar case cannot be made about Botswana since it does not share a similar history with those countries, yet just like in those countries the separation of state and religion tends to be blurred.

Between 1977 and 1993, studies conducted in Botswana were calling for an RE curriculum that was multi-faith in content and phenomenological in its approach because the existing curriculum was Christian based (Dinama, 1994; Morake, 1993; Seretse, 1990; Mmolai, 1988). As stated previously, the curriculum changed after the Revised National Policy on Education of 1994 which recommended the separation of Religious Education and Moral Education. In 1996 a multi-faith RE curriculum was ushered into Botswana junior secondary schools. After the RNPE of 1994 several studies (Matemba, 2005; Sepotlo, 2004; Seretse, 2003; Mazebane, 2001; Ontiretse, 2001) in Botswana examined the implementation of the multi-faith RE curriculum in terms of its effectiveness and concentrated on how students learn. Studies (Matemba, 2005; Sepotlo, 2004; Seretse, 2003; Mazebane, 2001; Ontiretse, 2001) conducted in Botswana on how teachers understand and implement the multi-faith RE curriculum in general are few. Most of these studies concentrated on the perceptions of students about RE and not specifically on teachers. Furthermore, there are few empirical studies that have been conducted in Botswana on the implementation of the multi-faith RE curriculum in terms of teachers' professional practices.

In a study on how the multi-faith RE promotes tolerance amongst students, Mazebane (2001) concluded that the curriculum increased the students' awareness about differences amongst people, whilst Ontiretse (2001) concluded that students and teachers have a positive attitude towards RE. Sepotlo (2004) concentrated on the constraints that RE teachers experience in teaching the multi-faith RE curriculum, by focusing mainly on textbooks as the major resources. She concluded that teachers in urban areas have access to several resources, compared to their counterparts in rural areas. Unlike her study mine goes beyond resource provision because it examines all aspects and factors that contribute to the RE teachers' classroom practices.

In a small survey of about thirty-eight teachers, Matemba (2005) explored the perceptions of RE teachers towards the multi-faith curriculum and found that teachers have a positive attitude towards the curriculum. He reported that teachers were of the view that a multi-faith RE was relevant for the multi-religious and multi-ethnic society of Botswana. In this particular study, Matemba reported that teachers indicated that they were comfortable in teaching a multi-faith RE curriculum because they claimed that they could distance themselves from the religions that they taught and also indicated that this type of RE was an educational and not a religious activity. However, in the same study, teachers reported that they experienced difficulties in assessing a multi-faith curriculum mainly due to the multiplicity of religions. In her study whose main sample was students, Seretse (2003) concluded that the junior secondary school RE teachers in Botswana were aware that their professional classroom practices did not satisfactorily encourage critical thinking.

Studies conducted in Botswana on multi-faith RE by Sepotlo (2004) and Matemba (2005) tend to be the only ones that concentrated on teachers. Though these two studies were conducted on teachers, the researchers studied the teachers' attitudes only, and did not investigate what actually took place inside the classrooms hence the studies do not give a comprehensive insight into the pedagogical practices of RE teachers. Furthermore, it has not been established that the multi-faith RE teachers possess skills that encourage reflective and critical thinking as envisaged in the RNPE and in a multi-faith RE curriculum. In their attempt to understand how critical thinking is developed in students, Seretse (2003) and Matemba, (2005), report that some teachers say that they mainly use role-play and debates as techniques. Ontiretse's (2001) participants, who were students, reported that their teachers commonly used techniques such as group work, discussions, presentations, role-play and dramatization. Ontiretse's (2001) study did not indicate how and when teachers used these techniques as well as the extent to which these techniques enhanced reflective and critical thinking. However, none of the studies investigated show how education in general and multi-faith RE in particular cultivated in students a sense of autonomy, enquiry and reflection which are the main tenets in a multi-faith RE curriculum. Studies conducted in Botswana indicate that little is known about how RE teachers implement a multi-faith RE curriculum and more significantly how they responded to change with regard to multi-faith RE teaching. I also investigated studies done elsewhere on multi-faith RE to establish the extent to which teachers have responded to it. However, all the studies were influenced by the phenomenological approach to Religious Education.

1.11 The Phenomenological Approach in multi-faith Religious Education

The phenomenological approach to RE 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. The approach basically uses Smart's (1968, 1969) seven dimensions that are said to characterise each religion and these are: ethical, social, doctrinal, mythical, material, ritual and the experiential. The *ritual dimension* refers to religious actions that are performed within a religion by its adherents. This involves all the practices that followers of a religion perform to show their devotion to it, such as prayer. The *doctrinal dimension* refers to major beliefs within a religion which followers accept as true, such as belief in one God as it is, for example in Islam, Christianity and Judaism. The *ethical dimension* refers to the codes of conduct that govern how adherents conduct themselves with regard to issues of right and wrong, and good and bad. For example, what a religion may say about monogamy or polygamy. The *social dimension* refers to how followers of a religion behave and relate with each other and other members of society. For example, whether they should associate with homosexuals or they should shun them, whether the adherents who are also members of society can join the army or not. The *experiential dimension* refers to the personal feelings and experiences that adherents have for example in relation to the divine. This dimension is premised on personal faith. The *mythological dimension* refers to myths that are related by followers of a religion and are mainly meant to strengthen a certain teaching or belief. For example, the story of creation in the Garden of Eden in Christianity and Judaism. Lastly, the *material dimension* refers to the objects and buildings that the adherents of a religion use as they practice their religion. Examples of religious buildings are temple and church while a rosary and fly whisk are examples of religious objects in Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR) respectively.

With the phenomenological approach in RE, the teacher is expected to help students know and understand the concepts that underlie religion and not to convert them to a particular religion. Sutcliffe (1984) says that the phenomenological approach focuses on the phenomenon of religion, by describing and giving information about religion and by so doing, it attempts to remove assumptions that the students might have about a religion. According to him, this is done in order to avoid subjectivities that may lead to prejudices, because subjectivities are commonly associated with inadequate information.

Furthermore, Sutcliffe (1984) says that the approach can help students in their quest for meaning. This could be done through discussion when students narrate stories and beliefs they hold that are of significance in their lives." The approach is meant to help avoid pre-judging that might lead to prejudice and bias. Judgments about a religion are suspended until one has adequate information. The question is: How do we know that people in general and teachers in particular possess adequate and relevant information that could be used to make judgments? Furthermore, there are no assumptions in this approach, for example, that the teacher or students could be or could not be practitioners of a religion (Buchanan, 2005). According to Hull (2005) the approach can enable the students to interpret a religious phenomenon by helping students to examine their own beliefs hence leading them to be aware of their prejudices.

Summers (1996:35) says that the "approach requires that a person's own religious beliefs be temporarily suspended, while the beliefs of other religions are considered *objectively* (emphasis original)." This is known as "bracketing out" because it attempts to understand in an empathetic and sensitive way what believing in a religion different from one's own entails. According to him, the approach does not concern itself with the truth or falsity of a religion but with how a religion is understood and practised. When using this approach, various religions are included in the content of the RE curriculum, that is why it is referred to as multi-faith RE. When using the phenomenological approach, concepts are emphasised and the examples used are taken from various religions. For example, a concept such as *freedom* can be discussed in the light of what the different religions say about it. However, little research has been done to unpack the approach to suit primary and secondary school levels, except in a project done by British academics, namely Grimmitt, Groves, Hull and Spencer (1991). They tried to apply the approach to primary school level in a Religious Education project which they named *"The Gift of the Child"* since it demanded from young children to bring along their religious experiences to the classroom and share them with others including the teacher. *The Gift Approach* recommends that the learning and teaching material for young children should appeal to their senses, and should be specific, explicit and concrete (Grimmitt, Groves, Hull and Spencer, 1991). Despite the attempt to involve young people, the emphasis is still on the students and not on teachers.

Fundamental to this approach is the belief that religious experience is a distinctive form of experience with its own essence and structure (Surin, 1980). When using this approach, a religious tradition is presented to students, as a phenomenon, and they in turn would be expected to explore how ideas and other activities about it were formed. According to Summers (1996), the approach calls for knowledge, understanding, reflection, and empathy. Similarly, Sealey (1994) notes that in using the phenomenological approach, the teacher aims at helping students to know, understand and reflect on issues that are related to religion and those outside religion. He emphasises that RE teaching has to be about grasping of religious concepts and principles and that the intention of the RE teacher is to make the students *know* and *understand* the concepts and facts underlying a body of knowledge called RE, so that they are able to *reflect* on them. This reflection is what Jackson (1997) refers to as the oscillation between practice and thought. Similarly, Rogers (2002:3) says that reflection in terms of multi-faith RE "is a meaning-making process that moves from one experience into the next with deeper understanding of its relationships with and connections to other experiences" and that it is at the centre of the phenomenological approach. Sealey (1994:92) remarks that the intention of the RE teacher is not to make students religious, but "what is necessary to the educational enterprise is the learning outcome in terms of knowledge and understanding." However, he does not suggest how this situation can affect a teacher who may be religious or non-religious. Instead, he suggests that RE teachers should set aside their religious convictions if they hold any and engage students only in as far as *understanding*, *knowing* and *reflection* are concerned. However, it is not easy to establish that teaching a multi-faith RE class makes the teachers forget about their personal religious convictions. Similarly it has not been established how RE teachers can enable students to "bracket out" their religious convictions or lack of them thereof.

Hull (2003) argues that the objectivity and integrity of multi-faith RE teachers using the phenomenological approach before their students has been strengthened because students realise that the RE teacher is there to help them to know and understand as well as think critically about religions under discussion in relation to their own values as young people. Furthermore, he notes that RE teachers are not there to advocate their own personal religious commitments if they happen to hold any. In this approach, teachers can be relied upon to be fair in their teaching of religions. He also indicates that teachers are able to give students professional support in order to increase their faith if they practice one or to move toward atheism if they do not practice any. He further points out that it is the

secular nature of RE that gives it the reason to exist in public schools. Hull (2003) emphasises the difference between a minister of religion and a teacher of RE by indicating that a minister of religion has to believe in what he or she teaches while that may not necessarily be the case with a teacher of RE.

According to Hull (1996), forms of the phenomenological approach can be divided into three categories; *the systems approach, the thematic or topical approach and the experiential approach.* With *systems approach*, religions are taught and treated as separate entities. In the *thematic approach*, religions are made to respond to themes or topics that emerge, and usually they will be contemporary religious and moral issues, while the *experiential approach* uses themes that tap into the experiences of the students. For example, the interpretive approach adopted by Jackson (1997) and the Gift Approach by Grimmitt, Grove, Hull and Spencer (1991 are forms of the experiential approach. The systems and the thematic approaches are used with adolescents or upper primary and secondary school students. The systems approach is commonly used in many theology and Religious Studies Departments in colleges and universities. However, Botswana adopted the thematic dimension of the phenomenological approach at junior secondary school level because religions are made to respond to themes.

Even though understanding, knowledge and reflection are emphasised in this approach it has some limitations. For example, in their study on beliefs and understanding, Chinn and Samarapungaravan (2001), found that students might know and understand what is being taught yet they may not believe it. They found that the undergraduate Science students understood the proposition that molecules are constantly moving in some solids, such as wood, yet they could not believe it. The situation is likely to be worse in religion which is essentially contentious by nature. Similarly, Haldane (1986) argues that there are no religious claims that are universally agreed upon and that religious doctrines are not publicly testable. Furthermore, a study conducted in one Australian Christian secondary school by Calder (2000) on students' sense of tolerance indicates that students who studied other religious traditions in addition to Christianity did not improve their sense of tolerance to other religions and ethnic groups. However, these studies indicate that these students had a better understanding of other religions though they did not believe that they were legitimate forms of expressing truth. These studies indicate that despite the intention of the curriculum to enhance tolerance, that did not happen because the students understood that they were to be tolerant to those who belonged to other religions, yet they

did not believe that tolerance of other religions was the best and probably the right thing to do, because they indicated that some religions were not legitimate ways of expressing truth. It is against the above observations that the phenomenological approach tends to have some limitations.

1.12 Critique of the phenomenological approach in Religious Education

Despite the relative popularity of the phenomenological approach to RE teaching it tends to have limitations (Barnes & Wright, 2006; Thompson, 2004; Hughes, 2003; Cush, 1999; Wright, 1993; Grimmitt, 1987). For example, there are fears in some quarters that this approach is secular and relative in nature, hence it waters down certain important elements in religions. Relativism is mentioned as one of its weaknesses because of the many contradictory claims found in the field of beliefs. In Botswana, the fear has been that if students are introduced to various religions, that might bring about religious conflicts, yet it has not been established that religious conflicts that could degenerate into a full scale war started in classrooms.

Though the approach emphasises *learning about* religion, it is still criticised of indoctrination. For example, Cush (1999) says that the approach has indoctrinating effects because students are made to *know* and *understand* other religions in addition to Christianity which in his view, is not necessary for students to learn. It is difficult to accept Cush's position since *learning about* religion focuses on exposure to a form of knowledge and understanding. He further argues that the approach encourages "universalism that sees all paths as leading to the same goal, rather than into confessional Christianity" (Cush, 1999:143). It is clear that Cush (1999) does not subscribe to a multi-faith approach to RE. In my view, such a position is parochial and runs against the spirit of openness and acceptance especially in liberal democracies and in a liberal form of education.

Most of the proponents of a single- religion type of RE are from a British context and are sympathetic to Christianity whence it is taken that all morality emerges. Wright (1993) a British RE scholar, argues that the phenomenological approach is vague and idealistic, especially when it deals with issues of tolerance and empathy. Nonetheless, Wright does not clarify what the approach has failed to do with regard to tolerance and acceptance.

Furthermore, whatever his argument is, Wright (1993) does not suggest a multi-cultural approach to teaching and learning of Religious Education. However, he argues that RE has to stress that the British society is governed by Christian principles hence the need for students to imbibe Christian values without making choices. He further suggests that there has to be a set of values such as honesty, truthfulness and respect from a particular religious tradition to be learned, and for him this religious tradition has to be Christianity. His position closes out and denies the existence of other religious traditions in Britain, something that runs counter to the ideal of a multi-cultural and a multi-faith society. Most of the proponents of a single faith RE are from a British context and are sympathetic to Christianity whence it is taken that all morality emerges. Wright (1993) further argues that the approach denies religiously committed children the opportunities to "enrich themselves and have a deeper understanding of Christianity. It reduces a religious faith to a mere culture" (Wright, 1993:18). It is not clear what he refers to as "deeper understanding of Christianity and that religions are reduced into a culture". If by deeper understanding he means strengthening and nurturing of faith, and especially Christianity, the public school classroom will definitely not be the right and best place for that activity, because it is the responsibility of religious institutions, communities and families to nurture faith. That religion is reduced into a mere culture may be correct to the extent that from a sociological view, faiths are part of a society's culture. However, RE does not in any way aim to stress the cultural aspect of religions since there could be other subjects on the school curriculum that are meant to solely deal with such an issue.

Arguing from a British context Thompson (2004) recommends the need to openly convert learners to Christianity and to further strengthen the faith of those who are already converted. Her argument runs counter to western liberal ideals and the diversity found especially in Britain. From the same British context, Hughes (2003) says that the phenomenological approach is not neutral because it avoids questions that deal with truth claims. He posits that by taking a neutral stance the approach is taking a position. There are three reasons why his suggestion is inadequate. In the first instance it is difficult to establish the falsity or truth of a truth claim. Secondly, it would be taxing for adolescents to engage in debates about the truth or falsity of various religions. Thirdly, it may not be easy to create instruments that can be used to guide one towards establishing religious truth claims since they are not universally accepted and testable. Hughes (2003) argues that by emphasising the *learning about* religion only, and not *learning from* religion,

students only learn a part and not the whole about religions. Unfortunately, Hughes misses the point by saying that the approach does not include *learning from* RE yet he agrees that it is premised on understanding, knowledge and reflection. The dimension of reflection is the *learning from* religion that he says is missing in the approach. He further argues that the approach can be repetitive and boring to students since it overloads them with its content of the many religions. That students are exposed to various religions is true, but it cannot be readily established that in itself it necessarily leads to boredom.

Horn (2006) a South African scholar argues that the approach trivialises religious truths to opinions because *truth* and *right* (emphasis mine) should be raised as important instead of completely ignoring them as it is now the case. He argues that the approach trivialises religion especially the Christian faith, because it teaches that all religions are equally important and worthy. However, it is not easy to establish how the approach trivialises religious truths because what the approach does is to present to students in the best way possible the different truths claims as the practitioners understand them. The approach does not aim at checking the truth or falsity of a religion. Furthermore, by raising the question of religious truth, one assumes that there are religions that are true and those that are false. He concludes by saying that at primary school level, "children must be educated with confidence in their own religion" (Horn, 2006:33) and according to him *their own religion* has to be Christianity. For him truth is only found in Christianity and that it should stand out instead of emphasising the celebration of unity in diversity as the South African Religion Education curriculum document expects schools to do. While there are several religions each with its truth-claims it becomes difficult to accept that Christianity is the custodian of truth. It is unfortunate that Horn should be arguing along the lines of a "better than" position bearing in mind the history of South Africa that was once marred with the politics of inequality which is still vivid in the minds of many South Africans, especially the Black community. Similarly, Coertzen (2002) also arguing from a South African context, says that Christianity should be given an eminent role over other religions in the curriculum. According to him, freedom of religion is similar to teachers converting or enhancing the faith of the students and as a result it becomes difficult to draw a line between professional academic RE teachers whose aim is to enable students to have knowledge and understanding, on the one hand, and the religious teachers whose aim is to convert and strengthen faith on the other hand.

Barnes and Wright (2006) arguing from a British context say that the multi-faith RE is in some respects not neutral at all because it is as partisan and as uncritical as its predecessor which is Christian confessional RE. They argue that the present RE is another form of confessionalism because essentially, Christian confessionalism gave way to a form of liberal, Protestant confessionalism which is multi-faith in its content and phenomenological in its approach. They also express that this liberal protestant confessionalism "has been conveyed and expressed in different ways through religious education in the 1970s and 1980s chiefly through the phenomenological approach and more recently through some interpretations of spiritual education" (Barnes & Wright, 2006:67). Contemporary RE is liberal Protestantism in nature, hence rules out neutrality and lack of confessionalism. According to Barnes and Wright (2006) liberal Protestantism arose in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when religion was viewed in terms of an "inner subjectivity and commitment." That was the time of the Enlightenment where Reason ruled and where knowledge to God was viewed as inconclusive and intellectually bankrupt. Religion was then situated within the "self in private experience removed from the realm of public knowledge and the realm of the sacred privatised" (Barnes & Wright, 2006:68).

In addition, Barnes and Wright (2006) trace how Schleiermarcher a nineteenth century philosopher cum theologian claimed that religions were agreed as far as religious experience was concerned, which is a fundamental element in religion. They indicate that Schleiermarcher argued that the religious experience could be expressed in different modes, hence making God to be manifest in all "great" religions. The phenomenological approach, according to them, was later followed by British religious educators and notably Ninian Smarts who was articulate in the presentation of the phenomenological approach to religion in the 1970s. Hence, Barnes and Wright (2006:68) point out that, the:

> … phenomenological approach is the means by which the liberal Protestant thesis of unity of religion could be inculcated in the young. … [hence] … modern religious education has posited false oppositions between confessional religious education and phenomenological religious education, religious commitment and neutrality; religious indoctrination and education; and between secular public knowledge and private religious knowledge.

Barnes and Wright (2006) further argue that these false oppositions are a result of liberal Protestant thesis which emerged due to Enlightenment. They object to the view that adherents of different religions have any similar view of God because through their different religious experiences, practitioners can never encounter "the same spiritual object." They further say that:

> … there is virtually no belief common to the religions; it is difference rather than similarity which is more striking. … the different descriptions of the religious object(s) in the various religions should not be regarded as having a common referent; the descriptions are not only different but in particular instances actually conflict with each other; what is asserted by one religion is denied by the other. The case of religious pluralism collapses on the irreducible dissimilarity of the different religions (Barnes & Wright, 2006:71).

They further ask why public schools should be required to convey the liberal Protestant creed that all religious paths lead to God. As for Barnes and Wright (2006) contemporary religious education promotes the interests of a particular religious creed that emphasises the unity of religions. They complain that religious education in publicly funded schools should not be used as a vehicle to promote liberal protestant religious thought. The question then is: What type of RE do they advocate for? They say that:

> … to present the different religions in the classroom as not in competition with each other would be to falsify the self-understanding of most adherents of the main religions and to misrepresent the logic of the different belief systems. Religious education … must respect the right of religious believers and religious traditions to define themselves and not to impose on them the kind of fluid religious identity that follows liberal theological commitments. (Barnes & Wright (2006:72)

They suggest that an alternative form of religious education should be one that acknowledges the existence of a broad range of incompatible religious and secular world-views. Regarding the dissimilarity of religions, they say that if Jesus is a prophet of Allah then he cannot also be God incarnate as understood in the Christian religion. They suggest that religious education has to deal with a plurality of religions and their distinctive interpretations.

While Barnes and Wright (2006) have been eloquent in their critique of the phenomenological approach, they fail to offer a convincing and a practical alternative. They suggest that the RE curriculum has to be diverse and that "no set of beliefs should be excluded from the classroom" (Barnes & Wright, 2006:73). How possible is that, bearing in mind the multiplicity of religious beliefs? One speculation is that it can only be

possible if fewer religions are taught in their distinctiveness, which they refer to as "great" religions. If that is the case, a selection criterion has to be developed since they say that a selection has to be made. It is not clear if religions that are not "great religions" will form the content of RE. It has to be noted that from their argument, the commonly-called "minor" religions are followed and practised by millions of people, like religious traditions found in Africa, North and South America and South East Asia. Barnes and Wright (2006) are of the view that there has to be debate among adherents of different belief systems and world views – how is that going to help in promoting peace, harmony and unity which they acknowledge to be the touchstone of a liberal democracy? For example, religious adherents would as of necessity not need any debate to justify their existence. When they say that Jesus cannot be God-incarnate as well as a prophet of Allah they miss the point that the phenomenological approach deals with what is common to religions and not that religions are necessarily the same. However, each religion is peculiar and that is what this approach stresses – that is the peculiarity within such a framework.

Conclusion

In Chapter 1, I traced the literature on the history of RE in post-independent Botswana – from the Christian based RE, to Religious and Moral Education to the present multi-faith RE curriculum. I also explored the meaning of a multi-faith RE curriculum. Studies conducted on RE in general in different countries were discussed, as well as those particularly on multi-faith RE curriculum in Botswana and elsewhere. Tolerance and diversity which are central to a multi-faith RE curriculum, were discussed in terms of their strengths and weaknesses. Lastly, the strengths and weaknesses of the concept of the phenomenological approach which is used with multi-faith curriculum were discussed.

Chapter 2

The teachers' professional landscape

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter I contend that teachers as the main policy implementers are often ignored on the occasion of curriculum change and that their profession is usually undermined within the education circles and outside of it. I show that teachers have a particular "professional landscape" within which they operate and that due to the nature of their profession, teachers have several identities that in most of the cases do not make teaching in general and RE teaching in particular an enviable profession. I also discuss teachers' autonomy as professionals. The possibility of using critical pedagogy in a multi-faith RE is discussed. I conclude by discussing diversity in the classroom since it is an important aspect in a multi-faith RE curriculum.

2.1 Teachers' professional landscape: a conceptual framework

Since my research focus is on how RE teachers understand and translate the multi-faith RE curriculum into practice, I adopted a conceptual framework that is premised on Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) notion of teachers' *"professional knowledge landscape."* It is through this lens that I explore how RE teachers understand and implement the multi-faith RE curriculum. Literally a landscape refers to all the features of an area that can be seen when looking across. The metaphor of a *landscape* has "a sense of expansiveness and the possibility of being filled with diverse people, things and events in different relationships" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995:4). The teachers' professional knowledge is also rooted in their *multiple identities*. Whilst Clandinin and Connelly concentrate on knowledge, my study goes beyond that, because it includes various factors that are related to the teachers' work. Using Clandinin and Connelly's notion of landscape, I have the opportunity to explore these factors. For example, the teachers' subject, pedagogical and curricular knowledge is a major part of the landscape.

Clandinin and Connelly (1987) explore the various terms and understandings of teachers' personal knowledge. For example, by teachers' understanding they refer to the teachers' "beliefs about a curriculum and students in terms of classroom activities and teachers' learning priorities for children and the connections between the two" (Clandinin and Connelly, 1987:489). They further indicate that in their teaching, teachers have certain principles that guide their interactive behaviour as they teach. They observe that teachers have certain conceptions of the phenomena as they interpret the curriculum, and this mainly involves the way in which they view what they are doing as professionals. They refer to this as the "teachers' professional knowledge," that is, how teachers understand themselves as persons who are involved in teaching and the importance that they attach to teaching. In addition, this professional knowledge involves the teachers' knowledge of students regarding what the students need and what the curriculum requires and expects of them. They further indicate that when teachers teach, they think about their teaching in terms of the various activities involved in teaching. Bolter (1983:298) takes the point further by saying that the teachers' knowledge "arises from the need to comprehend the complexity of a particular context with sufficient accuracy to be able to act efficaciously in it. … [and] … knowledge that works in a classroom involves tacit consensus between the teacher and students about their mutual expectations."

RE teachers, just like other teachers, need to possess some knowledge that is linked to their classroom teaching. According to Shulman (1986, 2004), teachers need to possess three categories of knowledge; *subject matter or content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and curricular knowledge.* According to him, these categories of knowledge form part of their professional landscape. For example, regarding the *subject matter* or *content knowledge*, the RE teacher has to be in a position to tell what the subject entails. Shulman (1986, 2004) points out that a teacher's knowledge of the subject matter is important because it is a pre-requisite for teaching since they must have adequate subject or content knowledge in order to make what they teach comprehensible to students. Furthermore, teachers need to be in a position to understand students in terms of their misconceptions in learning the content of the subject. When in class, teachers make decisions, interpret situations and create solutions to whatever classroom problems that might arise at that particular time. On *pedagogical content knowledge*, Shulman (1986) says that it involves the way a teacher presents the subject matter to the students. For example, RE teachers who teach a multi-faith RE curriculum need to be conversant with the concept of religion in order to easily teach the different religions. The third form of

professional knowledge is the *curricular knowledge* which involves the teachers'
understanding of how a particular subject has been structured for teaching, as well as the
relevant teaching resources associated with it. Hudson (2002) also emphasises the
importance of content and pedagogical knowledge. He indicates that if teachers have
adequate content knowledge of the subject, they will be able to construct new
explanations and activities for students, and also be able to ask questions of both a lower
and a high cognitive order. The three forms of teachers' professional knowledge are
relevant to my study since it seeks to find out how teachers interpret the multi-faith RE
curriculum. Grossman (1995) takes the point further on teachers' professional knowledge
and divides it into six domains or categories namely; (a) content knowledge, (b)
knowledge of learners and learning, (c) knowledge of general pedagogy, (d) knowledge
of curriculum, (e) knowledge of context and (f) knowledge of self. According to him
content knowledge includes both the subject matter knowledge and pedagogical
knowledge which Shulman (1986) refers to as "pedagogical content knowledge". By
knowledge of learners and learning he refers to the teachers' repertoire of knowledge in
terms of educational learning theories, students' ethnicity, gender, and their socio-
economic status.

Grossman (1995) says that *pedagogical general knowledge* refers to the teachers'
knowledge of the classroom in terms of how they organise and manage their class and
how they apply some of the general methods of teaching. By *curriculum knowledge* he
refers to the knowledge of the curriculum in terms of how it has been developed and
interpreted in the different grade levels. This is particularly relevant to my study which
seeks to unearth the way in which teachers interpret the multi-faith RE curriculum. The
teachers' knowledge of context refers to the teachers' knowledge of the various work
situations and settings which includes the physical as well as the social setup in the
school. For example, how do physical structures and social relations influence the
teaching and learning of the multi-faith RE curriculum? Knowledge of context also
includes the teachers' knowledge of the students, of their families and of the local
community. To what extent do RE teachers know the background of their students?
Finally, the teachers' *knowledge of self* refers to the teachers' knowledge of their personal
values, dispositions, strengths and weaknesses. It also involves the teachers' educational
philosophy, and their purposes for teaching. For example; how does multi-faith RE
teaching affect teachers as individuals? What are the personal values, strengths and
weaknesses of RE teachers? What does the multi-faith curriculum mean to them as

persons?   What do they think is the effect of the multi-faith RE on their students? Furthermore, related to the teachers' professional knowledge are their beliefs.

Teachers' knowledge plays an important part in shaping the enacted curriculum and can also shape the curriculum through their own knowledge. Curriculum reform requires that there be emphasis on teachers' beliefs when it comes to professional development programmes. Keys (2007:43) says that "these teacher beliefs are founded in the teachers' own personal value system which in turn has been shaped and reinforced through personal experience as a student, formal training, teaching experience and family upbringing". He further says that the "teachers' knowledge is the body of knowledge that comprises teachers' beliefs, teachers' craft knowledge, teachers' pedagogical knowledge and teachers' practical knowledge". He indicates that there is the *intended curriculum* which is filtered through the teachers' knowledge producing the *enacted curriculum*. According to him, curriculum implementation goes through a metamorphosis, and while it does so, it shapes the curriculum because as the intended curriculum is processed through the teachers' knowledge, it is also re-shaped into practical or enacted curriculum. As it does so, the intended curriculum loses its original mandated form. This happens because the teachers' knowledge filters the intended curriculum, and by so doing, gives it a new meaning.

Keys (2007) observes that on an occasion of curriculum effort, teachers' entrenched beliefs impact on the intended curriculum, resulting in either the curriculum being accepted, modified or rejected. This process could be seen in the teachers' techniques and strategies in the classroom. Entrenched beliefs influence the interpretation of the curriculum and these beliefs are the ones that teachers would have formed over a period of time as professionals and in some cases the beliefs go as far back as when teachers were still students in high school. Keys (2007), says that there are also manifested beliefs which are a translation into action of the entrenched beliefs, and are shown in the teachers' classroom techniques and strategies. Timperely & Parr (2005) say that failure in implementation usually occurs because of the contradiction between the proposed change and the existing norms, belief systems and practices while the success in implementation depends largely on how change fits into the teachers' existing craft knowledge. That is why Zembylas (2005) says that the teachers' knowledge is found in their values, beliefs and deep convictions found in their social contexts.

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Of significance is the observation made by Brown and McIntyre (1993) that through time in the field, teachers acquire substantial practical knowledge about teaching through their classroom experience rather than their formal training. It is possible to describe the classroom practices of teachers but that is not the same as describing what these teachers know. For example, teachers possess knowledge that they acquired in their training, in classroom teaching and from other experiences. This "knowledge" influences how teachers relate to their students in the classroom as they engage students in their learning. In terms of this study, teachers' teaching of RE would naturally be influenced by their environment. Calderhead (1984:96) reveals that despite the different forms of knowledge that teachers could have acquired in different places, schools have ethos or traditions that at times "wash out" what teachers learnt at training institutions. However, in their interactions within the school environment and the broader community, teachers are continually reshaped in their work.

It is important to note that the social, political, economic and school context influences what teachers do and how they are viewed by other related parties. For example, Wong and Wong, (2002) contend that teachers' knowledge is produced, circulated and shared and is a product of everyday practices which are shaped by culturally contingent relations of power and authority. They further observe that it is true that most of the teachers' work takes place in and outside the classroom. For example, a teacher may involve other people such as colleagues, parents, community members, academics, employers and even politicians. The knowledge and experiences of the teachers are affected as they interact with these people. Of importance to note is that the expectations of the people about teachers are varied hence making it difficult for teachers to satisfy the expectations of all the different people. MacLaughlin (1998) and Calderhead (1984) note that the teachers' practices are largely determined by the context in which they work. MacLaughlin (1998) contends that it is difficult for policy to change existing teachers' practices if the teachers' context, especially at school level is not considered. For example, teachers in a particular geographical location may be eager to embrace change, yet they may not be given enough support in their efforts, hence leading to failure in implementation. Success in innovation depends on the commitment of schools and teachers to make it work, but if the commitment is lacking, an innovation is likely to head for failure (Schwartz, 2006).

Drake, Spillane and Hufferd-Ackles (2001:1) argue that for a "reform vision to be realised in classroom practice, a considerable amount of teacher change and teacher learning must take place" which is not always easy. It is therefore important that when introducing a new curriculum there has to be emphasis on educating the teachers in terms of how they understand, interpret and apply themselves. "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" (Schwartz, 2006:449). Teachers work in complex environments that do not follow a linear progression that can easily be determined. What happens in the classroom has multiple variables that cannot realistically be related to a teacher's manual. Teacher change and teacher learning becomes difficult because a new curriculum normally demands a radical shift since it will have a new content and pedagogy. Furthermore, a new curriculum demands from teachers that they reject their previous practices and beliefs, which is not easy. When teachers decide to change their practices and beliefs as expected by a new curriculum, they simultaneously reform even their identities as learners and as teachers. This learning and change of identity by teachers largely depends on schools' organisational structures and norms which teachers operate under. However, it is significant to note that some arrangements offer opportunities for teachers to learn and to revise their practices while other environments can constrain the teachers' readiness to learn and to change. What teachers learn and how they learn is largely influenced by their identities, that is "their sense of self as well as their knowledge and beliefs, dispositions, interests and orientation toward work and change" (Drake, Spillane & Hufferd-Ackles, 2001:2).

The curriculum that is enacted in classrooms normally differs from the one mandated by administrators and curriculum developers. Classroom realities tend not to be what curriculum developers envisage, hence teachers at times sense this gap between what the curriculum demands of them and what the curriculum suggests. Schwartz (2006) suggests that curriculum developers need to be clear with regard to how they formulate the curriculum by being aware of the two distinct target groups, that is, teachers and students who are curriculum users and curriculum receivers respectively. He warns that if curriculum developers are not clear regarding what teachers should do, and also if they disregard the teachers' environment, teachers are likely to interpret and apply the curriculum in the way in which they themselves find suitable under their circumstances. This tends to be the case because teachers cannot afford to work with endless theories provided by curriculum developers because their work is essentially practical. The

practical world of teachers is often misunderstood by curriculum developers who may be working on "the tidy world of theories" (Anderson, 1983:6). The teachers' survival kit is always to try to find a way to fit in the missing parts in their attempt to give the curriculum some meaning. Furthermore, it is possible that teachers may not accept the authority of curriculum developers by faithfully following their suggestions. "What happens in the learning experience is an outcome of the original, creative, thinking-on-your-feet efforts of the teacher – which often lead the class in directions far away from the anticipated goals of the curriculum writers" (Schwartz, 2006:450). Both the curriculum developers and the teachers are frustrated by the lack of understanding of each other, for example, the curriculum developers are frustrated by the teachers' inability to follow the curriculum to the letter while the teachers on the other hand, are frustrated by the curriculum developers' inability to be realistic and to understand the teachers' context. That is why in terms of policy change, some parts might be "rejected, selected out, ignored, [and] deliberately misunderstood by the implementers" (Bowe & Ball, 1992:21). The contexts of policy makers and implementers tend to be remarkably different from each other.

It has to be noted that all the contests revolve around power as the curriculum developers and implementers attempt to understand each other. That is why Bowe and Ball (1992:23) suggest that this struggle for power should not always be seen as a problem because it is through this contestation that "ideas are developed and tested". Even though there are contestations, the teachers' professional status has to be acknowledged, especially by the policy makers. In their anxiety for reform, policy makers at times fail to recognise the complex context under which teachers work, especially the daily demands on teachers that are made by their own profession, since "the role of the teacher is broad and diffuse and often ambiguous" (Bowe & Ball, 1992:11). Policy makers normally ignore the diverse world of teachers. Notwithstanding the diverse landscape under which teachers work, very little of the available literature focuses explicitly on the classroom practices of RE teachers. That is why Schwartz (2006) advises that for teachers to interpret the curriculum to the satisfaction of curriculum developers, they need to be empowered through education so that they can apply multiple ways in their interpretation of a curriculum. Two questions can be asked in relation to the introduction of the new multi-faith RE curriculum in Botswana: Were the voices of RE teachers listened to when the multi-faith RE curriculum was introduced? Was the context conducive for RE teachers to internalise the new curriculum?

In their efforts to translate policy into practice, teachers may not be supported by their superiors such as school administrators and education officials. If this happens, it could lead to inadequacy in implementation (Jankie, 2001). This could be so because implementers at each level interpret a policy reform in their own way. According to MacLaughlin (1998), what matters most in policy implementation is how it is interpreted at local level, that is, at the level of the teacher within a school. However, little is known about what happens in Botswana's multi-faith RE classes in different schools. Sloan (2006) notes that teachers do not usually experience and respond to a curriculum change in a predictable mechanistic and even in unidimensional ways. The way teachers respond to new policies is complex and they are usually uncertain as what to do. Before using a new curriculum, teachers need to make sense of it in relation to their teaching context, that is, both the teaching and learning practices. Drake and Sheri (2006) note that to bring about curricula change both student learning and teacher needs should be supported.

2.2 Involving teachers on the occasion of a reform

Bowe and Ball (1992) observe that for an effective education policy implementation, government has to rely on the teachers' input because at times teachers resent a reform if they are not fully involved. In a study conducted by Datnow (2002:223) on teachers' involvement in curriculum reform, she reports that "when reform elements conflicted or were unclear, educators sometimes resisted these elements outright or they made adaptations. Most often educators moulded the reforms in ways that made sense with their professional knowledge". The view is taken further by Zembylas and Barker (2007:238) who reveal that "when teachers resist reform efforts, it is often because it threatens their self-image and their emotional bonds with students and colleagues by over-loading the curriculum and intensifying teachers' work and control from outside". Different teachers respond to curriculum reform in various ways because some will be happy about it and hence support and sustain it, while others will have a sense of fear, frustration and loss of image and power and will as a result resist its implementation. Teachers emotionally respond to a curriculum in terms of their interpretation, their perceptions and evaluation of the changing environment (Zembylas & Barker, 2007). Similarly, Keys (2007) notes that on an occasion of reform, "teachers will either respond to imposed curriculum change by embracing change, resisting and ignoring change or modifying the curriculum change" because their belief systems are being challenged.

Bowe and Ball (1992) contend that little attention has been paid to the potential power of teachers as policy implementers on the occasion of an education reform. Therefore, it can be concluded that the top down model commonly adopted by governments on an occasion of reform, including Botswana does not foster effective implementation. Furthermore, Bowe and Ball (1992 observe that education reform should not be understood as linear because it is subject to interpretation by the implementers, and this interpretation might be different from policy intentions. They note that implementers might interpret a policy according to their own context, their "own understanding, desires, values and purposes and in relation to the means available to them and the ways of working they prefer" (Bowe & Ball, 1992:21).

Ball (1994) asserts that at times policies do not enumerate what has to be done but they create circumstances that make it easier for those implementing change to make decisions. This could have been the case with RE curriculum because the policy was first interpreted by curriculum developers and secondly by RE teachers. Wellington (1994:12) says that in such a situation, teachers usually interpret the curriculum in a way that is practical, for example, what they think is the best way of teaching creatively, clearly and with vigour. In their interpretation of the RNPE and with regard to the RE, the task force created a form of RE where students were to be taught various religions so that they could be tolerant of those who were different from them. With the new RE, teachers were expected to increase the students' understanding of religion as an area of study, because it is viewed as having an important value in the lives of the students in terms of how they relate with other people.

In her study, Sepotlo (2004) suggests that it was taken for granted that RE teachers in Botswana knew what they were to do with the new multi-faith RE curriculum. Similarly, Stodsky (1999) notes that it tends to be taken for granted that teachers possess some content and pedagogical knowledge, and that they are always aware of classroom and social diversity. It is for this reason that teachers are expected to use this assumed knowledge to teach whatever curriculum is introduced. By so doing, teachers are usually left on their own without help from anyone and it is when teachers are left on their own that they decide and create what they think will work in their classrooms. For example, the RNPE (Botswana Government, 1994:16) indicates that when the reform was effected, teachers were to be sensitised to "cultural differences" yet teachers in general and RE

teachers in particular were not equipped with that knowledge and skills. Drake and Sherin (2006:154) say that "change does not occur simply because there are curriculum materials in the classroom ... Instead, changes in teachers' instructional practices are the result of particular interactions between teachers and curricular materials around specific subject matter and pedagogical content." It is therefore important to involve teachers on issues that they are expected to implement.

It is important to note that, in instances where the curriculum reform does not fit within their "ideologies of teaching and learning" teachers adapt and modify it to their own needs (Datnow, 2002:223). In their studies, Zembylas and Barker (2007) conclude that teachers resist reforms when the rhetoric of change does not match the reality of what happens in their everyday experiences. That could be the reason why Datnow (2002) suggests that on an occasion of curriculum reform, teachers must be approached as assets and collaborators, not as obstacles or passive implementers of a reform. Hargreaves (2002) further by points out that embracing reform involves a form of loss, because it means abandoning old routines and attachments in order to acquire new ones. That is why when a curriculum change is unrealistic and unclear to teachers, they tend to be overwhelmed since it makes them lose their identity while a lot is required from them all at once. That is why Zembylas and Barker (2007) conclude that in such a situation, change effort for some teachers can invoke a sense of powerlessness and vulnerability. For example some teachers will adopt inadequate coping practices such as retreating, ignoring it or doing what will make them feel comfortable when implementing a new curriculum. Levin (2004) says that teachers are settled in a set of routines and relationships and are inevitably stable in the environment and to bring about change would inevitably destabilise what is normal. To suggest that teachers should change is to suggest that their traditions and habits, expectations, and images be immediately modified, something that cannot easily be attained.

Levin (2004) observes that in most cases, reform rests on the illusion that it is only the skills that need to be changed forgetting that attitudes and how individuals operate in a given setting is something that matters the most. He is of the view that skills can easily be taught to people if they are convinced of the relevance of change. However, if teachers are not convinced of a reform effort, they are likely not to direct their efforts towards any form of change by not supporting it, because they will feel that they do not own it. Levin (2004:34) further reveals that, since teachers belong to schools that have certain cultures,

they tend to resist any change that is premised on a different set of beliefs," and concludes by noting that "when reforms are forced on schools that are not receptive, the school often has more influence in modifying the reform than the reform has in modifying the school." He further reveals that reform may succeed in one school and fail in another school in the neighbourhood depending on whether the school welcomes the reform or not. Reform is therefore not a smooth linear process because it is characterised by "conflict, unpredictability, resistance and some loss of self-image" (Zembylas & Barker, 2007:235).

Those involved in reform will usually attempt to make sense out of the whole process, hence rendering reform a fundamentally emotional laden process. Change is naturally emotionally laden hence it may create a number of potentially stressful conditions such as uncertainties, ambiguities and roles in the school context, since it might invoke stress, loss, anxiety, conflict and strain. That is why Oplatka (2003:26) says that change especially one that does not match people's realities, threatens their sense of competence, and hampers their "ability to perform their jobs confidently and successfully, making them feel inadequate and insecure." Sense-making is a process that is strongly influenced by the social and professional context in which teachers work (Timperely & Parr, 2005). There is meaning-making as teachers implement a curriculum reform and as they attempt to make sense out of it and then interpreting that experience in order to guide their classroom practices. This is the case because teachers are the touchstone through which to better understand the dynamics involved in curriculum change. The policy makers will be unsettled when they reckon the extent to which teachers could be involved and the depth of their expert knowledge on policy formulation.

On an occasion of change, new skills and behaviours will be required and expected, while the existing individuals' skills and knowledge may become inadequate or invalid. However, teachers tend to know best what to do when they are coerced into implementing a curriculum reform. In such situations, their space is diminished due to the urgency of new demands, especially where reform efforts will have excluded them. Zembylas and Barker (2007) observe that there is ample evidence that a reform effort is likely to succeed where teachers have a sense of ownership of innovation. There tends to be contestation in reform largely because those involved in it, such as teachers, confront it from their own context contrary to the expectations of policy makers.

At times, policy makers attempt to present a curriculum as if it is value free, uncontested and unproblematic which is not the case (Sugrue, 2004). Hoffman, Alpert and Schenell (2007:304) note that "curricular response to social change is not uniform and reflects competing doctrines and practices that tend to differ from one another as much as from the status quo that they seek to replace." An example is the multi-faith RE in Botswana, where it is taken for granted that it will easily be accepted by everyone concerned. Are teachers ready for this change? What understanding do RE teachers have about curriculum change?

Fullan (1991) contends that central to curriculum change is the meaning-making that teachers attach to a reform, that is, how they understand change and how it can best be accomplished. He further stresses that for change to happen, teachers have to "understand themselves and be understood by others" (Fullan, 1991:117). Orozco-Gomez (2006) uses the term "innovation" instead of reform or change and observes that reform is always equated with improvement. He argues that an innovation can sometimes be considered as eternally desirable and that it is always assumed that it has to be adopted by groups and individuals without questioning its legitimacy or even its desirability. This could be one reason why curriculum reformers in their excitement to usher in curriculum change, in most cases forget the implementers who are teachers because in their minds reform has to be legitimate and desirable. The understanding being that since it is a form of change, it is likely to be desired by all. In most cases change is imposed on teachers rather than viewing teachers as co-owners of change. On an occasion of a reform, the biggest challenge has to be how it could be made socially and culturally relevant to stakeholders. A similar observation is made by Zembylas and Barker (2007) who note that reform is usually viewed as necessarily a rational and mechanistic process. While the rational is emphasised, its complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty is barely acknowledged. When rationality is emphasised, the emotions of teachers in responding to change is usually downplayed if not completely ignored. Change initiators usually adopt a technological perspective where teaching is viewed as only knowledge which can be improved reasonably readily. On the contrary, teaching is a craft that is based on experience and tacit knowledge that could have been acquired over a period of time in particular contexts.

Zembylas and Barker (2007) call for the social, emotional, and material support of teachers on an occasion of curriculum reform. They observe that on an occasion of reform, it is always assumed that teachers will respond positively to it by behaving and teaching in the manner in which it is expected. That various teachers respond emotionally different to reform is rarely considered, because it is usually taken that the teachers' behaviours and emotions are uniform. Change initiators should be aware that change is neither a linear nor is it a rational process, hence they have to listen to the voices of change agents who in this case are teachers. While this is the case, at times the teacher training institutions do not provide teachers with knowledge and skills outside the subject that they teach hence "crippling" the teachers. Teachers have to be understood as being more than "deliverers" of a curriculum, and should be involved in the shaping, interpreting and adapting of a curriculum. In a reform context, teachers experience a new meaning and new learning about a subject. As a matter of fact, curriculum issues such as teachers' readiness and their understanding of the curriculum, have no single answer and that is why change agents who are apparently teachers in this regard have to be involved (Granville, 2004) and in terms of this study these are RE teachers. This can only happen, if teachers are aware of who they are especially with regard to the views and beliefs they could be holding about the curriculum. Furthermore, the way teachers understand themselves as professionals and as individuals in relation to the demands of a curriculum has pedagogical implications.

Goodson (2004:25) observes that when there is a reform effort, at times teachers barely understand their role as the change agents, hence experience a "crisis of positionality." In such an instance, teachers as change agents will not initiate change but will be expected to respond to change from outside and would not know how to respond to change, since they would have been left out of the decision making machinery. He further notes that since educational change would not have been initiated and defined by the change agents, they usually view the reform effort as alien, hence they may not welcome it. In such cases, teachers experience a crisis of positionality, that is, they start to question who they are and the role that they play in curriculum change. As a result, teachers may become resistant and reluctant to change. According to Goodson (2004), reforms have to be sensitive to change agents as well as their context, if change is to be sustained.

In an externally driven curriculum, teachers become disempowered because in most cases their context is ignored. Datnow (2002) advises that reform efforts need to be grounded in an understanding of teachers' context. and that if teachers cannot be allowed to initiate change, they will in turn do that to their students by not allowing them to be creative, and be free critical thinkers (Goodson, 2004). An example, is where RE teachers may not allow students to bring along to the learning environment their personal experiences and knowledge. That teachers are not allowed to contribute in curriculum reform may degenerate into a spiral of lack of freedom that may hinder critical thinking. That could be one reason why despite the many reforms in education, in different parts of the world there has been failure to enhance individual growth and development as well as promote social transformation because teachers are not part of the reform. If teachers cannot be allowed to initiate change, but are only expected to imbibe what is given to them, they may internalise that attitude and relate to their students in a similar manner, that is, where they will also not allow their students to be co-creators of knowledge in a classroom setting. Curriculum reformers largely expect teachers to conform to what they will have created instead of co-creating with them so that they become co-owners of the curriculum.

Power plays an important part in curriculum reform and that is why teachers are in many cases not involved due to their assumed lack of expertise that renders them powerless. Of significance is the observation made by Sugrue (2004b:169) that curriculum reform has to be understood within the context where there is power relations and politics because, "it is necessary to identify the key values, beliefs, knowledge and power positions that shape and influence education policies and practice." He further notes that the boundaries between the school and the community is permeable, because what happens outside the classroom and the socio-cultural and economic environment have considerable influence on what takes place in the classroom. As a result, teaching and learning that occur in classrooms are influenced by external forces and that is why the RE teachers' classroom practices will be affected by factors outside their classrooms, yet policy makers usually ignore the teachers' social conditions.

It is important to note that curriculum development and implementation tends to be a war zone, full of conflicts between various stakeholders who have different values and interests. That is why different groups of stakeholders will often blame each other for failure of an educational reform. This leads van der Akker (2003:7) to conclude that:

> Curriculum reform efforts are characterised by overly big innovation ambitions [especially by politicians] within unrealistically short time lines with very limited investment in people, especially teachers … [and] timely and authentic involvement of all stakeholders is often neglected.

In an educational reform, the social context has to always be borne in mind because teachers and learners have their own curriculum realities as opposed to intended curriculum change, and teachers are inevitably a key to curriculum reform especially in terms of implementation. Teachers need to be listened to when it comes to curriculum matters instead of them depending on the decisions, plans and knowledge from "elite" sources that are usually located outside the school setting, such as, from academic researchers. Reform may become a problem when teachers are not fully involved when a change is initiated because they are likely not to fully adopt the suggested ideas into their classroom practices. Walker and Burton (1987) observe that teachers are seldom part of the educational planning process of a reform, yet they are the main implementers hence they become overwhelmed by what they have not been involved in. Since teachers know what happens in the classroom, they are better placed to know what works in there since they interact with students regularly. When policy makers compromise the status of teachers, by not involving them, in curriculum reform, they inadvertently compromise its implementation.

Grimmitt (2000) laments that on an occasion of curriculum reform, RE teachers often find it extremely difficult to translate RE approaches into classroom practice, because they are always coerced into adopting them without adequate pedagogical content knowledge being suggested to them. Similarly, in her study in Botswana senior secondary schools, focusing on curriculum implementation, Jankie (2001) concluded that education policy makers are, on the whole, and in most cases long on expectation and short in helping teachers to implement policies. This supports the assertion made by Grimmitt (2000:21) that "there has been very little discussion between religious educators and researchers about the theoretical basis upon which pedagogies can and should be devised, developed and evaluated in Religious Education".

Furthermore, Brown and McIntyre (1993:14) point out that, generally, on an occasion of curriculum reform, teachers are seldom asked to "articulate and elaborate on what they do in their ordinary, everyday teaching." They suggest that little may be known about teachers' pedagogical knowledge, and this lack of knowledge of teachers' practices may be due to the multi-dimensional nature of their work that renders them to have multiple identities.

Curriculum change is realised in classrooms which are diverse and have specific historical contexts. That is why Airasian (1995) says that teachers must learn about their students' unique strengths and weaknesses in order to organise their students into learning societies that are largely characterised by communication, order, and common goals. Furthermore, curriculum decisions that teachers take involve the appropriateness of the learning and teaching materials, objectives and other related activities in terms of their relevance and adequacy when presented to students (Airasian, 1995). As teachers interpret and apply the curriculum they face several constraints in terms of how they can create lively and productive classrooms. It is also important to note that teachers are accountable as professionals about what happens in their classrooms. Students on the other hand have both an individual and collective responsibility by being committed to activities that can lead to learning" (Elstad, 2006).

It is significant to note that teachers have some degree of influence regarding what goes on inside their classrooms. This shows that teachers matter most when it comes to what happens in the classrooms. Classroom teaching practices can affect the students' academic performance as shown by Wenglinsky (2002) in his study on performance of some schools in the USA. Wenglinsky (2002:3) says that teachers' classroom practices and the social background of the students. This leads one to conclude that micro-contexts such as the schools do matter, especially how teachers teach in their classrooms. "Decisions that teachers make about classroom practices can either greatly facilitate student learning or serve as an obstacle to it" (Wenglinsky, 2002:6). This is an indication that teachers have considerable influence in their classroom because they are situational decision makers. In the course of their work "competent teachers make an amazing number of decisions based on predictions about the probable effect of their actions on students' task accomplishment" (Bolter, 1983:294). Pugach (2006:2) observes that teachers may not possess any power, control and influence outside their school, but will certainly have a great deal of control and influence in their own classrooms, because

teachers "make deliberate choices about the kind of classroom they will create and the kind of experience their students will have". Since they are important stakeholders in education, and in reform in particular teachers need to be given the opportunity to contribute to reform since they are professionals in their own right, because they are guided by their expert knowledge, experience and context.

2.3 Teachers' autonomy and their multiple identities

Teachers live in different worlds and have multiple identities as they go about their business of teaching. There tends to be no linear way of knowing and understanding the teachers' world of work. Kotter (1997:3) observes that as human beings, teachers can be identified according to their "gender, political affiliation, socio-economic class, marital status, sexual orientation, ethnic background, religious affiliation and even age" and that renders their identities to be multiple and complex. Anderson (1995) further notes that teachers have lives inside and outside schools and their classrooms, which impact on their professional work. RE teachers will also naturally identify and can be identified with some of these multiple identities. Zembylas (2005:468) notes that teachers "merge their sense of personal and professional identity. They invest in the values that they believe their teaching represents. Consequently, their teaching and their classroom become the main sources for their self-esteem and fulfillment as well as their vulnerability." This is related to the conclusion that Clandinin and Connelly (1995) reached in relation to teachers' professional knowledge that there is unease when teachers move in and out of the classroom, because whatever teachers do is influenced by the professional knowledge of their landscape as well as the influence of the micro contexts in which they operate. For example, teachers bring to their work a diversity of experiences which are determined and influenced by their professional knowledge. Furthermore, due to their multiple identities, teaching can be a wrenching process as the teachers struggle with their teaching and learning context that is coupled by their own subjectivities (Jackson, 2001).

Teachers are expected to have the well-being of their students close to their hearts, this includes the full knowledge that individual students are unique and are influenced by their socio-economic and cultural circumstances (Pugach, 2006). At times the work environment does not allow teachers to analyse their teaching, in terms of what they are doing and why they are doing it because more often than not the environment, stifles their

voice (Innovations, 2007). Furthermore, teachers rarely reflect on their own practices yet such a practice could be helpful since that is a form of learning of their own teaching. By reflecting on their practices, teachers could refine their teaching practices. However, it is pertinent to understand teachers from their own perspective by being aware that their world is multi-dimensional and is different from that of the curriculum developers (Kotter, 1997). For example, what matters most to teachers are their students, as MacLaughlin's (1998) study in the USA shows that when teachers were asked to talk about their professional lives, they instead talked about what their students were capable or incapable of doing. The students were their main point of reference and even the reason for their professional existence. In a similar study, Brown and McIntyre (1993) report that when teachers were asked about their teaching, they talked about what their students were doing and not about themselves because they are almost always judged by the performance or the good grades of their students. It is interesting to note that teachers live under the shadow of their students. Their professional lives then become intricately intertwined with their students' performance. Involving teachers on an occasion of reform could be one way of empowering teachers and making them have an identity that is separate from those of their students. If they are the architects of a reform effort they are likely to have a sense of assertiveness, which tends to be presently lacking in many instances. It is important to unearth why teachers do not to talk about themselves even though they know what they can say about themselves. One major way that could help teachers to open up is to fully involve them each time there is an educational reform. Of significance too is the teachers' choice of what to teach and how they teach it, which gives them the opportunity to interpret the curriculum the way they deem fit. To some extent, this can be interpreted as teachers' power and authority. Beyers (1998) says that unlike other professions, the teachers' influence can have an impact on the lives of their students.

2.4 Teachers' professional status

It is important to note the observation made by Hargreaves (2003:4) that due to the multi-dimensional and ambiguous nature of teaching, it tends not to be a fully fledged profession and that it has remained and confined to what he describes as "belonging to a pre-professional age" that is, a profession that has not yet matured to a full status. Furthermore, at times the teachers' professional status and judgement is questioned and their expert knowledge is subject to public scrutiny with regard to what and how they

teach as well as their overall character. Wotherspoon (2004:124) concludes that teaching is a"contradictory occupation." Similarly, Ball (1994) argues that while teachers are highly regarded as professionals like doctors or lawyers they tend not to have the autonomy and authority as well as status that is accorded these other professionals. Though teachers are experts in their own right, their performance tends to be always under scrutiny, something that is rare in other professions. For example, teachers are subordinate to principals and other senior administrators in educational hierarchies, hence making their authority and autonomy to be subject to scrutiny by those in higher echelons of education including even society as a whole. Similarly, Calderhead (1984) observes that the teachers' autonomy to determine what takes place in the classroom is limited though they are held responsible for whatever happens in their classrooms. For example, teachers are expected to conform to school policies and practices which might frequently "reflect external influences and constraints and be at odds with their preferred practice" (Calderhead, 1984:91). According to Falk and Drayton (2004) teachers experience the most intense conflicts within the school especially the classroom, which although it is the smallest unit spatially, it is the place where a lot of events take place. It is in the classroom where teachers are continually reminded of what the Education Officers, parents and the community expects of them.

At times teachers have little choice on what and how to teach because they are subject to the whims of politicians, administrators and even parents. They also tend to have little control, for example, over how the school principal decides how to run the school, hence a teacher can be what Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford (2003:33) refer to as being "a victim of a head-teacher's ideology of education". Crowther (2002) notes that at times principals stand on the way as teachers attempt to implement a curriculum reform. This is an unfortunate situation since teachers have to be subordinate to their principals, because when they join a school, they enter into a contractual agreement in which they promise to obey commands, and that they will automatically accept the authority of their superiors (Crowther, 2002). Davies (2004) says that at times administrators use their powers and position to frighten, harass and intimidate teachers. For example, administrators may want teachers to implement techniques that have never been used before in the classroom. She further says that administrators can be incredibly rude, saucy and insolent hence can easily make the school workplace a hostile environment for a teacher, since they do not appreciate the teachers' efforts. When school administrators behave in this manner, they do not threaten the autonomy of the teachers because they largely disrespect the teachers'

professional status. She further observes that at times, administrators sorely criticise teachers and barely acknowledge their efforts. Davies (2004) says that both the teachers' superiors or administrators and society rarely appreciate the teachers' efforts largely because they view the teachers' work as effortless. She notes that even though that is the situation, by all accounts teaching is one of the jobs that can emotionally, mentally and physically drain a person's energy. According to Davies (2004), teachers are "besieged" from all sides – school administrators, parents and even politicians because all these people do not think that teachers work hard enough. Even though teachers are always held in low esteem, they are always held responsible for problems in society. Davies (2004) observes that of every profession one can think of, it is always the teachers that are publicly humiliated, made spectacle of, and condemned for the declining standards in schools. Even though that is the case, teachers are always expected to be the epitome of virtue so that their very presence will awe their students so that they become respectful to everyone and especially to those in authority (Davies, 2004).

Even though a lot is expected from teachers, they may not have control over the schools' physical structures, that is, how classrooms are structured. Physical structures may have an impact on how teachers want to organise their classes in relation to teaching and learning activities. Similarly, is when education is expected to be learner-centred on the one hand, whilst on the other, teachers are seen as "guardians of cultural knowledge, traditions and religious beliefs where teachers transmit knowledge instead of being in dialogue with students" which in essence is a contradiction (Thomas, 2000:241). All these factors have a bearing on the teachers' professional landscape which can either empower or restrain them in terms of translating policy into practice. Despite this, a lot is still expected from teachers such as responding to all human deficiencies including developing tolerance among children whose parents may have been divided by religious, ethnic conflicts or dysfunctional families. That is why Sugrue (2004b) advises that there is need to recognise that teachers have their own views and subjectivities which form the heart of the educational enterprise, and which naturally forms an integral part of their professional landscape.

Olson (1983) says that people outside the school environment such as curriculum innovators constantly seek to influence what goes on inside classrooms yet they have limited knowledge about that context. The problem arises partly because curriculum writers at times use difficult ideas and terms which teachers may not have been exposed

to hence find them difficult to understand. The communication problem subsequently leads to lack or failure of implementation. Decisions that teachers make are practical, immediate, and involve particular teachers and particular students in particular contexts.

When studying curriculum change in Ghana, Osei, (2007:158) observed that on the occasion of change, the existing culture did not allow teachers to become autonomous in curriculum implementation hence teachers become uninterested "because … reform … [does] … not view them as potentially influential." In such a situation the education system tends not to be ready to empower teachers. In fact it will be a remote fact that teachers would be allowed to be autonomous, if in the first instance they were not acknowledged as legitimate professionals who can contribute to change. Teachers do not have full autonomy to determine the type of curriculum, hence if the curriculum is unpopular they may choose to accommodate it, resist or create its alternatives in a curriculum that would have been initially determined by others. Furthermore, the knowledge that is included in the curriculum or is excluded from it may legitimate or challenge their existing power. In most cases, the knowledge found in the curriculum legitimates the existing powers. Sugrue (2004:203b) notes that on an occasion of curriculum change there are various forces at work and that the education system is usually: "poorly positioned to monitor the process of implementation, provide focused professional support for teachers as they struggle with new curricular and pedagogical realities." He further notes that there can be lack of coherence between the intentions of a curriculum and other areas in the education systems. When other stakeholders do not acknowledge the teachers' expertise they make teachers to feel uncertain about themselves and their work.

In summary, the landscape in which teachers work puts them under pressure because at times society craves for higher standards in education hence subjecting teachers to perpetual attacks on any educational failures, and by so doing, society erodes the autonomy and the professional judgment of teachers (Hargreaves, 2003). Furthermore, teachers are usually viewed in terms of how they implement policy intentions and not how they were initially involved. They are at the same time expected to adapt easily to changing circumstances whenever there is an educational reform (Whitehead, 1991). If change fails, teachers will be blamed mainly because curriculum reformers may know very little about the teachers' professional landscape or they may have deliberately ignored their expertise (Lieberman & Miller, 1999). Society tends to have little respect

and confidence in teachers and presently, demands by curriculum reform is intensifying on teachers especially in terms of accountability, assessment and any other forms of paper work (Klette, 2002). For example, teachers have to be accountable especially for the students' results. Furthermore, teachers are urged to and expected to widen their role as professionals beyond the four walls of their classrooms. To a large extent, the diversity of expectations and lack of faith weakens the teachers' professional autonomy and judgment.

Even though teachers may not be directly responsible for students' poor performance they are in almost all cases blamed. However, the environment in which teachers work has a profound effect on what they do and the standards they are expected to achieve by different sectors of society. When there are various forms of expectations, teachers generally tend to be uncertain about their decisions, and may develop a sense of powerlessness, because despite all the expectations they are unable to influence important decisions that affect their work (Webb & Ashton, 1987).

2.5 Critical pedagogy and multi-faith RE

It is important to note that public schools are political institutions of the state hence educational policy, curriculum and even classroom teaching are highly regulated state activities (Laurian & Miron, 2005). For example, "through the curriculum, particular forms of knowledge are selected over others and implemented. The curriculum is related to issues of class, culture and power" (Laurian & Miron, 2005:20).

Giroux (1983:257) disagrees with the claim made by liberal theorists and historians that public education gives its recipients, who are students, equal opportunities for "individual development, social mobility, political and economic power [because] the main function of schools are the reproduction of the dominant ideology, its forms of knowledge, and the distribution of skills needed to reproduce the social division of labour." Giroux (1983) contends that in a radical perspective, schools can only be understood in their relationship to the state and the economy. Schools can only be understood as "agencies of social and cultural reproduction that is how they legitimated capitalist rationality and sustained dominant social practices" (Giroux, 1983:258). Furthermore, Giroux (1983) further contends that schools are not the "great equalizer" as liberal educators suggest, but instead, schooling is a reproductive process that:

> … provide different classes and social groups with knowledge and skills so that they can occupy their respective places in the labour force stratified by class, race and gender; they distribute and legitimate different forms of knowledge and values including language, as well as other aspects that constitute the dominant culture and its interests. (Giroux, 1983:258)

From a liberal perspective, schools are said to exist as impartial and neutral in relation to the transmission of values whereas in reality they promote values of a dominant culture. Schools are presented as fair and objective while in actual fact, they serve the interests of the powerful under the guise of independence, fairness and neutrality, and while they disconfirm the values, cultures and interests of other groups. Giroux (1983:268) says that according to the reproduction theory, "… schools … legitimise certain forms of knowledge, ways of speaking, and ways of relating to the world." The legitimated knowledge is offered as different and superior to other forms of knowledge hence possessing some power and high status. The schools usually exclude the history of the poor. For example, educational institutions can celebrate the history and especially the achievement of the powerful class whilst downplaying and ignoring the history and contributions of the marginalised. When this happens, a false consciousness is created, where individuals refuse to recognise and accept historical truth as well as social reality – but only believe what those controlling social institutions say and dictate (Giroux, 1983).

Even though Giroux makes us aware of the position of the radical theorists, he is however critical of their theories of reproduction. According to him, the theories paint a bleak picture where schools, students and teachers cannot do anything about the situation they find themselves in. He argues that the theories offer no hope to teachers and their students because they are victims of a system which is incapable of change (Giroux, 1983). However, he underscores the importance of human agency and experiences as a tenable way of understanding the relationship between schools and the dominant society. For him, resistance theories can respond to human agency and experience since "mechanisms of social and cultural reproduction are never complete and always meet with partially realised elements of opposition" (Giroux, 1983:259). He argues that according to resistance theories students and teachers are not mere pawns but they are actors who are capable of challenging the most oppressive aspects of schools through their "oppositional behaviour" (Giroux, 1983:260). Since schools are a contested terrain characterised by contradictions, students too can "collectively" resist what they feel is oppressive. However, Giroux (1983:260) acknowledges that "conflict and resistance take place

within asymmetrical relations of power which always favour the dominant classes." Schools are not only economic sites but they are political, cultural and ideological sites that cannot exist independently of the capitalist economy. Resistance theories offer a degree of agency and innovation to the cultures that are subordinate – that is, teachers and their students (Giroux, 1983). According to Giroux (1983), the resistance theories maintain that there can never be any guarantee that capitalist values, interests and ideologies will always succeed despite how strongly they powerfully set their agenda.

Brosio (1990) is critical of the resistance theories and reminds us that even though there may be room for oppositional maneuvering as a form of resistance it is restricted because the power of the teachers and their students cannot be a match against the greater power of capital. He further indicates that history attests that though there have been various oppositional groups in the US, for example, at various times, they were never given all that they demanded by the capitalist power. As a result, "teaching and learning for democratic citizen empowerment will require resolute adults who are in the struggle … [and] … must develop strength superior to the awesome power of capital and capitalist hegemony. This is not a job for school kids and a few brave educators" (Brosio, 1990:81). According to Bourdieu (1991:164), those who wield power, exercise symbolic power which is the "invisible power which can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it." Examples of symbolic symbols that may be used to exert power are art, language and religion. Symbolic power is at work in educational institutions especially in RE textbooks.

Schools exist in ideologically charged contexts where teachers cannot remain neutral and if they can claim neutrality, they can then be construed to be siding with the oppressors. "The teacher either supports the oppressors who have appropriated the material conditions of life – wealth, land, property – and have constructed a social, cultural and political system that justifies their exploitation of their subordinated groups, or the teacher acts to advance the liberation of the dispossessed" (Gutek, 2004:240). Furthermore, Gutek (2004:244) advises that teachers should have a "tough, rigorous, critical attitude toward social economic and political reality as well as a sense of humility." McLaren (2007:192) takes the point further and argues that:

> …. teachers as public intellectuals must accept the consequences of the knowledge that they produce, the social relations they legitimate, the ideologies and identities that they offer to students. … Teachers must raise fundamental questions about their lives and the lives of their students so that they can all be better prepared for participating in - and changing – the larger world.

Teachers have to learn from both the students and the members of the community. Gutek (2004) says that critical theorists maintain that a curriculum can be used to either confirm or legitimate and transmit the values of the dominant ruling class. Teachers work and live in a conflictual situation where there are contested spheres – where there are unequal power relations. Ginsburg (1995) contends that teachers are engaged in political action in their teaching, interpretation and application of the curriculum and in their interaction with students, parents, colleagues and administrators in their schools. "What teachers do in and outside their workplaces is dialectically related to the distribution of both the material and symbolic resources; and structural and ideological power used to control the means of producing, reproducing, consuming, and accumulating material and symbolic resources" (Ginsburg, 1995:670). Similarly, there are power relations in terms of the curriculum content, that is, the topics that have been chosen for teaching and learning. The curriculum content is not neutral because certain interests are promoted in terms of what the content entails. Here teachers are regarded as political actors since schooling and teaching are not neutral. Critical pedagogy theorists posit that education and educational policy should be viewed as a political, cultural and ethical enterprise, that is, education is not in anyway neutral (McLaren, 2007; Winch & Gingell, 2004; Gutek, 2004; Apple, 2004; Brosio, 2000; Ginsburg, 1995; Giroux, 1983).

According to McLaren (2007:187), schooling is a cultural and political enterprise and that schools are more than "instructional sites but also [act] as cultural arenas where heterogeneity of ideological and social forms often collide in an unremitting struggle for domination". He further argues that teaching itself cannot be done without one being involved in politics. In addition, he says that genuine pedagogic practices demand that one be committed to social transformation in solidarity with the marginalised and subordinated groups of people. He further says that schooling is guilty of a litany of wrongful deeds because it is always implicated in issues that are related to power, and social practices while in doing so, favouring certain forms of knowledge that support a specific vision of the past, present and future. Brosio (2000) says that formal schooling is domestication of the mind which he refers to as *hegemonic strategy* [emphasis mine]. He argues that as society relies on government and schools for the naming of its reality, the

dominance of the hegemonists continue since the powerful control culture and meanings around which people organise their life. He further notes that with "official knowledge" educators collude with the powerful of the society against the powerless. If that is the case, in what way could the RE teachers be colluding with the powerful against the powerless in society? To what extent if that is the case then does multi-faith RE promote the values and interests of the powerful?

Hargreaves (2002) posits that critical pedagogy commits educators to take seriously several issues such as the democratic purposes of schooling, because education has a political dimension which cannot be avoided. Education has to deal explicitly with issues of class, race, gender, sexuality while all the voices have to be listened to especially those of the under-privileged. For example, Winch and Gingell (2004) say that decisions about education are often political ones which influence the questions that people ask and answers that they get and even accept. They further indicate that consumers of education operate within given "sets of moral, political, economic and cultural values which … colour what they take to be educationally acceptable or unacceptable." They further indicate that even though that is the case, schools have the role to educate children. The question that needs to be asked is: What type of knowledge is the school promoting? Due to the socio-economic, political and cultural nature of schools, one needs to be aware of the impact that these aspects may have on the practices of the teachers. That is why Apple and Weiss (1983:27) note that a "school is an area where tensions and contradictions are worked through rather than as a place where individuals who fit neatly within an unequal social structure are produced." While that is the case, people have expectations regarding education and schools. Apple (2004:vii) notes that "education is … a site of conflict about what kind of knowledge is 'official' about who has the right to decide both what is to be taught and how teaching and learning are to be evaluated." He further posits that schools are preservation and distribution sites as to what kind of knowledge students get because they "create and re-create forms of consciousness that enable social control to be maintained without the necessity of dominant groups to resort to overt mechanism of domination [and] … schools act as agents of cultural and ideological hegemony … as agents of selective tradition and cultural 'incorporation'" (Apple, 2004:2-5). With regard to the issue of selective tradition, Apple (2004:6) asks these questions: "Whose knowledge is it? Who selected it? Why is it organised in this way to this group?" In all, Apple takes a socio-economic position and argues that there is a relationship between education and economics, political and cultural power. It is in the

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school setting that conflicts of power and meaning are articulated, and take place, and while there are many actors, the main ones being teachers and students.

It is also important to be aware of the state's control over school knowledge as well as who selects the school textbooks. It is also important to note that the ideological, economic and intellectual relationships between interest groups in the construction of textbooks. As textbooks are used, the questions that can be raised could be: "whose voices are heard in textbooks, whose knowledge is included, and which groups receive most attention? To what extent do pictures and other images used in the textbook, support particular viewpoints?" Mirkovic, Skola & Crawford (n.d:6) say that "textbook knowledge is far more than mere information, being located within clear cultural contexts; its meanings are changed and are used to justify behaviours and actions which are designed to have specific social consequences." They continue and say that:

> While there is a strong tendency for school textbooks to present themselves as objective and non-discursive, complex judgements are still made through the language that is employed. One possible area for investigation is to explore how characters, social groups and events are described, and what adjectives, verbs etc. are juxtaposed within texts next to these groups which might help reveal some hidden assumptions regarding the politics and cultural ideology of textbook construction and what constitutes legitimate definitions. (Mirkovic, Skola and Crawford, n.d:7)

The extent to which textbooks use parody and pastiche, pun, allusion and metaphor to describe individuals, groups has to be borne in mind too.

Apple (2004) says that teachers have no "sense of society" because the curriculum especially in a liberal set up does not address social issues. At fault are not the teachers, but the existing material conditions and Apple (2004) is worried that teachers as intellectual workers may employ and give legitimacy to hegemony or even an ideology as they follow the curriculum. Apple (2004) notes that in a classroom setting, there is interaction between teachers and students and that this interaction leads to the socialisation of students. He contends that during this interaction, students in a classroom socialise the teacher as well as becoming socialised themselves. However, students and the teachers do not have equal influence in determining what goes on inside the classroom because the teachers' meanings are dominant. Bourne (2004:62) makes a similar observation on the role of the school when he says that "the school systematically

selects and regulates the forms of knowledge it provides, responding to external social pressures," something that the majority of the society may not be aware of.

Language that is used and appropriated by both the teachers and the students is another issue that has been brought forward by critical pedagogy theorists. For example, LeCuotuer and Augustinos (2001) indicate that language can reveal the thoughts of people and how they perceive the world, hence what people think and say cannot be separated. They note that:

> Language has no fixed meaning outside the context in which it is used [because] words are not simply abstract tools used to state or describe things; they are used to make things happen. People use language to justify, explain, blame, excuse, persuade, and present themselves in the best possible light. … Language is functional. … Language is viewed as reflexive and contextual, as constructing the very nature of objects and events as they are talked about" (LeConteur & Augustinos (2001:217).

Similarly, RE is an area where language is important since there are various religious concepts that are being explored using a specific language to express them. In addition, a multi-faith RE curriculum has to be careful in its use of language for both students and teachers who may be practicing or not practicing religion. Religion has in many instances been accused of causing conflicts that emanate from prejudice and part of the causes of conflicts is how religious people use language to describe themselves and others. How can multi-faith RE as presented in schools promote a language that can bring about understanding, acceptance and tolerance? Can multi-faith RE help both the teachers and the students name their realities?

Furthermore, critical pedagogy values dialogue between teachers and students. When teachers and students are engaged in a dialogue, they are able to ask and answer questions raised by the other party in a non-coercive manner, leading to a better understanding of each other (Brosio, 2000). Furthermore, if people have a profound knowledge of themselves and their world then they are likely to agree on issues that matter to them. True education enables both the teachers and their students to have a dialogue. Brosio (2000:202) observes that some of the shortcomings of undemocratic form of education is where teachers tell students about what is true and what is right, which he refers to as "official knowledge". In such a situation, students' experiences, needs and hopes are ignored and "the teacher attempts to fill students' 'alleged emptiness' with facts and truth; they are expected to memorise, bank it, and then regurgitate at the proper moment"

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(Brosio, 2000:202). When students spend time storing information in readiness to regurgitate it, they are likely not to develop critical consciousness which means that they are ready to accept the world as it is presented to them (Brosio, 2000). They cannot make independent judgments of situations and issues. Dialogue is preferred because inherent in it is its ability to bring about a sense of hope, part of what critical pedagogy is striving to achieve. Truth can therefore only be revealed if people view each other as equals in their discussion or dialogue, since the knowledge from such a discussion will liberate both (Brosio, 2000). In their discussion there has to be no party that should fear the other because according to Brosio (2000), the expectation is that schools should act as places where hope exists. Do multi-faith RE classes in Botswana, encourage dialogue between teachers and their students in promoting a sense of tolerance, for example, does the curriculum give students a sense of hope?

In critical pedagogy, teachers need to understand the role that schooling plays with regard to knowledge and power and that teaching and learning are not neutral. According to Brosio (2000) schools cannot be removed from the concepts of power, politics and history. Since there is power dynamics at play in schools, where some cultures are promoted whilst others are devalued; it is therefore easy that one group will accept the views of another as the reality (Brosio, 2000). This reality will be a result of one culture successfully imposing itself on another which Brosio (2000:110) refers to as "cultural hegemony" because the *victimized culture* (emphasis mine) will be held captive by another. Teachers should "present knowledge, facts, and the taken for granted as problematic, that is, problems to be interrogated and solved. Students must learn to question whose reality is being legitimised, and/or whose interests are being served by certain forms of naming the world" (Brosio, 2000:198).

Both students and teachers need to develop a culture of doubt where no knowledge, beliefs, political orientation is taken for granted. Schecter (2004) refers to this culture of doubt as the need to doubt and says that "learning begins with doubt and with individuals who are willing to express doubt. Doubt is the spark necessary for initiating a learning process, without which no effective change can take place … [and] … the purpose of doubt is to reach total cognitive freedom from the confinement of already existing opinions" (Schechter, 2004:172). It is not clear if teachers across subjects possess critical thinking pedagogical skills in order to empower students to learn how to "doubt." A possible question is: Do multi-faith RE teachers in Botswana classrooms possess skills

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that enable their students to doubt or to be critical thinkers? The point on the sense of doubt, is echoed by McLaren (2007:246) who says that critical pedagogy has to "encourage students to develop a *pedagogical negativism* – to doubt everything, and to try to identify these forms of power and control that operate in their social lives. Second, assist students in *making a final judgment* about the forms of power and control. … Finally, help students affirm their judgments" [emphasis original]. Similarly, and speaking from a British context, McEwen (2004:155) observes that as far as the school curriculum is concerned "most pupils are taught certainty at the expense of a subject's creative uncertainty, often in response to the inexorable demands of an examination system with the added pressure of 'league tables' such pressures have led to teaching that is largely information-based". People need to have a sense of doubt and avoid being victims of certainty, which in most cases when taken to another level, is found to be artificial. Where there is no sense of doubt education becomes undemocratic and knowledge becomes a gift to be imparted to the recipients in the form of the banking concept (McLaren, 2007, Brosio, 2000). In such a situation, a teacher is considered to be the knower and the student the ignorant one, and where there will not be any dialogue between the two.

However, during a democratic teaching environment, teachers should not only be facilitators but should still remain teachers and not relinquish their roles. They should continue directing the dialogue in ways that deepen and extend self and social analysis. When teachers do this, they become "transformative intellectuals" and schools then become places where self and social empowerment is realised by the students, while they learn the knowledge and skills necessary to live in a true democracy. McLaren (2007) contends that teachers need to assume the role of transformative intellectuals, and treat students as critical agents who are capable of questioning how knowledge is produced and distributed. These teachers have to make use of dialogue, and make knowledge meaningful, critical, and ultimately emancipatory to students and it has to be genuine if ever it is to take place, and if it is to bear fruits (McLaren, 2007; Brosio). It is only when teachers involve their students in dialogue that they can later develop "the ability to become self-educating; capable of critical analysis, solidaristic action, and responsible citizenship – in the world and in the workplaces" (Brosio, 2000:206).

Morais, Neves, and Pires (2004) note that learning involves the social construction of knowledge where the teacher tends to be an important player. Here, the teachers are expected to promote student learning processes, and can do so by promoting dialogue and open interaction in their classrooms between them and the students. The teacher is therefore viewed as a creator of social contexts one who enhances learning. Teaching and learning are two activities that are at the core of the educational enterprise. Furthermore, through their pedagogy teachers are responsible for ensuring that the relevant knowledge and techniques are used in teaching and learning. In trying to assist students to realise their worth, the teachers have to become social as well as moral agents because teaching takes place in relation to particular ways of thinking and understanding of reality. In such a situation, "young people learn to be 'critical readers' of their society. When they are confronted with some knowledge or viewpoint, they are encouraged to ask questions like this: Who said this? Why did they say it? Why should we believe this? Who benefits if we believe this and act upon it?" (Apple & Beane, 1999). Students realise their worth, they thus become involved in becoming makers of meaning and no longer become passive consumers of knowledge. That is why McLaren (2007:253) says that when teachers act as moral agents, "teaching always takes place in relation to a particular regime of truth … The teacher performs a social function that is never innocent. There is no neutral, non-partisan sphere into which the teacher can retreat to engage student experience."

For McLaren (2007), it is the unjust social structures that are a result of capitalist system that have to be brought down including the type of schooling which he says leans towards the few rich, influential and powerful at the expense of the poor majority. He suggests that teachers need to be exposed to some critical pedagogy during their training or their graduate programmes. It is "also crucial that teachers engage in the kind of historical materialist analysis developed within the Marxist tradition so that they can see how the production of consciousness works gear in gear with capitalist social relations" (McLaren, 2007:33). He further notes that schools are at the centre of capitalist society and development. Can multi-faith RE be classified as a form of education that enhances social classes in a capitalist society?

As for McLaren, students have to be taught:

> … how knowledge is related historically, culturally, and institutionally to the process of production and consumption. … [and] that teachers and students [should] question how knowledge is produced and ask the following questions: Who produces it? How is it appropriated? Who consumes it? How is it consumed? (McLaren, 2007:35).

The questions that McLaren raises are rarely asked in teacher training institutions in Botswana. In the same manner, such questions are never asked in primary and secondary school curriculum. It is therefore against this background that it is not easy for schools to produce rounded students who are expected to become critical adult citizens.

For McLaren (2007), education should not be tied to market forces which emphasise testing instead of understanding because tests are punitive measures that are meant to differentiate in order to prepare students for the labour market. Teachers are put under inordinate pressure when they are expected to teach to the test, because their focus is narrowed to certain themes and topics. McLaren (2007) says that in emphasising tests instead of teaching for understanding no time is left for students to learn about how a socially and economically just society can be created and that test-driven curricular can compromise the teachers' classroom practices since the bulk of the time will be spent preparing tests. Apple and Beane (1999) make a similar observation about the US education system where teachers have to teach for tests, hence denying them the professional autonomy they may wish to maintain. They reveal that "most of the content and textbooks … are closely interconnected to the mandated tests" (Apple and Beane, 1999:xii). They wonder why critical thinking is emphasised while the education system is based on teaching in order to test. Students' experiences are fundamental in critical pedagogy because it takes the problems and needs of the students as the starting point. "To ignore the ideological dimensions of the students' experience is to deny the ground upon which students learn, speak, and imagine" (Giroux & McLaren, 1986:234). Teachers need to understand that the experiences of their students emanate from a variety of discourses and subjectivities. McLaren (2007:50) says that "a major step in preparing students to become critically literate is not only to provide them with meaningful learning experiences, but also to validate and legitimate the experiences that students bring into the classroom from their everyday lives." Yet in most cases, the experiences of the students are rarely taken seriously in schools. Educators have to empower students by emphasising to them that they are people who are capable of internalising knowledge, and that they possess some form of useful knowledge.

McLaren (2007) argues that knowledge is relevant only when it uses the experiences that students bring along with them to class from their surroundings or culture on the one hand, whilst on the other, teachers use their pedagogic skills to assist the students to analyse their own experiences in order to clarify the processes by which their experiences were produced and even confirmed. He concludes by indicating that: "Teachers need to understand how experiences produced in various domains of everyday life produce in turn the different voices students employ to give meaning to their worlds and, consequently to their existence in the larger society" (McLaren, 2007:241).

As a way of giving students a unique voice, teachers need to listen to what their students say are their emotions and interests – a process that will make learning possible, since it will be part of the existing material situation of the students. McLaren(2007) suggests that a teacher should not tell the students what they think since they have their own experiences. Teachers should instead, allow students to tell their story and avoid silencing them, because of the teachers' own biases. The teachers might silence students because of the influence of their own pedagogical practices, which may not be relevant to the experiences and the learning process. Teachers need to learn and understand the existing material situation of their students because it is only then that teachers will be able to listen to the voices of their students. McLaren (2007) also notes that teachers on many occasions unintentionally devalue their students' experiences hence any sense of equality in the exchange between teachers and students is lost.

 McLaren (2007), Brosio (2000) and Giroux (1983) emphasise that the voice of the teacher and that of the students need to be heard, as they actively engage in a dialogue. As the two parties engage in a dialogue both listen to the voice of each other. During this process of the dialogue, there is no party that should play a second fiddle since each party is capable of making its voice heard. By voice, they mean how individuals use language to interpret and articulate their experiences. McLaren (2007) reveals that there are times when teachers do not allow the voices of the disadvantaged or the subordinate groups to be heard. He says that in most cases, teachers are not aware of the dynamics between the teachers and the students, and he notes that if students are allowed audience, they can then define themselves as active participants in the world.

For Giroux and McLaren (1986), failure to listen to the voice of the students will prevent teachers from tapping into the students' motivation, emotions and interests hence making learning difficult. By voice they are referring to a situation where there will be a dialogue between the teachers and students and where each will present their position to the other. Each of the two parties will be in a position to tell their "story." In such an environment, the students will be able to express themselves, and in so doing affirm their own identity with respect to culture, class, gender and race. Giroux and McLaren(1986) further note that the voices of teachers during this communication should not be aimed at silencing the voices of students even though they are capable of silencing or legitimating them. They say that such pedagogy "attempts to organise classroom relationships so that students can draw upon and confirm their own histories and experiences which are deeply rooted in the surrounding community" (Giroux & McLaren, 1986:236). According to McLaren (2007), the voice of the teacher in most of the cases silences that of the students. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) refer to the teachers' authoritative voice that silences students as "symbolic violence". McLaren (2007) says that a teacher's authoritative voice can be positive, hence can allow students to articulate their experiences. If that happens, the voice then becomes what he calls emancipatory power of the teacher's authoritative voice. There is need for teachers to listen to what students are saying, so that they can legitimate and confirm the knowledge and experiences of the students. If the teachers can listen to their students, they can enable them to give meanings to their everyday lives. That is why Apple and Beane (1999) say that democratic educators have to change the conditions that increase the harshness of social inequalities in school.

Furthermore, McLaren (2007:43) is unhappy with what he refers to as "cultural imperialism" which is "the universalisation of one group's experience and culture and its establishment as the norm". He says that the dominant cultural group uses its power to dominate others, and the dominated groups are made to view themselves from the perspective of the dominant culture by internalising the stereo-types of the dominant group's culture. Cultural imperialism makes its victim to be invisible to the dominant culture. McLaren (2007) says that despite being subjugated, the oppressed will still refuse to accept their picture as painted by the oppressor. They will still desire to be recognised as human beings who are capable of naming the world and are full of hope. However, the dominant culture would always regard them as different and inferior. To what extent is this found in the Botswana education system especially in RE?

McLaren (2000) says that in an undemocratic education system, students from low social class are not provided with the relevant tools that will help them to understand themselves, why they are unhappy with themselves. "These students are not provided with the ability to think critically, a skill that would enable them to better understand why their lives have been reduced to feelings of meaninglessness, randomness and alienation" (McLaren, 2000:41).

Knowledge should be analysed on the basis of whether it liberates or oppresses its recipients and not on the basis of whether it is true or not (McLaren, 2007). For example, how liberative or oppressive are the books, as well as classroom approaches, values and beliefs as they are transmitted in RE? McLaren (2007:211) says that "the curriculum favours certain forms of knowledge over others and affirms the dreams, desires, and values of select groups of students over other groups". Certain types of knowledge promote and legitimate certain interests. He then asks: "Whose interests does this knowledge serve? Who gets excluded as a result? Who is marginalised [by this knowledge]?" He says that teachers should be aware of the type of knowledge that marginalises particular views of the world. Since there is power play in education, certain educational choices would promote and help reinforce a certain set of "values, priorities and perspectives that have an effect of furthering some interests while hampering others" (Beyer, 1998:245).

Conclusion

The teachers' professional landscape as it is determined largely by frame factors such as curricular, pedagogical and subject knowledge have been discussed. I indicate that teachers have multiple identities and that they influence the way they interpret a curriculum. Furthermore, I showed why it is important to involve teachers on an occasion of curriculum change. The status of teaching as a profession was also discussed. I drew from theorists of critical pedagogy and indicated that curriculum change can be meaningful if both teachers and students can be empowered and could become co-creators of knowledge.

In Chapter 3, I report on the methodology that I adopted and why I chose it.