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# HOW RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHERS UNDERSTAND AND IMPLEMENT A MULTI-FAITH CURRICULUM – CASE STUDIES FROM BOTSWANA

by

**BAAMPHATLHA DINAMA**

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**Disclaimer**

I hereby declare that this thesis (*How Religious Education Teachers Understand and Implement a Multi-faith Curriculum - Case Studies from Botswana*) is the result of my original and independent investigation and that all quotations and sources have been acknowledged.

I further declare that the thesis has not already been accepted for any other degree, nor is it being concurrently submitted for any other degree.

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Baamphatlha Dinama Date

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## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife Nomsa, my daughter Gabo and son Mogale who gave my academic life some meaning.

# ABSTRACT

This study explores teachers' understanding and implementation of the multi-faith Religious Education curriculum in Botswana junior secondary schools. The multi-faith curriculum resulted from an educational policy change in 1996 that saw a move from a Christian-based RE to a multi-faith Religious Education (RE) curriculum. This study is based on qualitative case studies and draws data from classroom observations, interviews with four RE teachers, five RE education officers, eight RE in-service teachers and three groups of RE students. The main participants are two groups of teachers, those who taught the multi-faith curriculum and those who taught both the Christian based RE and the multi-faith Religious Education.

In this study, documents such as the syllabus document, end of month tests, end of term examinations and end of three year junior secondary school national examinations papers were used to further highlight the classroom practices of RE teachers. Furthermore, the study adopts the *teachers' professional knowledge landscape* as the theoretical framework, a view that is espoused by Clandinin and Connelly (1995), that stresses the importance of teachers' knowledge. In the implementation of the multi-faith curriculum, there

The following themes emerge in the study; teachers' understanding of the multi-faith RE, teachers' classroom practices in terms of their content and pedagogical knowledge, their classroom management, and especially discipline. The study reveals that there are no marked differences between these two groups of teachers in terms of their understanding of the curriculum and their classroom practices. It further reveals that there are various factors that impact on the practices of teachers such as their view of the multi-faith philosophy, assessment skills, use of students' textbooks, mentoring and tracking of RE graduates from teacher training institutions. The study suggests that teachers need to have an adequate understanding of students' environment, in terms of their personal experiences and social background. The study recommends that teachers in general and RE teachers in particular need to be involved on an occasion of any curriculum change because they are the main implementers. In addition, teachers need extended periods of professional in-service training on occasions of curriculum reforms.

**KEYWORDS:**

Education policy

Multi-faith Religious Education

Teachers' professional landscape

Classroom practices

Phenomenological Approach

Tolerance in Religious Education

Critical teacher

Diversity in Religious Education

RE teachers

RE students

**KEY ABBREVIATIONS**

| | |
|---|---|
| **ATR** | African Traditional Religion |
| **CD&E** | Curriculum Development and Evaluation |
| **ERTD** | Examinations, Research and Testing Division |
| **JC** | Junior Certificate |
| **RE** | Religious Education |
| **RME** | Religious and Moral Education |
| **RNPE** | Revised National Policy on Education |

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# Preamble

## Aims of the Study

This qualitative study aimed to explore how Religious Education teachers at four junior secondary schools in Botswana understand and implement a multi-faith religious education school curriculum in their classrooms.

## Research Questions

The following research questions are explored in relation to the Religious Education teachers' understanding and their classroom practices of a multi-faith curriculum.

a. How do Religious Education teachers in Botswana understand the multi-faith curriculum?

b. Have the classroom practices such as teaching techniques and strategies of Religious Education teachers in Botswana changed in response to the multi-faith Religious Education curriculum?

c. How do conditions inside and outside classrooms shape the Religious Education teachers' translation of the multi-faith curriculum into practice?

## Rationale for the study

The Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) in 1994 introduced major educational changes in post-colonial Botswana. One of the key policy shifts was the termination of the Christian Religious Education curriculum and the introduction of a multi-faith Religious Education (RE) curriculum (Botswana Government, 1994). A Christian based RE refers to a variant of RE that has Christianity as its content and where there is a deliberate fostering and nurturing of the students' faith. A multi-faith RE refers to a curriculum whose content is a variety of religions and whereby students are helped to know, understand and reflect on the basic tenets that form the concept of religion. In addition, the students are expected to bring to the learning environment their various

experiences, knowledge, backgrounds and are not expected to be necessarily practitioners of religion.

Furthermore, the fact that the new RE curriculum emphasises student-centredness instead of teacher-centredness, means that it has major implications in the way RE teachers and students interact and engage with each other (Botswana Government, 1994). More than ten years after the introduction of this curriculum, little is still known about how RE teachers use student-centred pedagogies in Botswana classrooms. Similarly, little is known about how RE teachers of different religious persuasions understand and implement a multi-faith RE curriculum.

In conducting my literature search, I did not find any studies that showed RE teachers' practices that resulted in students who are autonomous, tolerant and have a sense of respect for other people as envisioned in a multi-faith RE curriculum. Autonomy, respect and tolerance are tenets envisaged in the RNPE, which is a document that presently guides curriculum development in Botswana (Botswana Government, 1994).

Another reason for embarking on this study is that I have a strong professional interest on how Botswana RE teachers currently understand and implement the multi-faith RE curriculum. By understanding I loosely mean the knowledge or familiarity with a particular thing. According to Ausubel, Novak and Hanesian (19870 two conditions are necessary for understanding to occur. Firstly, the content of what must be known has to be meaningful, and secondly, that person must relate his or her prior knowledge to the new one. Understanding could be viewed in terms of a person being able to contextualize, compare, as well as analyse. It is the ability of being able to take knowledge learned in one instance and applying it to another situation (Settlage & Wheatley, 2005). I am a Religious Education teacher by training, and taught the subject for five years at secondary school level in Botswana. I also taught pre-service RE teachers for eight years at tertiary level which is a diploma awarding institution. I am currently teaching RE to prospective and in-service RE teachers at university level and have been in contact with practicing RE teachers mostly in workshops. In all these years, I observed that junior secondary school RE teachers have several successes as well as constraints in teaching this curriculum. Of significance, is the necessity to gain insight into the work of RE teachers as they work in the classrooms.

Though I have been an RE teacher trainer for several years, I cannot claim knowledge of what teachers do in their classrooms, until I study their practices, beliefs and values about RE teaching. It is against this background that I embarked on this doctoral study in order to suggest possible practical RE teaching techniques and strategies where possible. I engaged in this study because research is a human endeavour that is characterised by its persistent and deliberate effort to extend people's understanding about the world in which they live (Verma & Beard, 1981). I hope my research will add value to an existing pool of knowledge in RE and might suggest some teaching techniques and strategies that correspond with the philosophy of a multi-faith RE curriculum that might be helpful to RE teachers and teacher educators.

**Significance of the study**

This study is likely to give insight to policy makers and curriculum developers on how RE teachers understand and implement the multi-faith RE curriculum in Botswana. It may also alert policy makers and other professional developers such as teacher educators about the challenges faced by RE teachers in their classrooms as they respond to educational policy reforms initiated by government. The findings from the study might influence teacher educators to include in their teacher training programmes some relevant skills that teachers might use in their classrooms. I envisage that the study will help curriculum developers and policy makers understand better the teachers' practices as well as inform them about the teachers' professional knowledge, in terms of their content, pedagogical and curricular knowledge. This understanding particularly on the part of teachers and teacher educators might lead to relevant and improved classroom practices. Lastly, the study might act as a knowledge base for future research in Botswana because, in my view, there is inadequate literature on how RE teachers understand and practice a multi-faith RE curriculum.

**Research Problem**

It is on the basis of the fundamental changes in a multi-faith RE curriculum in Botswana and on the evidence that many teachers seem to be struggling to translate the multi-faith RE curriculum into practice that my study focuses on. Sepotlo (2004) notes that teachers struggle to translate the RE curriculum into classroom practice, largely due to lack of resources especially relevant textbooks. However, it is not clear if teachers possess relevant and adequate professional knowledge to teach the multi-faith RE curriculum. Currently, for RE teachers to be employed in public junior secondary schools, they are expected to have a minimum qualification of a diploma in secondary education with RE as one of their specialisations.

When the multi-faith RE curriculum was introduced, practicing RE teachers were invited to attend workshops conducted by the Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation (CD&E) of the Ministry of Education. The Department aimed at making teachers aware of the new curriculum so that they could re-align their classroom practice according to it. However, from my experience as one of those who attended some of the workshops, and also as a teacher educator from a college of education, I observed that the emphasis was on the philosophy of this new curriculum rather than on how it was to be implemented in class. It is against this background that this study explores RE teachers' understanding and classroom implementation of the multi-faith RE curriculum. In the workshops that I attended, the curriculum was received with mixed feelings because there were teachers who thought it better to stick to a single religion type of RE, on the one hand, and those who welcomed the new multi-faith RE curriculum, on the other. Those who were against the introduction of a multi-faith RE, argued that Botswana is a Christian country hence Christianity is the religion that has to be taught. They further indicated that the single religion type of RE had one religion as its content, and had ready-made resources in the form of students' worksheets and teachers' handbooks which according to them, made learning and teaching easier for students and teachers respectively. On the other hand, those who welcomed the new curriculum argued that a form of RE that was not inclined to a particular religion with the clear intent to convert the students was likely to be respected due to its non-partisan nature. They further contended that since RE is a low status subject with a poor career path, by being non-partisan, it was likely to establish a more stable and respectable status compared to high status subjects such as Mathematics and Science.

**Limitation of the Study**

The study explores how teachers understand and implement a multi-faith RE curriculum in Botswana junior secondary schools. It focuses on four teachers, in two schools, and in each school there were two teachers who participated in the study. Furthermore, since my study lasted for only eight months, I am of the view that a longitudinal qualitative study would have produced richer results.

**Outline of the thesis**

This study is presented in six chapters. Chapter One reviews literature on multi-faith RE; how the phenomenological approach is used in a multi-faith curriculum, how RE is understood and practiced in different countries, and the concept of tolerance is discussed in relation to RE.

Chapter Two explores the professional landscape under which teachers in their multiple identities operate. It discusses the extent to which teachers may be involved on an occasion of reform, teachers' autonomy and how critical pedagogy can enhance both learning and teaching.

In Chapter Three I discuss the qualitative methodology that I adopted, describe the research setting in terms of my four participants and how I gained access. I describe the sampling procedures and the data collection instruments that I used. Furthermore, I indicate the importance of ethical considerations that have to be borne in mind especially when conducting a qualitative study.

In Chapter Four, I present my findings which I divide into themes. The major themes are: teachers' understanding of the multi-faith RE curriculum, teachers' classroom practices in terms of their content and pedagogical knowledge, their classroom management, and especially discipline. Lastly I discuss how RE teachers' faith or lack of it thereof is shown in their teaching.

In Chapter Five, I present data on assessment, mentoring and collaboration, access to government documents, and resources. I further indicate the processes involved in using and showing respect for students' knowledge and experiences.

Lastly, in Chapter Six, I discuss the implications of my research in terms of RE teachers' context, their practices and their understanding of the curriculum. I further suggest some recommendations regarding future research on multi-faith RE.

# 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.

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.

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

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"

(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

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.

# CHAPTER 3

## Sitting, watching and talking to teachers

### 3.0 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the nature of qualitative methodology by exploring both its merits and the demerits. I describe the research design, sampling procedures, data collection methods which were interviews, observations, video-recording biographical questionnaire, document review and the researcher's journal. I describe the participants, the research sites and how I gained access into the schools. I discuss how I validated my data and conclude by indicating the importance of the researcher's reflexivity especially in qualitative research.

### 3.1 Qualitative methodology

My epistemological stance as a researcher is that knowledge is personal, unique and subjective. Of significance to this stance is that people are deliberate and creative in their actions, and the situations in which they are in, are fluid and change constantly. Alison and colleagues (1996:8) emphasise that "each and every event is conditioned by variables such as time, location and culture which are interactive and therefore no two situations…can be identical and cannot be the basis for generalizations." I adopted Silverman's (1993) position that in qualitative research, there are multiple interpretations and perspectives of a reality, hence events can be better understood when situated in the social and historical context of the researched. Qualitative research involves people being studied in their natural context, their experiences and the meaning they make of those experiences (Patton, 2002). "Qualitative research also provides an encounter with the world and the ways in which people construct, interpret and give meaning to their experiences" (Roux & DuPreez: 2005:277-278). Silverman (1993) outlines three practical reasons for doing qualitative research, that it is relatively flexible, and it concentrates on what people do in their natural contexts as it studies meanings and causes of events.

I researched four RE teachers in their classrooms. I used a multi-case comparative approach that involved four teachers in two schools, and in each school there were two participating teachers. I focused on the teachers' understanding, experiences and how they teach the multi-faith RE curriculum. Merriam (1988) notes that qualitative methodology is ideal for understanding a phenomenon in a holistical manner in the way it is lived or felt. In this study, the phenomenon was the RE teachers' understanding of RE and their classroom practices that is their knowledge of RE. Of significance in this study was the teachers' professional knowledge as well as their professional lived experiences (Lieberman & Miller, 1999).

Furthermore, I chose the qualitative methodology because it provided me with an in-depth understanding of the inter-relationships between RE teachers and their students, as well as their experiences, and practices such as their grasp of the subject matter, lesson presentation and their assessment skills. Wotherspoon (2004), Harry (1997) and Dey (1993), say that qualitative methodology enables the researcher to identify social bases of meanings by exploring how meanings are related to the participants' social actions. Burgess (1985) indicates that qualitative research focuses on social processes and meanings which the participants attribute to social interactions. In my study, I was able to search for the nature of the environments under which teachers work, and the meanings that they attach to RE teaching. The qualitative methodology deals with people as they interact with their natural environment and in my case it was the four RE teachers in their two schools. In addition, in qualitative research there is flexibility because it is not based on fixed or rigid procedures, even though the work has to be well organised. Furthermore, in qualitative research, data collection and analysis occur simultaneously, because it is not a linear process that the researcher is involved in, but both processes occur at the same time. Burgess (1985:9) says that "data are not usually collected to support or refute hypothesis but categories and concepts are developed during the course of data collection. The theory is therefore not superimposed upon the data but emerges from the data that are collected". For example, as I observed and talked to the four participants, several issues emerged hence led me to ask new questions. I was able to connect the present, past and the future in the process, and some issues were unraveled. The data that was generated from this methodology helped me to understand some of the participants' experiences and attitudes. Since one of the characteristics of qualitative research is rigour and detail, I was able to vividly describe events that took place especially in the RE classrooms. Furthermore, that is why when I reported my findings, I

was detailed especially through the constant use of excerpts. Qualitative research attempts to describe and interpret some human phenomenon often in the words of some selected individuals or participants. Wilkinson (2004) notes that in a case study, data can be substantiated by means of extensive illustrative quotations, by using excerpts that are selected for their clear descriptions and portrayal of actions or voices. The researcher has to employ this strategy so that readers are situated in the scene, and are able to "imagine and vicariously experience what the researcher observed" (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995:175).

In reporting qualitative data, the researcher has to be elaborate, by clearly presenting the participants being studied for readers who lack direct acquaintance with them. Emerson, Fretz & Shaw (1995:170) note that the researcher has to "construct from the field notes a narrative that will interest an outside audience" and this is done by selecting a small portion from a set of field notes and the narratives have to help "create" a story that flows. To begin this process, the researcher has to select "potential excerpts that could develop into a story line that leads readers to an ever fuller understanding of the participants and issues that are addressed or that emerge. Since my focus was on the RE teachers' understanding and teaching practices of the RE curriculum, I had to select and describe their actions and voices in order to make research process clearer for the reader. Thorough thick descriptions in qualitative data, takes the reader into the time and place where the researcher was engaged in observation, so that readers "feel" and know what it was like to have been there. The data has to "capture and communicate someone else's experience of the world in his own words" (Patton, 2002:47).

When analysing my data several issues emerged which I assigned some codes. The coding was done manually but was later fed into a computer with *Atlas.ti* software for ease of data management and retrieval, for example, with *Atlas.ti* software, I was able to group sentences together that belonged to a code and also enabled me to group codes into themes. Emerson, Fretz & Shaw (1995) observe that while creating codes, the researcher engages in the analysis of data at the same time. They also note that a researcher can select themes based on topics that have substantial amount of data and that reflect recurrent or underlying patterns of activities in the setting under study. They further note that a researcher may give priority to what seems significant to members, whether it is what they think is the key, what looks to be practically important, or what engages a lot of their time and energy.

Qualitative methodology is interpretive in nature because it allows the researcher to gain insights through discovering, meanings by improving the comprehension of the whole (Creswell, 2003, Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). For me to accomplish this, I used observations, interviews, and documents as my main data collecting instruments. The approach helped me to understand the meanings associated with the actions of the RE teachers in their classrooms which are their natural places of work. In carrying out my study, I spent time during RE lessons with the participants in order to understand better their practices and perspectives in relation to RE teaching. I observed RE lessons in the chosen classes for a reasonable time, because in a qualitative research the researcher becomes involved in the world of the researched (Delamont, 2002, Harry, 1997). The point is taken further by Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995:2) when they say that the researcher has to be immersed into the world of the researched in order to see "from the inside how people lead their lives, how they carry out their daily rounds of activities [and] what they find meaningful". That is why Baszanger, & Bodier (2004:14) observe that the researcher moves away from his or her familiar world-view, to that of the participants in order to understand their world-view which they refer to this activity as "personal proximity." Furthermore, since the project is a case study I had to make extensive observations of how four RE teachers operated in their natural setting which is the classroom.

### 3.2 Case study

I chose a case study in order to tease out a detailed understanding of what is happening with regard to the actions and minds of the RE teachers in Botswana junior secondary schools. More (2004: xiii) posits that "case studies … broadly represent the total population surveyed. They [case studies] will never be representative in a statistical sense but they should reflect the main characteristics of the whole population." In a case study, it is not frequency or representativeness that is the goal, but it is the depth and that is why in my study I researched four RE teachers in two junior secondary schools. It is in studying a smaller representative that the researcher is able to gather huge chunks of data. What is important to note is that the participants represented two groups of RE teachers, those who taught the Christian based RE and those who were only exposed to the multi-faith RE curriculum. Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995:2) suggest that in a case study a

researcher has to ask the following questions; "How is this example the same and different, and what were the conditions under which differences and variations occurred?" Edwards & Talbot (1999:50) note that a case study allows the researcher to have interaction with the context being observed and that its main strength is that it allows "a fine tuned exploration of complex sets of inter-relationships" because the unit of study is small. In a case study the researcher attempts to understand the whole individual in relation to the environment (Verma & Beard, 1981). However, there will be no way I could have studied the participants without paying attention to other factors that influence their perspectives such as the school set up and its culture. Furthermore, since there are emotions involved in a case study there is need for empathy on the part of the researcher (Rager, 2005).

### 3.3 Design of Setting

When collecting data for this study I chose two public schools in the city of Gaborone which is the capital city of Botswana. In each school I chose to work with two participants so that I could spend considerable time observing their practices.

I used pseudonyms instead of the real names of my participants and their schools. Makala Junior Secondary School is about one kilometre south of the city centre of Gaborone, while Togal Junior Secondary School is about two kilometres west of the city centre. These two secondary schools are public schools where children who graduated from primary schools have automatic access to. The students in both schools are largely from middle and low income households. The physical plans of the two schools are generally the same and both schools receive full funding from the government. Teachers have equivalent or comparable education, professional training and experience. Three out every four teachers are accommodated on the school premises since government provides teachers with accommodation at a subsidised rate. Enrolments in both schools are similar with about six hundred students in each school, with a student-teacher ratio of one teacher to a class of about forty students.

### 3.3.1 Makala Junior Secondary School

Makala Junior Secondary School has part of its fence along one main road that leads into the city centre and part of its fence borders the main road. There are 18 classes with only 12 classrooms; four out-door teaching areas, one Science laboratory, one Computer laboratory which holds 20 computers and a library with a seating capacity of about forty students. In addition, there is a dining hall, library, and a design and technology laboratory. A siren is sounded at the beginning and the end of every lesson. A lesson lasts for 40 minutes. In the same school yard there are playgrounds that are used by Physical Education students and also by all other students for afternoon sporting activities such as soccer, netball and volleyball. Furthermore, the windows for almost all the classrooms are broken and the school is on the whole not clean. The desks are old and some have no lids, hence some students use their laps to write on. Some classes use out-door teaching areas. The out-door teaching areas are roofed and seats are made of concrete blocks and arranged in a semi-circle pattern. As for the out-door teaching area, students can be distracted by the noise of vehicles passing by since the school is adjacent to a busy main road. The out-door teaching areas are adjacent to the playgrounds and teaching is difficult to carry out, especially when Physical Education students are in their lessons and going through their paces. For example, one of the classes that I observed used an out-door teaching area and it was a few metres away from an incinerator and in most cases, the smoke and smell from the incinerator enveloped the whole area.

Finally, students are compelled to wear their school uniform except on *civvies days* when they are allowed to wear clothes of their own choice as a way of raising funds for the school.

### 3.3.2 Togal Junior Secondary School

Togal Junior Secondary School has a similar physical set up to Makala Junior Secondary School - the same number of classes, classrooms, four out-door teaching areas, one Science laboratory, and a Computer laboratory with twenty computers, school garden, playgrounds for various sporting codes and a library with a seating capacity of about forty students. The only difference in the physical structures between the two schools is that classrooms at Togala Junior Secondary School classrooms are two storeyed.

Furthermore, the school is generally clean and there are few broken windows. However, in most cases chairs are not enough for the students in each class. Just like at Makala Junior Secondary School, some students are taught in outdoor teaching areas due to the inadequate classrooms. All the physical facilities in both schools that I mentioned are inadequate for a school that had 18 classes.

### 3.4 Gaining access

Gaining access into a site is important in qualitative research. I applied to the research unit of the Ministry of Education for permission to do my research in the two Botswana government junior secondary schools. The application took two weeks before I received a positive response. I was granted six months permission (Appendix B) to do my research and had to extend (Appendix B2) my stay since I was not satisfied with my classroom observations.

Before I started my fieldwork, I wrote letters to the school heads asking them to allow me permission to do research in their schools with some of their teachers. A copy of the letter from the Ministry of Education that granted me permission to do research in the junior secondary schools in Botswana (Appendix J) was attached to the letters and that helped ease my access into the two schools. The principals who are the main gatekeepers in their schools granted me permission, even though I never met personally with any of them. On several occasions I had wanted to meet with the school heads but their secretaries told me that they were too busy to meet with me.

In each of the schools, RE coordinators were informed about my project by their school heads and they made an arrangement to meet with members of the RE department. This had to be done so that teachers could meet with me and learn more about my project in order to have adequate information, which would help those who were to volunteer to work with me. When I met the RE coordinators and the teachers, and asked for volunteers, some teachers indicated that they were ready to work with me since I had made my criteria clear in the letter to the school heads and in my meetings with the department. I then wrote an official letter to the volunteering participants with a consent form attached which I collected a day after giving it to them. I then arranged to individually meet the teachers who had volunteered to work with me so that I could explain further the finer details of my envisaged research project, and also as a way of

creating rapport. I also indicated to these teachers that I would be observing them teach for about eight months without me being involved in the teaching activity.

Even though I had explained the aim of my project, one of them Mrs. Koloni at Togal Junior Secondary School thought that my project was interventionist when she said:

> I am happy that you are here to help me with the teaching of this syllabus. You are one of the people who designed this programme because I have seen your name in the list. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 9th October, 2006)

Another participating teacher Mr Tiro at Makala Junior Secondary School jokingly said:

> Mr Dinama, I will get into this project so that when you become a professor you may take me along. (Conversation with Mr Tiro, 3rd March, 2006)

The comments from these two participants indicated how they viewed me as a researcher who was going to work and assist them with their teaching. To some extent my presence meant that I was going to help enable them realize some of their aims in the teaching of RE.

### 3.5 Permission

In addition to the permission from the Ministry of Education in Botswana, I had to satisfy the requirements of the University of Pretoria Ethics Committee (Appendix C). In addition, I wrote letters to the parents and guardians of the students that I was to engage their children in focus group interviews. In the letters I asked parents and guardians to grant me permission to interview their children about how they learn RE (Appendix K). Students took the letters to their parents, and on the following day they all brought back the signed consent forms which I collected from their RE teachers. I had wanted to have a focus group interview with only ten students in each school. However, when some RE students at Togal Junior Secondary School, heard that I was to interview their fellow classmates they asked their teachers to ask me to write letters to their parents as well so that they too could become part of the focus group interviews. I consented to the request of these students because they were going to add more data to my study. I then wrote letters for the second group of students so that they too could take them to their parents and guardians for consent (Appendix K). All the students brought back consent forms

that granted me permission to interview them. I was happy with these students' positive attitude towards my study. That is why at Togala Junior Secondary School I had two focus group interviews with students, one with ten members while the other had eight. I also wrote letters to five Education officers, requesting them to be interviewed. I also verbally requested a lecturer of in-service RE teachers at the University of Botswana to talk to her students to ask them to be interviewed. This group of teachers agreed to be interviewed.

### 3.6 Ethical Considerations

When conducting this study, I was conscious of the ethical implications, because in qualitative research, consent to participate is sought first since no one has to be forced to participate in a study (Roux & DuPreez, 2005; Hillier & Jameson, 2003). Since the research involved human beings, I had to make known to the participants my research goals and to this end, I had to get their informed consent. I did everything possible not to do anything that might professionally, socially or psychologically harm the participants. I had to protect the physical, social and psychological welfare of the participants as well as their dignity and privacy as human beings (Grinyer, 2002; Cohen *et al*, 2000). Roux and DuPreez (2005) observe that researching RE is an emotive exercise, hence researchers should react sensitively and respectfully to the participants' emotions. In addition, consent had to be sought from participants whether to use their actual names or pseudonyms. The participants were also asked to indicate if they wanted their names to be shown or to remain anonymous in case the revelation of the names harmed them in some way at any other time. The participating teachers indicated that they were comfortable with both options hence I made a deliberate decision to use pseudonyms so that the participants could remain anonymous. I did this, in case there could be a situation that would work against them in future if it was to be known that the views expressed in the study were theirs.

Furthermore, the participants were made aware that they were free to withdraw consent or withhold information as well as to discontinue participation in the project at anytime without prejudice to them (Cohen *et al*, 2000). The confidentiality of the participants is also respected because what transpired during the course of this project was to be kept confidential, unless the participants decided that the information be disseminated.

Furthermore, as a way of protecting the interviewees, I gave them the scripts to read in order to verify statements they made during interviews and in class.

### 3.7 Sampling

The study comprised four teachers who were solicited through convenient purposive sampling. In purposive sampling, the researcher handpicks participants in a study based on identified variables under consideration. There were two main variables, that is, teachers who taught the old Christian based RE and those who only taught the new multi-faith RE curriculum. Decker (n.d.) indicates that purposive sampling is used to study the lived experiences of a specific population and in the study it was the teaching practices of RE teachers. However, this type of sampling restricts the sample population to a very specific one and its main advantage is that it is more economical with regard to both money and time (Decker, n.d.). Furthermore, the sample is usually small and the emphasis is on the context, especially the perspectives of the participants (Jacobs, n.d.). As a result, numerical representativeness is of secondary importance since the emphasis is on the participants' ability to provide the desired information about themselves and their setting (Jacobs, n.d). Of significance, is the population that appears to be representative of what the researcher is targeting. For example, I targeted two groups of teachers – those who taught the old Christian based RE and those who only taught the new multi-faith RE curriculum. This type of sampling is useful and convenient in situations where the researcher needs to reach a targeted sample quickly and get the opinions of that target group (Trochim, 2006). The strength of purposive sampling is in the selection of cases that can provide information that is rich due to its relevance. Patton (2002:40) says that "cases are selected because they are 'information rich' and illuminative, that is, they offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest, sampling, then is aimed at insight about a phenomenon, not empirical generalisation from a sample to a population". Information rich cases are those from which a researcher can talk more about issues that are central in one's research. It is through choosing information rich samples that major questions under study can be illuminated.

All the four RE teachers who were the main participants were teaching in government junior secondary schools in an urban area in Botswana. In each school, one of the teachers had a minimum of ten years teaching experience and the other had less than ten years teaching experience. The teachers who had ten years or more of RE teaching

experience had taught both the old single religion-based type of RE and the new multi-faith RE, while those who had less than ten years were only exposed to the new one. The teachers' experiences were important because the single religion-based Christian RE curriculum had one religion as its content. In addition, there were the teachers' guide and notes, students' workbooks and worksheets which were available. The multi-faith RE, on the other hand, has various religions as its content and different textbooks are the main and easily available resource to both teachers and students.

Furthermore, the two schools were selected for study due to their accessibility and convenience since they were about two kilometres apart from each other since I could observe two teachers in a day. Furthermore, I chose junior secondary school teachers because that is the level where the multi-faith RE curriculum is presently implemented in the Botswana Education system.

The study involved a great deal of classroom observations (Appendix H), as well as pre and post lesson interviews (Appendix F & G) and that is why I had to choose schools that were adjacent to each other. This allowed me to observe more lessons since I could move between the two schools on the same day. I also chose the same class and the same teacher in each of the two schools so that I could constantly observe them, because observation is an essential requirement in qualitative research. At Togal Junior Secondary School I worked with Mrs. Laban who taught the class 2EF and Mrs. Koloni who taught 2AB. At Makala Junior Secondary School, I observed Mr. Tiro and Miss Rabin who taught classes 2AB and 2CD respectively. I observed the same group of teachers and students so that I could establish consistency in my study. The fewer classes and teachers that I chose to observe, helped me to spend more time with each case. I also wanted to find out how teachers prepare their students for examinations especially in the final year of the students' secondary schooling.

All the teachers involved in this study were teaching RE only, even though they had another teaching subject which they did during their teacher training. For example, at Togala Junior Secondary School, Mrs. Koloni told me that she once taught English, while Mrs. Laban had briefly taught Setswana. At Makala Junior Secondary School, Mr Tiro and Miss Rabin had each taught only RE. I chose the two groups as a way of finding out if there were any difference in the teachers' understanding of the multi-faith RE curriculum and in their classroom practices. I also wanted to find out if the number of

years of RE teaching has an impact in the understanding and classroom practices of these teachers.

Miss Rabin at Makala Junior Secondary School had twelve years teaching experience whilst her colleague Mr Tiro had two. At Togala Junior Secondary School, Mrs. Laban had thirteen years of teaching RE experience whilst Mrs Koloni had four years. I also explored the extent to which the curriculum had or had not influenced the RE teachers' lives as persons, especially with regard to their understanding and application of diversity in RE classes, since they taught students who were from different socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicity, genders and to a lesser extent different religions. In my choice, I explored the teachers' sense-making, feelings, perceptions and opinions about RE. In addition, I discovered that they were all parents even though that was not part of what I was investigating.

In addition to the four participants, I included secondary participants, namely, RE students, and Education Officers. I also interviewed a group of eight RE in-service teachers who were on study leave at the University of Botswana and all these teachers had a teaching experience of at least six years. Out of the eight in-service teachers, two of them were males and the rest were females. I sought the opinions of the in-service teachers as a way of soliciting their views on what they understood the multi-faith RE curriculum entailed and how they taught it. Furthermore, I wanted to find out if their views about the multi-faith RE curriculum were similar or different from my primary participants.

I interviewed five Education Officers of RE from the Ministry of Education - three of the officers were in the secondary school inspectorate, one was an examinations officer from the Examinations Research and Testing Division (ERTD), (Appendix I) and another one was a Curriculum Development Officer from the Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation. The reason for choosing the Ministry of Education officials especially in the inspectorate was to hear from them what they regarded as the appropriate classroom practices and what they observed as they visited teachers during inspection. Two of the officers in the inspectorate were interviewed at their homes because they indicated to me that they did not have adequate time to talk to me during working hours. It took me two weeks to have an interview with the examination officer because she told me that she had a tight schedule. I chose Education Officers because

they are better positioned in terms of interpreting issues regarding curriculum change and implementation since information about educational matters especially change, is communicated to them first, before it reaches the teachers. Officers would in turn relay it to the teachers either directly or indirectly through the school principals. In addition, they are the ones who see to it that educational changes are fully implemented by teachers. In addition, Education Officers play a supervisory role to teachers. It is also important to note that these officers in most of the cases possess important documents such as circulars that may not be made available to teachers.

I involved the examination officer because she meets RE teachers at examination centres every end of year in December to mark the junior certificate final examinations. It is at the examination centres where teachers raise concerns regarding issues that concern them in relation to especially testing and examinations (Appendix K). The Curriculum Development Officer meets regularly RE task force members who are mainly teachers for syllabus review, trial and textbook reviews. In these meeting the RE curriculum officer gets a feel of what teachers think of the subject and how they teach it.

I conducted focus group interviews with a sample of RE students (Appendix J) in the two schools. Students were interviewed in order for them to give me their opinions and experiences in as far as what takes place inside RE classrooms and what they think are effective ways of learning and teaching that benefit them. I used convenient purpose sampling in choosing these students, because I had asked their teachers to select students and group them into three categories of those that the teachers thought were very able, average performers and low performers. The different categories were preferred as a way of asking the students to share with me their successes and challenges in relation to how they learn the multi-faith RE curriculum. However, in the focus groups, only the "able" students could answer questions that I posed and also express their views. English could have been a communication barrier to the "weak" students because they kept quiet all the time during the interview. I used interviews to better understand what RE students regarded as effective ways that teachers use to teach RE, especially in relation to their teachers' preferred techniques. I also wanted to establish the relationship between the teachers' practices and their preferred learning techniques from the viewpoint of students. The views of students were meant to further inform and guide me, whether what they said in the interviews matched what teachers did in the classroom.

Of significance, is that there were more female teachers in my study because the majority of RE teachers in Botswana are presently females. For example, at Makala Junior Secondary School there were four RE teachers and only one of them was male, while at Togal Junior Secondary School, there were three RE teachers and all were females. That I had one male participating teacher out of the four teachers in the two schools was indicative of the large numbers of females who teach RE in Botswana secondary schools as shown in one government report (Botswana Government, 2004a).

### 3.8 Profile of the students

The research took place in two government secondary schools in Botswana that have a mixed sex education enrolment and where both the students and teachers were mainly Batswana (citizens of Botswana) of African descent. In both schools, there were few expatriate students and most students that were in the focus group, said that they belonged to the Christian religion. At Makala Junior Secondary School, a few students said that they belonged to African Traditional Religion, and an even smaller number claimed to belong to Islam and Rastafarianism. Some of the comments they made in class also made me to conclude that they mainly subscribed to and were familiar with Christianity.

### 3.9 Participants at Makala Junior Secondary School

At Makala Junior Secondary School there were four RE teachers – three females and one male. Out of the four RE teachers, two agreed and volunteered to work with me, namely Miss Rabin and Mr. Tiro. Makala Junior Secondary School started its day at 7:00 am in summer and at 7:25 am in winter. A lesson lasted for 40 minutes and RE lessons were always doubles, meaning that they lasted for 80 minutes. Assemblies were held on Mondays and Fridays and they started with a Christian hymn that was followed by the Christians' Lord's Prayer. Lastly, the teacher who was conducting assembly had to make announcements if they were any. In almost all the cases there were announcements, after which students dispersed to attend their first lesson for the day.

### 3.9.1 Miss Rabin

Miss Rabin was a female teacher who had twelve years of RE teaching experience and a senior teacher of the optional subjects that are referred to as general subjects which include RE. In addition, she coached Chess in her school. This is what she said about her position as senior teacher of the general subjects:

> I am a senior teacher Grade One, and I supervise the options general subjects which are Religious Education and Physical Education. What is expected of me is that I should observe all teachers in my unit. I also check teachers' scheme books - they are submitted on a monthly basis. I make schedules for setting tests, setting dates for submission of scheme books and also make sure that they are up to date. In addition I am involved in extra curricular activities. I coach Chess, but I do not have anyone to assist me. (Interview with Miss Rabin, 29th September, 2006)

The above excerpt shows that she was unhappy that there was no teacher to help her coach Chess. Miss Rabin told me that she had previously taught at other three secondary schools before she transferred to her present school. She also indicated that she previously taught Setswana for a short time which was her second teaching subject. Miss Rabin had taught the old RE curriculum and also satisfied the requirements that I was looking for in terms of her experience having taught both the old and the new RE curriculum. In addition, she was teaching students who were in their second year in a three-year junior secondary programme. She was expected to teach fewer classes because she was a senior teacher and had to attend to some administrative matters. She told me that she did not practice any religion.

### 3.9.2 Mr. Tiro

Mr. Tiro was a male RE teacher with two years teaching experience and by the time I interviewed him, he was doing Pastoral Theology studies part time. He was a lay-pastor of the United Congregationalist Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA) in a village about forty kilometers from where he taught. He coached a traditional dance troupe and told me that he was in the process of starting a choral music choir in the school. Mr. Tiro had only taught the new multi-faith RE curriculum, hence he satisfied the requirements that I was looking for in terms of experience of having taught the new curriculum only. He taught first and second year RE students. When I first met him he was teaching a group of students who were in their second year of a three-year junior secondary schooling. In

addition, he was a professional gospel singer and had released two albums which according to him were doing reasonably well.

### 3.10 Participants at Togal Junior Secondary School

At Togal Junior Secondary School there were three RE teachers and all were females and two volunteered to work with me, namely Mrs. Laban and Mrs. Koloni. The school started the day at 7:15 am in summer and at 7:30 am in winter. General assemblies were held thrice a week, that is on Mondays, Wednesdays and on Fridays. Just like at Makala Junior Secondary School, assembly started with a Christian hymn followed by a Christian Lord's Prayer. In most instances a teacher who was conducting assembly would read from the Bible and give a short moral lesson based on what had been read.

#### 3.10.1 Mrs. Laban

Mrs. Laban was a senior teacher responsible for general subjects, which included RE. She had thirteen years experience of teaching RE. As a senior teacher, she taught fewer classes, which were not to be more than three, because I was told that she had to do some administrative work as well. She had taught in four different schools before she was transferred to Togal Junior Secondary School. She had briefly taught Setswana which was her other teaching subject and she was a member of the disciplinary committee in her school.

#### 3.10.2 Mrs. Koloni

Mrs. Koloni was the coordinator of RE at Togal Junior Secondary School with four years RE teaching experience. Her teaching subjects were RE and English, and she had taught English for a short time before concentrating only on RE across all the three grades which are called *forms* in Botswana – that is Form 1, 2 and 3. She was a staff coordinator for Scripture Union in her school she told me that she was a staunch Christian, and that her husband was a church minister.

### 3.11 Data collection procedures

It is important that a researcher makes important decisions regarding the selection of appropriate data collecting tools and techniques. Out of the various instruments available, I chose the ones that best suited my study because each of them has its own unique characteristics. It is also important that as a researcher I had to be familiar enough with various techniques in order to make a wise choice. Turney and Robb (1971) say that in the choice of the instruments, the researcher has to be aware of their characteristics, and strengths as well as their limitations. This knowledge is important because it helps the researcher to gain a better understanding in terms of how the tools will be used in the study. In collecting data for this study, I used observations, interviews, researcher's journal, biographical questionnaire and documents.

#### 3.11.1 Biographical Questionnaire

A questionnaire consists of questions that ask for facts, opinions, attitudes or preferences of the participants (Turney & Robb, 1971). In the biographical questionnaire (Appendix D) I enquired about each of the participants' background, teaching experiences, conceptualisation of the multi-faith RE and the teaching techniques and strategies that they used. The participants were each given the questionnaire to respond to, and I had to collect it the following day. I used a biographical questionnaire on my primary participants, which was followed by an intensive one-on-one interview as well as subsequent interviews in order to solicit their views on the multi-faith RE curriculum. I first used a biographical questionnaire in order to understand better the participants before I could engage them in an intensive interview. The biographical questionnaire demanded me to know the teachers' bio-data and their perceptions regarding their understanding and how they teach the multi-faith RE curriculum including what they regarded as its strengths and the challenges that they faced. The biographical questionnaire was used as an ice-breaker before the interview.

### 3.11.2 Video-recorded observations

Observation is a popular data collecting method in qualitative methodology. Its main aim is to gather first-hand information about naturally occurring activities. Fieldnotes that are taken during observation, have to be rich, by being detailed in their descriptions of events and actions. For example, the setting where the observations take place have to be clearly described to the reader who will not be there. The descriptions must be vivid enough to allow a reader to understand what happened and the manner in which it happened (Patton, 2002). The observer's notes become the eyes and the ears and perceptual senses for the reader because the descriptions must be factual, accurate and thorough. Silverman (1993:21) notes that "most qualitative research describes and illuminates the meaningful social world as prescribed by the interpretivist paradigm". He further notes that observation over a period of time is necessary in qualitative research in order for the researcher to be absorbed in the historical and social world of the researched and that is why I had to spend considerable time with the participants in their natural context which is the classroom. Emerson, Fretz & Shaw (1995) say that in qualitative research, the researcher enters into a social setting which may not have been previously known in an intimate way in order to know the people involved.

Since I spent about eight months observing teachers in their classrooms that allowed me to fully describe what I saw, and also helped me to avoid my personal judgments and any interpretations to interfere with what was going on. That is why Pugach, (2006) notes that the actions of the participants have to be separated from the researcher's judgments and his or her reactions to it. During observation, the researcher observes the participants' direct behaviour rather than their perceptions and therefore avoids many sources of error. Observations are helpful compared to interviews because at times what the participants say is often different from what they actually do. Patton (2002:262) adds another important dimension to observations when he says that they give the researcher "the opportunity to see things that may routinely escape awareness among people in the society" because no one ever paid attention to them because they could have taken those things for granted.

As a researcher I spent eight months interacting with the participants so that my presence could become familiar to them hence reducing a situation where they may have behaved uncharacteristically. This is appropriate because their natural behaviour is likely to eventually show itself if they contrive any uncharacteristic behaviour (Walford, 2003; Cohen et al, 2003). For example, initially, teachers had contrived not to administer corporal punishment, but with time all the teachers administered corporal punishment on their students. The prolonged involvement with the teachers allowed me to enter their world and gain a better understanding of their practices. Furthermore, repeated classroom observations prevented me from reaching conclusions that could have been based on a single isolated behaviour. The prolonged observations and consistent interaction with teachers helped to avoid creating an artificial world of the teachers' classroom practices.

Furthermore, observations are suitable since they guard against a situation where I might have used interviews or questionnaires alone, and the participants could have misled me by telling me what they thought I wanted to hear while in practice they did something else (Miller & Glassner, 2004). Vulliamy, Lewin and Stephens (1990) observe that at times participants say what they think researchers want to hear and by so doing they conceal reality, hence what people say in interviews can often be checked and verified by observing what they do.

Throughout my classroom observations I wrote observational notes. As Pugach (2006) advises, one can separate the descriptions of the observation from interpretation by using two columns when recording observations – one column for descriptions in a chronological order in which events occur on the left and another on the right hand side, where the researcher records the personal comments, reactions and even questions about what is being observed. In addition to the two columns suggested by Pugach (2006), I developed a third one, where I recorded the codes as they emerged from the data, and I referred to it as the "observer's comments". The information from the three columns gave me a clearer picture of what was happening. While Newbury (2001) takes the position that there are no fast rules as to how observational notes should be compiled, he advises that researchers should follow a consistent format and style that is workable to them, one that best fits the needs of the research project. According to Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995:4) "there is no one 'natural' or 'correct' way of writing about what one observes. Rather, because descriptions involve issues of perceptions and interpretation, different descriptions of 'the same' situations and events are possible". The researcher may

emphasise certain things and leave out others, ignore or even marginalize them. In writing observation notes, the researcher is also involved in interpretation and sense-making which is based on selection. The researcher makes a deliberate yet informed decision about what to write, to leave out, emphasise, ignore and trivialise. That is why Patton (2002:303) says that fieldnotes "should contain everything that the observer believes is worth noting". In writing my fieldnotes, I always had to bear in mind my key research questions so that they could further guide me.

The direct observational notes are statements that describe events experienced mainly through watching or listening and have to be detailed since they form a major component of the data on which later conclusions are based (Newbury, 2001). That is why Patton (2002:303) says that "no skill is more critical in fieldwork than learning to be descriptive, concrete and detailed". That is why I had to write down what took place in the setting in a systematic way. Furthermore, "fieldnotes also contain the observer's own feelings, reactions to experience, and reflections and about the personal meaning and significance of what has been observed" (Patton, 2002:303). In the notes, I indicated the name of the participant, time, date, and year. I had earlier on explained this process to the teachers and told them that I would be observing them without me being involved in whatever was taking place in the classrooms. I also indicated to them that I would be taking notes and video-recording their classroom activities

As a way of capturing and retrieving what was going on, I video-recorded the various activities in the classroom such as the teachers' presentation of lessons as well as their tone of voice, facial expression and any other movements in the classroom. The video-camera allowed me to watch the proceedings after the lessons in order to further understand better the events that took place in the classroom (Moyles, 2002). Observations helped me to clarify some issues that were raised by the teachers during the initial in-depth interviews, pre-lesson and post-lesson interviews. Brock (2002) says that in such a situation, the researcher is able to match the comments in the interviews with the actual practices. Observations helped me to confirm or to refute what teachers said in the interviews. In my observations, I was guided by a semi-structured observation schedule (Appendix H). Each teacher was observed more than ten times over a period of eight months and each observation lasted for two teaching periods which is one hour and twenty minutes because each period was forty minutes long.

During the period, I spent in the field, I was able to observe Mr Tiro 13 times, Mrs. Laban 15, Mrs. Koloni 14, and Miss Rabin 11 times. I engaged in classroom observations in order to have an insight into the classroom activities of the participants in their classrooms. Furthermore, I wanted to establish the extent to which teachers linked the students' experiences with the various topics taught, and the extent to which teachers were able to recognize the students' strengths and the challenges they encounter in learning RE, as well as to find out how teachers teach RE in a diverse class. Diversity here was, especially in terms of students' backgrounds, gender and ability.

### 3.11.3 Interviews

Holstein and Gubrium (2004:140) say that interviews act as a "window on the world" because they help researchers to generate empirical data about a social world of the participants when they ask them to talk about their lives. They note that during interviews, the interaction between the participant and the researcher leads to a creation of a social world, and that a certain form of knowledge is constructed, hence there is meaning-making that comes about due to the interaction. Another point that they raised is that the researcher has to be open to the participant by willing to "share his or her own feelings and deepest thoughts" (Holstein and Gubrium (2004:147). This too might have its effect just like not saying much about oneself. The point is taken further by Baker, (2004) who indicates that by virtue of being a researcher, one assumes multiple identities, for example, being a colleague, friend and even a confessor.

From the biographical questionnaire I was able to develop an in-depth semi-structured interview guide for the four participants (Appendix E). Using the in-depth semi-structured interview, I asked for further clarification on issues raised in the biographical questionnaire regarding the participants' understanding of the RE curriculum and how they teach the various topics. I had a one-on-one interview whereby I used this questionnaire on participants in order to solicit their views regarding their understanding of the curriculum, their classroom practices and the challenges that they faced.

In all the groups I interviewed, I used a semi-structured interview guide which allowed me to follow-up on questions. The interview guide had questions that guided and gave the discussion a focus, whilst at the same time the discussion was allowed to flow freely (Cohen *et al*, 2000). I used semi-structured interviews because they lead to open responses, which permitted me to see the world as seen by the participants. Furthermore, I was able to adjust the interview schedule depending on the emphasis of the interviewee's responses or the direction of the interview. This flexibility enabled me to develop and use new questions on the spot hence gaining more in-depth understanding of the interviewee's teaching practices, beliefs, attitudes and situation. The semi-structured interview guide had questions I wanted to ask and was flexible since I could vary the order of questions or even wording depending on the responses that I got from the participants. Qualitative interviewing allows the researcher to be flexible in terms of how he or she uses their knowledge, as well as interpersonal skills to further explore interesting or unexpected ideas. Patton (2002:21) says that qualitative interviews reveal the participant's "depth of emotion, the ways they have organised their world, their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences and their basic perceptions". For example, during the interviews, the participants talked about what they thought was important and meaningful to them using their own words.

Interviews help the researcher to gain the interviewee's perspective, experiences, opinions, knowledge and even feelings (Patton, 2002). Qualitative interviews tend to be more personal, hence they allow for follow-up questions. In addition, the participants are allowed to express their opinions. When using interviews, the researcher relies on the fact that people are able to give an account, for example, of their behaviour, practices and actions to those who ask them questions (Walker, 1985). Furthermore, the researcher has to establish rapport with the participant, by being a good listener and also making the participant comfortable by choosing settings where they can relax and talk openly. However, my initial interviews with the four teachers were intensive (Appendix E) and were partly based on the responses from the biographical questionnaire (Appendix D). In the post lesson interview sessions (Appendix G), I met with the participants either in their office or a classroom where there was only me and the interviewee.

The interviews I conducted were audio-recorded, transcribed and the data was coded according to emerging issues as well as the pre-established categories. Initially, I had used a standard tape-recorder, but later on I used a digital voice-recorder whereby I had the privilege to down-load the interviews onto the computer and then onto the compact discs (CDs) for ease of data storage and retrieval. One advantage of recording the interviews was to attend to crucial elements of the participant such as voice and pauses. For example, the participants would at times pause as a way of trying to digest an issue in order to clarify it, while at times they paused and retracted the statements that they could have made earlier. The recorded interviews gave me a chance to listen to them in my own time, hence I was able to make follow ups on some issues, especially that were related to my key research questions. The interviews were both formal and informal, and the formal ones were held at the convenience of the participants, usually when they had free periods during the day or in the afternoons when they were not engaged in actual teaching.

I conducted an intensive interview with each of the four participants before I began the observations. The initial in-depth interview (Appendix E) lasted for about one hour. This interview was semi-structured and consisted questions that were in four parts: background information, teachers' professional activities, teachers' content knowledge, classroom processes and teachers' beliefs about teaching, and the context of the school. These initial interviews allowed me to gain insight into the participants' perspectives about their understanding and implementation of the multi-faith RE curriculum. This intensive interview was meant to explore the teachers' perceptions regarding their classroom practices. The initial intensive interviews were followed by the follow up interviews that lasted for about thirty minutes. The follow-up of the in-depth interviews, allowed the participants to explain further the issues that I felt needed further clarification. At the end of the process I transcribed the interviews from the tapes verbatim. I asked the participants to check for accuracy in transcription especially on my interviews with them. In all the instances, the teachers agreed with my recording of the interviews. In my report, I used excerpts from interviews and informal discussions to capture the exact words of the teachers.

In addition to these interviews, I also conducted pre-lesson and post-lesson interviews (Appendix F & G). The post-lesson interviews (Appendix G) usually took a longer time because I requested the participants to reflect on the lesson they taught with regard to the various choices that they made about the techniques and strategies that they used. I was

able to conduct the pre-lesson and post-lesson interviews only if the participant was not preparing for the next lesson or was to engage on some school activity. Pre-lesson interviews (Appendix F) were shorter because they lasted for 15-20 minutes. I asked the participants to narrate to me what they were going to do in class and how they were going to teach and why they would use certain teaching techniques, and strategies. Participants were to indicate the teaching and learning aids, and ways of making sure that the objectives were to be achieved as well as their envisaged constraints of the lesson.

In further triangulating my data, I interviewed five RE Education Officers in the Ministry of Education in Botswana, so that they could shed light regarding how the curriculum is handled by teachers as well as what they witnessed happening in RE classes during their school inspection visits of selected schools. I also involved in-service teachers and students in focus group interviews. The strength of the focus group interviews is the interaction that takes place between members of a group, and how they express their feelings about an issue (Wilkinson, 2004). Members of a focus group will naturally react to issues raised by the other members of the group. Another, strength of a focus group interview is its diversity in terms of members telling stories, teasing, challenging, agreeing and even boasting. In focus group interviews, participants tend to be more open and would say something they would not say in a one to one interview. Focus group interviews allow for the building up of an argument (Wilkinson, 2004) since there is a dialogue between the participants. The weakness is that it takes up a lot of time just like an interview hence few issues might be discussed at a time. Furthermore, some members may dominate the discussion, as was the case with mine.

Even though the various forms of interviews are helpful in qualitative research, they also have limitations. Miller & Glassner, (2004), Silverman (2001), More, (2000) and Vogt, (1997), note that one major limitation of interviews is that participants always give rational explanations instead of what their beliefs, attitudes and views are. At times interviewees provide answers that they know researchers are looking for. That is why Miller & Glassner (2004) note that the interviewees at times deliberately mislead the researcher. For example, in my initial interview with one of the teachers, she told me that the multi-faith RE was a good programme. Later, during the course of my fieldwork, she told me that she had always had a dislike for it and was wondering why the government introduced it. Had I only used interview as my only source, this particular participant would have misled me.

I was also aware that in my interviews, I was intruding into the private lives of the participants. There could have been certain issues that the participants may not have wanted me as an outsider to know of. However, it is natural that people will not want to reveal a lot about themselves, like when they allow an outsider to know more about them. For example, in my initial interviews with the four main participants, they had indicated that there was collaboration amongst RE teachers, but in subsequent interviews they expressed the contrary. According to Measor (1985:63) interviewing involves "entering another person's world, and perspective, but remaining alert to its configurations at the same time". This is an ethical dimension that researchers need to be aware of (Measor, 1985; Edward & Talbot, 1999). Silverman (2001) says that interviews create an artificial social world as the researcher and the participant interact. For example, like when the interviewee gives the researcher rational answers or deliberately misleads the researcher. Measor (1985) highlights one of the problems of qualitative interviews that of the researcher building relationships with the participants. The researcher can be able to access the lives and the world-view of the participants if there is a good relationship between the two parties. The participants have to accept the researcher as a reasonable person who could be trusted with information about their personal lives hence the quality of the interview data will largely depend on the quality of the relationship between the researcher and the participants.

### 3.11.4 Document Review

Document review or analysis is when the researcher examines a set of documents. These written material and other documents could be official publications or reports, personal diaries, letters and others (Patton, 2002). Records, documents, artifacts and archives constitute a particularly rich source of information. Documents may provide the researcher with information about several things that may not be observed, for example they may reveal events that took place long before the research began. Its strength is the coverage of the historical aspect of a programme or policy. Documents largely provide additional data to the one that the qualitative researcher will have accessed, for example, in interviews and observations. The contents of the document are not affected or influenced by the researcher unlike interviews and observations. I used several documents and these were official circulars, teachers' scheme of work, students' tests, class work and some school and national based examinations papers (Appendix L & M).

The documents were used to corroborate and strengthen evidence obtained from other sources (Bell, 1999). I referred to documents so that my analysis could not be affected by my own understanding of how RE is taught. The use of documents helped clarify issues that could have been clouded by my own bias and possibly of my participants. Furthermore, some of the documents such as teachers' scheme of work, tests and examinations papers helped me to relate the teachers' professional knowledge with their classroom practices. I went through the teachers' scheme of work and students' examinations and tests and class work that the teachers assigned, in order to understand how they were structured why they were structured in such a manner. I also wanted to determine how consistent these records were in relation to the teachers' classroom practices.

### 3.11.5 Researcher's Journal

The process of research includes different forms of writing and one of them is a journal. This refers to where the researcher compiles the subjective and objective aspects of a study (Newbury, 2001). In the journal I recorded my fears, thoughts, successes and the picture of the whole research process. For example, I recorded the observations and interviews as well as their successes and shortcomings. Newbury (2001) says that in the researcher's journal there has to be a record of what is done, not done or completed during the fieldwork. That is why Delamont (2002:66) adds that in a researcher's journal, the researcher compiles "sacrifices made, risks taken and hardships taken" For example, I contacted three schools that were not comfortable with my research until I was welcomed at Togal and Makala junior secondary schools. In one of the schools that I had earlier contacted, the teachers had agreed to work with me, but they later changed their minds. I had wanted to observe the participants every time they had a class, but in some cases they indicated to me that it was not necessary, since they said that they would not be doing anything worth observing like giving back test papers. Similarly, they were not always ready to read through our recorded interviews, indicating to me that they did not have time. If they got the scripts, they would take a long time before they could give me feedback and that affected my schedule. As a result, they did not have the chance to read all the scripts of the interviews as I had intended. At times, the school programme had to change because of an unplanned event

### 3.12. Validation of data

Validity in qualitative research is the degree to which a study is honest and true to its intent, context and its reporting. I used several data collection sources in order to determine a pattern of emerging issues, themes or contradictions. Triangulation of data was adopted in order to establish consistency of issues or lack thereof. Triangulation refers to the use of a variety of data sources by a researcher in order to obtain a clearer picture of a phenomenon (Patton, 2002; Bell, 1999; Cohen *et al*, 2000; Merriam, 1988). Relying on one source may affect the validity of the findings and lead the researcher to accept initial impressions too readily. I preferred triangulation because the more sources I used the clearer and more complete became the picture I was studying (Newman & Benz, 1998; Padgett, 2004; Scholz & Tietje, 2002). Furthermore, the shortcomings of any one method can be overcome if different data collection methods are used (Kalliomeneimi, 2003). For example, what I did not clearly follow in my observations was further clarified through post-lesson interviews and vice-versa.

In my effort to ensure validity, I made use of a variety of data collecting methods, and these were member checks, interviews, observations, documents, researcher's journal, biographical questionnaire and reflexivity (Drisko, 2004). I used multiple sources of evidence because no single source of data is complete in itself; hence different sources complemented each other (Tellis, 1997). By using a variety of sources, I was able to obtain "a deeper and many faceted view" of the teachers' understanding of the RE and their classroom practices (Kallioneimi, 2003:185). What teachers did and said in my study had to be put side by side with other forms of data gathering techniques.

I transcribed audio tapes and video-recorded materials immediately after the interviews and class observations respectively. I read the interviews several times so that I was able to develop a portrait of each of the participants' experience and practices. For example: Did the data say what I thought it said? I compared my findings with what teachers said during the initial interviews, pre-lesson and post-lesson interviews, and what I observed in classes over a period of time. Furthermore, the time I spent on-site allowed me to obtain an adequate picture of the RE teachers' practices. As a validity check, 50% of the coded transcripts were peer-reviewed by a member of the department at my university to check for agreement on the selection of codes assigned to chunks of information. The

peer reviewer agreed with the codes that I generated. Furthermore, member check can assist the researcher in validating data since the researcher has to go back to the participants with data so that they are verified. Silverman (1993:15) refers to this verification as "respondent validity." For example, I allowed the teachers to comment on what I had documented during the interviews as a way of making sure that what was documented was consistent with what teachers said. I asked participants to read through my interviews with them in order to allow them to make further comments if any or to correct any data that did not reflect what they said.

### 3.13 Reflexivity

The researcher's presence inevitably affects what takes place in the setting of the participants, since the researcher has to necessarily interact with the participants (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). For example, I spent hours in the same classrooms with participants observing them. In qualitative research, the researcher attempts to be clear about his or her biases, presuppositions and interpretations, so that the reader is able to make independent judgment of the report. I brought my various subjectivities into the participants' researched world because it was natural for me to come with a baggage of my values, beliefs and ideas, for example, of what I regarded as effective teaching which could have been different from the teachers' views. Furthermore, as a teacher trainer I had hoped to see teachers varying their teaching techniques and strategies, by being innovative like using information communication and technology (ICT), inviting speakers from within and outside school to speak on certain issues related to the syllabus topics and taking students out on educational tours. To my dismay all these did not readily happen. Furthermore, in qualitative research it is important for the researchers to acknowledge their biases because by so doing they remove what Clandinin (1986:27) refers to as the "subject-object dichotomy". As a researcher I needed to be reflexive, by being aware of and making known both my influence and bias because both self-awareness and self-knowledge are important when carrying out a qualitative type of research. Reflexivity involves a sense of self-consciousness as Delamont (2002:8) says that it is "a means that the researcher recognizes and glories in the endless cycle of interactions and perceptions which characterise relationships with other human beings". As a researcher, I attempted to explore the world of the teachers while at the same time I had to be mindful of my own biases. Reflexivity emphasises the importance of the researcher's self-awareness and ownership of one's perspectives. Patton (2002) says that

in reflexivity, the researcher has to observe the researched, and how one interacts with the participants.

In order to better understand the teachers' practices, I had to move away from my familiar world of being a teacher educator to that of the teachers in order to create what Baszanger and Bodier (2004:14) refer to as "personal proximity". Similarly, Vulliamy, Lewin and Stephens (1990:86) refer to this process as "getting inside the perspectives" of those whom one is studying. It was through getting inside the teachers' perspectives that I began to understand their issues that are significant to them from their own perspective and not mine, because the world of the researched has to be understood from their standpoint and not that of the researcher. Furthermore, it has to be noted that a situation or event has multiple interpretations and perspectives, since reality is multi-faceted. For example, what mattered most to teachers was for their students to pass examinations. Furthermore, teachers did not make extensive and elaborate lesson plans which I had thought they would do. For example, when I first met Mrs. Laban she told me that I should not expect a lot in their classes when she said;

> Sir, we do not have any written lesson plans we just teach. (Conversation with Mrs Laban, 4th October, 2006)

Lastly, as a researcher, I assumed multiple identities, such as acting like a colleague to the participants in order to bridge the gap between me and the teachers. For example as a friend I had to always ask how their families were doing and what their future professional plans were. I did this in my attempt to bridge the gap between myself as a researcher and the participants.

### 3.14 Methodological limitations

The methods that I emphasised had limitation as well. For example, purposive sampling as a form of non-random sampling has a probability of sampling bias. There is, for example, a potential for inaccuracies in the researcher's selection since it depends on willing individuals or groups who may not properly represent the population. Since I was mainly using observations, I could have modified the behaviour of the participants since they were aware of my presence and that they were being observed. They could have

presented the ideal instead of their true selves. Since I spent time observing the participants and also conducted interviews before and after the lessons, the teachers' perceptions and practices may have been positively affected by this process mainly because they knew what I was looking for. For example, Mrs. Koloni said this to me after several interviews:

> You really helped me to identify my weaknesses in teaching. You are the only person who is able to say something about my teaching because since I joined teaching four years ago, no one ever observed me teach hence no one ever said anything about my teaching. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 6 July, 2007)

As an overt observer, I was aware of the effect that this research could have had on the participants. One possibility is that the participants' behaviours and attitudes might have positively changed because I was always there and they knew what I expected from them. Patton (2002) and Edwards & Talbot (1999) note that people may behave quite differently especially when they know that they are being observed. That is why Leech (1989:71) says that "even a situation where all we do is observe, as watchers we influence the watched". Furthermore, since I was a non-participant observer, teachers may not have felt that I appreciated what was going on in their classrooms, because I did not physically grapple with their uncertainties and even confusion as they were involved in teaching. To the participants, I might have largely remained an outsider even though I was with them for about eight months. Furthermore, the responses of the participants can be emotionally and conceptually loaded, hence make analysis difficult (Roux & DuPreez, 2005).

In a qualitative case study, the researcher is the main collecting and analysing instrument. Merriam (1988) says that as the main instrument and also as a human being, the researcher is likely to have limitation such as personal biases, making mistakes and at times missing pertinent opportunities that could have enriched the study. For example in my case, there were times when I was unable to observe participants because of unplanned school activities. Furthermore, I had to use my discretion as when to observe more closely, what and when, as well as to know that I had observed enough. Since I exercised discretion most of the time, I may have missed an opportunity which could have added value to my study. In addition, being a teacher educator could have affected my data collection and analysis because I expected participants to be systematic in their teaching in terms of organised lesson plans.

Emerson, Fretz & Shaw (1995) observe that since researchers in qualitative approach use fieldnotes, that may necessarily reflect and convey their own understanding and not that of the participants. They further note that "the researcher still remains an outsider and a partial stranger to the world of those studied even in 'immersion' because the researcher" continues to be a researcher interested in and pursuing research issues" (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995:35). There is an element of truth in what they are saying because researchers will always write down what they think is meaningful and important to them.

The limitation of interviews is that the interviewee presents selective perceptions only, and leaves out anything that may seem to threaten their identity. Furthermore, they produce a large volume of data which has to be condensed, categorized and interpreted and made meaningful, which is a time consuming exercise because it is mainly resource intensive (Patton, 2002). Another disadvantage of qualitative interviewing is that the interviewee may say more than he or she could have intended to say only to regret later. I had wanted to always constantly and consistently interview teachers before the lessons but that was not possible, because they were either preparing for another lesson or were just busy with something and hence could not do it. I had few pre-lesson interviews because teachers were either from a lesson, preparing for another lesson, marking, or doing something else and would tell me that they were busy. This meant that I could not always match what the teachers said they were going to do in class and what they actually did. One disadvantage of documents is that they might influence the views of a researcher due to their biased opinion.

Merriam (1988) and Bell (1999) say that a qualitative case-study methodology deals with a restricted sample of individuals, hence it is not easy to generalise the findings even though it is from this small sample that some light could be shed that could be of help in a large survey type study. My study focused on a specific group of participants and setting, hence it is difficult to generalise the results to a broader group of RE teachers. This might suggest the need for a large scale quantitative study that can test generalisability of the insights generated from this qualitative research.

The audio-tape and video-camera at times presented technical problems, and that affected my data collecting process. For example, I started my observation exercise without the aid of a video camera and conducted some of the interviews without a tape recorder. At times the battery of the video recorder went dead and needed recharging, whilst the lesson was in progress hence I had to resort to taking hand written notes. Initially, I used a standard audio tape but I later switched to a digital one, which I found easy to use and portable, since the recorded data could be stored in electronic form. Furthermore, in my fieldwork I used a video camera which was not digital, hence data was not easily transferable. At times, I experienced problems of unplanned changes in the school programme such as unannounced meetings. For example, in both schools, a week was set aside for the writing of end of month tests in all subjects yet in most cases the announcement about when to begin writing tests was done a few days just before the actual writing of the tests. This further meant that I could not observe practical teaching, since the students and the teachers I was to observe were engaged in this exercise.

Out of the four participants one declined to be video-recorded. This meant that I had to take hand-written notes of what was happening in her class and follow up that with a post-lesson interview. As a result, I was not able to watch her classroom practices on video after the lesson, the same way I did with the other three participants. I had to take notes which meant that I summed up most of the issues and this left a gap in my data gathering process.

I had initially intended to use *stimulated recall* technique which was meant to remind teachers of their actions during the lesson, as well as to gain access into their thoughts and decision-making processes as they were teaching. If I had used the technique, I could have watched the video-recordings with the teachers as a way of gaining access into the thought processes and decision-making of the teachers. The technique could have been helpful, because unlike other behaviours, it is difficult to predict someone's thoughts. This technique could have assisted teachers to recall what they said and did. Teachers could have told me why they did certain things and why they said certain things at various times. If I had used this technique I could have been able to understand the teachers' decision making process as they reflected on their classroom practices. I asked teachers to watch the video with me in order to clarify events that happened during the observed lessons (Calderhead, 1981) but they declined, indicating that they did not have time to watch that. In addition, one of the participants was taken ill just before I started

the observations but later joined the school, but was again taken ill in the last month of my fieldwork, where she was given a two months sick leave. I had fewer observations and interviews with this particular participant compared to the rest.

Furthermore, though I had the teachers' teaching time-tables, I still had to contact the teachers to further confirm if there were no changes. There were times when there were unplanned changes in the school programme such as when there was an important day to commemorate. In almost all the cases, I had to confirm if the participants were teaching and were ready to be observed and I had to phone them or send a mobile short message to confirm their readiness to be observed.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I discussed the qualitative research method in terms of its strengths and shortcomings. I indicated that I chose the method because it provides the researcher with an in-depth understanding of how participants interact with their natural environment. I also indicated that I used a case study within the qualitative paradigm in order to pay attention to minute detail. I showed that the setting was in two public junior secondary schools in Botswana and involved four teachers of RE who were my main participants. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of both the schools and the participants. I narrated the procedures that I followed in order to get permission from the Ministry of Education of the Government of Botswana. I used various data collecting techniques which were observations, interviews and documents in order to enhance validity and trustworthiness of the study.

# CHAPTER 4

## Students have to treat religions equally

### 4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I present my findings according to themes that emerged from the study. I present data on the participants' understanding of the multi-faith RE curriculum, their content knowledge, pedagogical skills and knowledge. I show that even though there are several teaching techniques, the commonest technique that the RE teachers, used was group work. I also report that teachers said that their religious beliefs or lack of them did not necessarily affect their classroom practices. Finally, I present data on how RE teachers manage their classes. In reporting my findings I used excerpts that were taken word verbatim especially from interviews. These excerpts reveal the participants' different views and concerns.

In this chapter, I will present data mainly from the four principal case-study teachers in the two case-study schools and occasionally I will use information from other data providers like the in-service teachers, students and Education Officers to stress an issue. The data is from interviews, observations, documents and field notes. Since my research is qualitative, the report is detailed through using excerpts in order to put the reader in a clear light about what was taking place. Furthermore, when reporting especially on interview data, the inter-related statements by interviewees, contradictions and consistencies are borne in mind.

### 4.1 Teachers' understanding of the multi-faith RE curriculum

Teachers' understanding refers to how they interpret a curriculum, especially in terms of its philosophy and how it is taught and how students learn it. A key to promoting effective curriculum implementation is an understanding of how and why teachers interpret a curriculum in the way they do. In implementing a curriculum, teachers will naturally interpret a curriculum, including its materials, and decide how they can use them in their classrooms. This is so, because teachers have different meanings for the different processes in curriculum implementation.

From the interviews that I conducted with teachers, it emerged that the multi-faith RE curriculum involves teaching a variety of religions, yet Christianity tended to be dominant. When I asked Mrs. Koloni about the strengths of the multi-faith RE curriculum, she said:

> I think it opens up one's eyes, and one learns more about other religions that are different from Christianity. I never had any interest in learning about other religions but can now sympathise with some of their practices. We should have continued with the old syllabus. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 9th October, 2006)

Mrs. Koloni indicated that the strengths of a multi-faith RE curriculum were in terms of exposing both the teachers and the students to other religions that were different from Christianity. She further indicated how the multi-faith RE curriculum influenced her view of other religious traditions since she never had any interest in them, except in her religion which is Christianity. Mrs. Koloni indicated that a multi-faith RE enhanced one's knowledge about "other" religions, and that the "teacher is forced to do research and read beyond what is found in the students' textbooks". Even though she articulated the strengths of the multi-faith RE curriculum, she maintained that the former Religious and Moral Education (RME) curriculum that was Christian based was better than the present one in terms of its emphasis on one religion. She indicated that if she had the powers, RE could be Christian based because according to her that was the best form of RE. She told me that she had never taught the old curriculum but had learnt it years back as a secondary school student. Mrs. Koloni also indicated that she did not have any conflict between her religion and her professional commitment because her aim was not to convert.

When I asked Miss Rabin about the strengths of the multi-faith RE curriculum, she said:

> It broadens the children's understanding of the different religions that are found in their country and elsewhere and prepares them to relate to different groups of people. (Interview with Mrs Rabin, 29th September, 2006)

Miss Rabin indicated that the multi-faith RE broadened the students' understanding of the different religions, hence prepares young people to relate well with people with different cultures, especially in the area of religion. By "different people" she meant people who came from outside Botswana, whom she said have beliefs and practices that are different from the people in the country. She went on to indicate why a multi-faith RE was introduced in Botswana.

> There were a lot of things taking place and there were a lot of people coming into our country for business and other things. I think this was a way of preparing students to accept people who are different from them.
> (Interview with Miss Rabin, 29th September, 2006)

She emphasised that the RE curriculum was meant to enhance a sense of tolerance, since students introduced to it are capable of accepting other people. When I asked her if she knew about the RNPE on which the curriculum was based, she indicated that she did not know anything about it, and that the document was not even available in her school library. She further said that the multi-faith RE enabled students to fit in the global world especially if they could internalise a sense of tolerance.

When I asked Mr. Tiro about the strengths of the multi-faith RE he said.

> With other religions, I think we need to try to understand them too. We tend to concentrate only on what we know and believe in. Even my students get shocked when I indicate to them some strong aspects of other religions other than my own [which he said was Christianity]. (Interview with Mr Tiro, 3rd October, 2006)

Mr Tiro lamented that there was too much emphasis on the Christian religion at the expense of other religions. He accepted that other religions were part of the curriculum, and that they needed to be treated in the same manner as Christianity because students needed to understand various religions. In his view, the belief systems of other religions need to be made known to the students, as a way of cultivating a spirit of tolerance. Mr Tiro said this about the multi-faith RE curriculum.

> I think it is about exposing different religions to the students. No religion should dominate. We need to make students aware that these religions exist. We do not convert anyone in class to a particular religion. What we do is to let students know that they have to treat religions equally.
> (Interview with Mr Tiro, 3rd October, 2006)

Mr Tiro indicated that the multi-faith RE was introduced in order to expose students to as many different religions as possible. He maintained that the curriculum is not meant to elevate any one religion above others because religions are supposed to be treated equally. He further stressed that the multi-faith RE curriculum does not aim at converting students. In his explanation of the multi-faith RE at times, Mr Tiro conflated other religions to the different Christian denominations because his examples in class were about the variants of Christianity. He also indicated that due to the teachers' emphasis on Christianity, at times students may take other religions as myths. However, he argued that

it was the teachers' duty to help students acquire knowledge and a better understanding of any religion under discussion.

When I asked him if the concepts *knowing* and *understanding* which are stressed in a multi-faith RE curriculum could change the students' perceptions in terms of developing tolerance, Mr. Tiro said:

> As a teacher you help students to question a lot of things. Yes, this is the time that they start to know about other religions as teenagers. One problem is that, presently they could be belonging to different church denominations, but as a teacher, one can help them understand more by questioning a lot of things. From that standpoint they may or may not decide to follow a religion. You enable them to make choices and by so doing they are able to discover truth.
> (Interview with Mr Tiro, 3rd October, 2006)

Mr Tiro indicated that a teacher is expected to be instrumental in enabling the students to have a full understanding of a multi-faith RE curriculum. In helping students to develop a sense of questioning many things, teachers could be enhancing critical thinking. For example, students would be enabled to decide to follow or not to follow a religion. Their decisions will be based on what they know and understand.

When I asked Mr. Tiro if Botswana is a Christian country or not, he said:

> It is not. For example when the former specially elected MP Mr. Satar Dada was sworn in, he was free to use a Koran because he is a Muslim. Botswana is a multi-religious state where different religions are allowed to operate.
> (Interview with Mr Tiro, 3rd October, 2006)

According to Mr Tiro, Botswana is a multi-religious country which promotes religious freedom and where different religions are allowed to operate side by side.
Mr Tiro further said:

> As an RE teacher, I can say that all these religions are praying to the same Supreme Being but they use different ways to reach him. All these religions may be talking about the same God but it is only that the revelation is given to different people and it comes differently. People need to have the freedom to worship God in their own way. (Interview with Mr Tiro, 3rd October, 2006)

According to Mr Tiro, there are various religious paths that lead to one and the same deity. He further stressed the need for people to be allowed to pray to God in the best possible way that they feel comfortable with. He said that part of the reason why there are different religions or even denominations is because God's revelation was given to

different people and came to them in different ways. However, despite the possible strengths of the multi-faith RE curriculum, Mr. Tiro said that there could be some intolerance in the Botswana school system because of its emphasis on Christian prayers. Mr. Tiro also acknowledged that he learnt a lot from his students because of the nature of the RE curriculum.

> It is very good and interesting in that you gain a lot of knowledge from students. When I came here, I had little knowledge about certain things. I had little knowledge of the different religions and of the different church denominations. I got a lot of information from the students because this is what they see happening daily in their churches. (Interview with Mr Tiro, 3rd October, 2006)

According to Mr Tiro, a teacher could learn from the experiences and the knowledge that students brought to the learning environment. He further indicated that the knowledge that the students brought to the classroom was important because they drew some of it from their personal religious experiences.

Mrs. Laban, a teacher with thirteen years experience teaching RE, was of the view that the multi-faith RE curriculum was not relevant for the junior secondary school level. She indicated that on the whole students understood what they were expected to do. She further argued that knowledge and understanding of different religions which is expected to bring about a sense of tolerance in a multi-faith RE curriculum was inadequate. According to her, despite the emphasis on *knowledge* and *understanding*, that does not necessarily bring about any change in attitude and behaviour as shown in her comment below:

> The students mainly *learn about* [emphasis hers]. What is important is the information that the students get which does not change behaviour. For example, after being exposed to this curriculum, a child may not start praying facing Mecca, or handling the Bible the way the Sikhs handle the Guru Granth Sahib [Sikh holy book]. As a way of showing their understanding our students tend to be shocked, for example, by all the rituals associated with the handling of the Guru Granth Sahib. (Interview with Mrs Laban, 5th October, 2006)

Mrs Laban further indicated that the strength of the multi-faith RE curriculum was in providing teachers with knowledge and understanding of the various religions. However, she lamented that it did not equip teachers with skills that would positively affect the behaviours of their students. Mrs. Laban also indicated that a teacher of RE has to be a moral exemplar, even though she was not elaborate on the issue. She was also of the view that in most instances RE teachers who are committed to their religions emphasise their

religions in class to the exclusion of other religions, hence they do not give students a chance to learn about the practices of other religions, and especially how the adherents appreciate their religions. According to her, excluding other religions on the curriculum is indoctrination. When asked if there still could be indoctrination within the multi-faith RE she said:

> Yes. That is what I am saying. Such teachers, after teaching, they would usually end their lessons with something like: "Jesus is the way." (Interview with Mrs Laban, 5th October, 2006)

Such a conclusion of a lesson was an expectation in the former single religion type of RE curriculum. According to her such teachers need to be reminded of the aims and instructional objectives of the multi-faith RE, which discourage conversion. She suggested that in-service workshops could be conducted in order to deal with the attitudes of those teachers. According to her, for a teacher to do that, it shows inadequate understanding of the curriculum and pedagogical skills to teach a multi-faith RE curriculum.

Education Officers had their own views about the multi-faith RE curriculum. A Religious Education Curriculum Officer Mrs. Gatt said this about the multi-faith RE curriculum:

> This is an open subject whereby everybody thinks they know what it is. Some people still think that this is a mono-faith curriculum. I have been having a lot of difficulties with my immediate supervisors, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education and even the Minister of Education himself when I tried to explain to them what the multi-faith RE curriculum is all about, but with very little success. It is hard for them to imagine a form of RE that is not Christian. (Interview with Mrs Gatt, 15th August, 2006)

In her view, many people still claim knowledge of what RE generally entails and also that some still mistake the multi-faith RE to a Christian single religion based curriculum. According to her, even though the multi-faith RE curriculum has been in schools for over ten years now, some people in positions of leadership in education still do not understand what it generally entails.

Mr. Moks a Religious Education Officer in the Southern Region Inspectorate area, said that a multi-faith RE curriculum is relevant because Botswana is not a Christian country and that the country was never founded on Christian principles. However, he indicated that the majority of Batswana are Christians. He said that:

> The Constitution of Botswana is secular and does not refer to Botswana as a Christian country. Botswana is not a theocracy. (Interview with Mr Moks, 6th September, 2006)

However, he was not clear why public and official functions in Botswana are started and ended in a Christian prayer. When I further asked him if teachers of a multi-faith RE curriculum needed to be religious, Mr Moks said:

> A teacher need not be religious because teaching is a profession where one has to be knowledgeable about religions. A teacher of RE can choose or not choose to be religious. However, it is unfortunate that when talking about religions it becomes an area where everybody claims some knowledge. (Interview with Mr Moks, 6th September, 2006)

He, like Mrs. Gatt was worried that many people usually claim some knowledge regarding what RE entails mainly because they think it is an extension of the church. Mr. Moks complained that RE is not given the respect that it deserves, because people feel that one needs no expertise to teach RE, which according to him, is not the case in other subjects.

Another Education Officer for RE based in the Northern Region Inspectorate, Miss Timon, was of the view that RE was not popular since it has fewer periods and that most school administrations have a negative attitude towards it. However, she laid most of the blame on teachers whom she said do not take the subject seriously.

> Teachers are to blame because they cannot market it. Even pupils do not like it because most of the subjects are linked to specific job opportunities and careers while RE is not. (Interview with Miss Timon, 22nd August, 2006)

In addition to blaming teachers for not popularising the subject, she indicated that students link it to job opportunities and careers in terms of what students can be after doing RE, which she said was not the case with RE. She indicated that since RE dealt with attitudes and behaviours, it enabled students to fit in different working conditions by the time they would be following their career paths. She, however, admitted and lamented that there were no in-service RE workshops, and in her view, that had a bearing on teachers' understanding and classroom teaching of the subject. Furthermore, even though she blamed teachers she did not show that teachers were initially involved in the design of the syllabus document and that they were fully aware of what it entailed.

The focus group of in-service RE teachers concurred with my four main participants and Education Officers, that the multi-faith RE curriculum has as its content multiple religions whilst its aim is to cultivate a sense of tolerance amongst students. They indicated that it would have been better if the multi-faith RE programme was started at primary school so that at secondary school level the students could not be overwhelmed as they said was the case now. They further observed that it was not likely that if students are introduced to various religions they may fall prey to some "radical religions" as some people suggest. They said that people who hold that view are the ones who are not versed with a multi-faith RE curriculum. They argued that the curriculum cannot promote chaos because it aims at instilling in young people a sense of acceptance through tolerance.

### 4.2 RE teachers' content knowledge

Teachers need to have a deep understanding of the subject matter because it can make them flexible in their presentation of lessons. If they fully understand the subject matter, it is probable that they will help students to relate ideas to one another as well as to deal with misconceptions especially in an area that is full of controversy like religion. In their study, Chazan *et al.* (n.d.) found that when teachers possess the right sort of knowledge, they are likely to be effective in their teaching. As a way of showing in-depth knowledge of the subject matter, teachers have to master a repertoire of teaching techniques and strategies. However, teachers can employ a variety of techniques and strategies if they have a rich knowledge of the subject, how it is organised and how it is related to other disciplines. Furthermore, teachers need to have adequate knowledge of the subjects that they teach so that they are able to solve and provide answers to the questions that they pose to students and questions which students pose to them (Shulman, 1986).

Teachers' deep knowledge of the subject matter helps them to make their ideas accessible to the students. On teachers' content or subject knowledge, McNeil (1983:125) says that, at times due to lack of content knowledge, teachers attempt to "mystify a topic" in order to make it look complex and very important. This is another way of showing the teachers' sense of insecurity because they will be the only repository of knowledge. In such a case, students will not have been given access to some other forms of information and hence leads to a dependency syndrome that will have been deliberately created by the teacher. Furthermore, McNeil (1983) makes another revealing observation that as a way of further mystifying the subject matter, a teacher may leave out topics or issues and divergent

views because the teacher does not subscribe to them. When teachers deliberately mystify and avoid certain topics they do so in order to "control knowledge access" as a way of protecting their territory (McNeil, 1983:137). Depending on the topic or issues, teachers may mystify, omit, treat topics or issues as if they were too complex or too simple, in order to cover up for their inadequate content knowledge. Below is an example of a teacher attempting to treat a topic as if it was irrelevant. This is what I recorded in Mrs. Koloni's class when she was teaching the topic "Freedom."

> There was an argument as to whether a nun can have children or not and what qualifies one to be a nun. One student was adamant that nuns can start off as mothers and then later join the order. There was no one who seemed clear as to whether a nun can start off as a mother or not, including the teacher who just kept quiet to let the issue pass by. The argument was mainly focused on virginity. As the argument heated up, the teacher advised students to forget about the issue since she said they were not dealing with virginity. (Fieldnotes from Mrs Koloni's class, 9th May, 2007)

It is not clear why Mrs Koloni advised students to abandon the issue. Was it because she felt that the issue was irrelevant and students were wasting time discussing it?

My interview with Mrs Laban on an examination question shows how she views the RE teachers' content knowledge.

> **Question 33.** ***What is common to scientific and religious theory of evolution?*** **Would you agree that science has a theory, and that religion does not since it is based on belief?**
> We also err as teachers because we teach children that there are religious theories. What I discovered is that this topic is problematic to teach. Even students usually raise a lot of questions on what scientists say about evolution theory. The other problem is that we emphasise only three religions: Christianity, Islam and Judaism on this issue. (Interview with Laban, 23rd May, 2007)

Mrs Laban indicated that teachers at times make mistakes in their presentation of the subject matter, and the mistakes are mainly due to the nature of the curriculum or the textbooks that teachers mainly depend on. However, the other problem emanated from the teachers' grasp of the content knowledge. For example, one student from Makala Junior Secondary School indicated that at times teachers get angry when a student tries to correct them. She gave the example of one teacher who said that Hinduism has a founder even though the students attempted to correct her. Miss Rabin complained that the content knowledge she received at both teacher training college and the university was inadequate because she said that there are some topics that were not covered in detail at those institutions, and that she learnt a lot while in the field.

There were times when teachers used the concept Botswana Traditional Religion (BTR) and African Traditional Religion (ATR) interchangeably yet they are not the same. However, none of the teachers tended to view that as an issue of concern. Teachers used the phrase Botswana Traditional Religion, following one of the textbooks, *Religion for All*, whilst the other textbooks that students and teachers had access to, used African Traditional Religion (ATR). However, teachers tended to be comfortable with both terms since they could use them interchangeably. They did not make the difference between African Traditional Religion and Botswana Traditional Religion neither did they show the relationship between the two as shown in my interview with Mrs. Koloni on the issue.

> **The two textbooks use different phrases, that is, Botswana Traditional Religion and African Traditional Religion.**
> Personally I use Botswana Traditional Religion and not African Traditional Religion in Botswana. I never use ATR at all. But I still do not see any problem because the other authors have specified to say African Traditional Religion in Botswana.
>
> **In your view what is Botswana Traditional Religion?**
> It is the religion of Batswana that has not been diluted by Christianity. It is just a pure traditional religion, without any traces of Christianity. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 6th July, 2007)

There have been debates especially on the term African Traditional Religion which spans more than two decades by African scholars, especially Idowu (1973) who argued convincingly why there has to be African Traditional Religion which according to him is found throughout Africa. He did not want to compartmentalise ATR because according to him, that would render ATR non-existent.

The Examination Officer Miss Ray was unhappy with what she referred to as the RE teachers' limited content knowledge. According to her, from the responses that they got as examiners from the students' scripts it was clear that teachers hardly researched, and as a result they had inadequate content knowledge. This is what Miss Ray said:

> Teachers tend to use one umbrella name for God, yet God is referred to differently depending on the religion. Each religion has its own name for God. Another weakness is in festivals and ceremonies where teachers cannot make the difference between the two. This has been a problem for a long time. Teachers rely heavily on students' textbooks and pick up concepts as they are, despite the errors found in the books. (Interview with Miss Ray, 7th November, 2006)

The four RE teachers had adequate content knowledge, even though at times its presentation was not satisfactory as shown by Mr. Tiro's presentation of a piece of information to students when making a point about the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Brazil.

> Last week the Pope visited Brazil where the issue of abortion was discussed especially by political leaders who supported abortion. The Pope told political leaders that life according to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church begins at conception, and that committing abortion was murder. (Fieldnotes from Mr Tiro's class, 21st May, 2007)

In this particular instance, Mr. Tiro did not indicate or ask if his students knew that the majority of Brazilians were Catholics because students may not have known this information.

### 4.3 RE teachers' pedagogical knowledge

Teachers need to show their complex and multi-dimensional nature by displaying virtues such as curiosity, tolerance, honesty, fairness and respect for diversity as they teach. They need to have adequate pedagogical knowledge in order to teach the subject matter. Though no religions had been enumerated as the ones to teach, the four RE teachers uniformly concentrated on some religions mainly because they were well covered in the students' textbooks. For example, when I asked about what mainly guided him as a teacher to choose what religion to teach in his lessons, Mr. Tiro said:

> I look at the students' textbooks and identify a religion with more information. But I need not have more information on one religion like Christianity, while I don't have anything on other religions. At times I choose a religion because I think it could be of interest to students, partly because its followers will be known to students. (Interview with Mr Tiro, 7th March, 2007)

In this regard, Mr Tiro did what he thought was practical under the circumstances he was in, such as when he had to teach a religion because he thought the students had some knowledge about it. Furthermore, the textbooks guided him on what religions to teach.

At times the instructional objectives in the syllabus document were problematic to teach mainly due to the way they were structured. For example, when Mrs Rabin was teaching about *"Authority"* one of the students asked her about the difference between the *"Functions of a leader"* and *"The importance of a leader."* These were two related

instructional objectives in the syllabus document. She had given the students a task, which was based on the syllabus objectives which she had picked verbatim. The textbooks which the teachers and students largely depended on were not helpful either in this regard.

Teachers allowed debate and accepted various viewpoints in their lessons. For example, in one lesson, Mrs. Laban asked her students to state the *"Disadvantages of capital punishment."* One student said *"It robs society of important people"* and this sparked a debate. Some students were of the view that if one committed murder, then that person was no longer important to society whilst others disagreed. The teacher agreed with the response that this particular student gave. The teacher then ruled that the issue should not be pursued. In addition, she expressed her personal viewpoint on the issue.

When she taught about HIV and AIDS in relation to religion, Mrs. Koloni allowed students to discuss the issue, and this is what I recorded in my field notes.

> One of the students indicated that in Christianity AIDS is viewed as a punishment from God. Some students did not agree with this view. They indicated that there was nothing in the Bible to that effect because AIDS is a recent phenomenon. One of the students who declared that he was a committed Christian from a charismatic church told the teacher that his church did not subscribe to the teaching that AIDS is a form of punishment from God. On realising that there was a debate on the issue, the teacher asked students to go and find out more about the perspectives of the different denominations on AIDS: mainline, Pentecostal, African Independent Churches and others. (Fieldnotes from Mrs Koloni's class, 2nd February, 2007)

Miss Rabin, too, in one of her lessons, allowed a discussion to proceed and students exhibited their general knowledge about religions, as shown in my field notes.

> **Teacher:** Anything that you would like us to discuss? [There were no questions from the students]. Then take your books and read on the topic "Loyalty". [Ben then raised his hand]
>
> **Ben:** How many disciples did Jesus have?
>
> **Class:** [There was a chorus response from the classmates] Twelve.
>
> **Ben:** How many of Jesus' disciples were women?
>
> **Class:** None.
>
> **Ben:** There was a disciple by the name of Mary.

**Teacher:** Was Mary not the mother to Jesus?

**Ben:** No. in fact there are several Marys in the Bible. [The class was not settled on this one – there were murmurs].

**Teacher:** Where did you get that?

**Ben:** From the Holy Bible that is in the library.

**Teacher:** You people, you must go to the library and read. Ben is coming up with something that I don't know too.

**Karabo:** It has been proven that the woman was the wife to Jesus. [The rest of the class except Ben was further unsettled yet they could not articulate their position. There were murmurs. Some students were complaining that Karabo and Ben were irrelevant and wasting their time].

**Ben:** Jesus was an ordinary man. The information that Mary was married to Jesus was taken out in case Jesus would look like an ordinary human being. [Other students derided him but they could not articulate their position. Some students were saying that Ben could not be serious at all].

[Karabo was the only student in class who agreed with Ben. What the two students said is found in theological debates. What the rest of the class did was to chide the two students on what they were saying, and at times there was even a burst of laughter of mockery from the classmates. The teacher did not deride Ben and Karabo but she allowed them to articulate what they said they knew].
(Fieldnotes from Miss Rabin's class on 13th June, 2007)

Even though the discussion was not directly related to the topic at hand, the teacher allowed the debate to take place. The teacher was able to ask Ben for his sources of information, hence making him and other students know that she acknowledged their knowledge. It is important to note that this particular teacher openly indicated that her student had come up with information that she herself did not have. In this particular instance, the teacher allowed and accepted information that her student brought to the learning environment. She was happy that Ben researched and got some information from the library, and that his peers had to do the same thing. Even though the discussion was mainly between two students and the teacher, Miss Rabin allowed these students to articulate their views. The teacher even allowed her students to ask her some challenging questions. For example, during this discussion, one student Karabo asked his teacher Miss Rabin why Jesus had to cry if he was not a human being. The teachers said: "We are told that he felt some pain." The teacher was patient with her students and provided the best possible answer she could come up with.

Miss Rabin always asked for students' views after they had written a test and had got their scripts back. This created rapport between her and the students, since students were free to make comments. This also allowed students to be more open and even to acknowledge what they regarded as their own faults. For example, some of the students used the opportunity to express their unhappiness about the teacher for being unnecessarily strict. What is not clear was how the teacher was going to use the comments to improve her teaching practice. These were some of the students' comments in Miss Rabin's class after they got their scripts after writing her test:

> **Bob:** My answers were not specific because you kept on asking "how".
> **Mercy:** I made spelling mistakes but you know what I was trying to write.
> **Silo:** Teacher, I do not know who was marking.
> **Boiki:** Time was too much and must be shifted to Maths**!**
> (Fieldnotes from Miss Rabin's class, 6th March, 2007)

In this enabling environment, students could complain, demand and confess to the teacher.

When revising either tests or examinations, Mrs. Laban allowed students to play teacher which according to her was a way of further involving them. When I asked her why she adopted that technique, she indicated that students feel at ease when it is their classmate doing what a teacher should be doing because they feel freer. Just like in group work, those who felt comfortable in playing teacher were the ones who had less problems with the subject and also with English language which is used as a second language by some and as a third language by others.

At times, as a way of showing their pedagogical knowledge, teachers held views that were not in the textbooks. For example, when I asked Mrs. Koloni why she said there were advantages and disadvantages of capital punishment yet in some of the textbooks it was *"possible advantages and disadvantages"* she said:

> I don't know, may be it could be right that it is possible that capital punishment can deter criminal activities. But with us, we are guided by the syllabus. We cannot add a word like "possible" to advantages and disadvantages. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 30th May, 2007)

When I further asked her if it made any difference when leaving or adding the word "possible" she said:

> To me it wouldn't make such a big difference. I would leave it as an advantage, without adding "possible." Most of the points are advantages – they are issues that

> happen. If a criminal is sentenced to death, obviously the society is going to be secure. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 30th May, 2007)

In addition to what she viewed as pedagogically correct, she also expressed what she felt was morally correct.

There were times when some teachers followed what was in the textbook because they thought that examinations were based on this resource. For example, even though Miss Rabin knew that the information that robbery was a crime punishable by death in Botswana was not correct, she still provided it to the students mainly because it was in the textbook. In her view, what was in the textbook was likely to be examined hence if students could use that information they were likely to pass.

There were times when teachers expressed their personal views on issues. For example, when Miss Rabin gave her personal opinion on the topic *"Capital Punishment"* and said: "those who commit serious crimes need to be decapitated." Similarly, Mrs Laban expressed her opinion to her class that Capital Punishment robbed society of important people.

One of the strengths of Miss Rabin is that she at least once used short stories that she had herself created when she was introducing the topic *"Punishment"* and that the students were able to pick up certain relevant points from the story. One of the stories is shown below:

> Two men broke into a house and shot the husband in that home. After killing the man, they tied up his wife and then stole several items in the house. Below are the teacher's questions that followed the story.
> a. What is the nature of the crime?
> b. What would happen to the men if they were caught?
> (Fieldnotes from Miss Rabin's class, 6th March, 2006)

The story was created in such a way that it was easy to understand. Using this activity as a measuring stick of the success of teachers' innovation, it was likely that if they varied their techniques, teachers could own their lessons since they would be their own creations.

When it came to giving examples from religions, Miss Rabin mainly used examples from Christianity. For example when she was teaching about *Loyalty in Religions*, she used examples mainly from Christianity and to a lesser extent from Islam. In Christianity she quoted the verses that buttressed whatever point she made while it was not the case in Islam where she made general statements without any reference for example to relevant Koranic verses. Since most of the examples were from Christianity, that in itself did not encourage her students to explore various religions as they worked in their groups. For example when she was teaching about the *"Importance of Contraception in Religion"* she spent most of the time discussing with students the various Christian views on the issue and very little on other religions. However, she mentioned Islam and Judaism just in passing. Similarly, in Mr. Tiro's class, when he taught about: *"Authority in Different religions."* there was emphasis on Christianity and to a lesser extent on African Traditional Religion and from other religions.

Mrs. Koloni also restricted herself to Christianity on the topic *"Freedom"* and spent half the time talking about it. When one student suggested a different religion the teacher objected as shown in my observational field notes below.

> **Student:** Can we talk about Sikhism?
> **Teacher:** No. We will talk about Sikhism next time. Why should we talk about Sikhism? I am the teacher and I decide what has to be done. We are left with 10-15 minutes and I want to give you some work. (Fieldnotes from Mrs Koloni's class, 9th May, 2007)

This particular student had interest in Sikhism which was also covered in the textbook. Even though the teacher indicated that they were to attend to Sikhism later, it was never discussed at all or given as an example in another topic at any other time in Mrs. Koloni's class during my eight months stay in her school.

Mrs. Koloni had a bias towards Christianity, for example, when she gave students a piece of homework to revise the topic, *"Human Rights in Religions."* Throughout her lessons, Mrs. Koloni used examples from Christianity but seldom used examples from other religions. She deliberately favoured Christianity even when giving notes as shown in my conversation with her:

**In the notes that you gave to the students you used capitals and pronouns *Him a*nd *Himself* referring to Jesus and also capital F for *Father* referring to God. Why?**

It is just in me. It is my religion. At times we take the religion to class.

> **Don't you see the danger then?**
> Yes I do, but at times you cannot help it. I cannot imagine writing **Father** (referring to God in Christianity) with a small letter. It is difficult for me. But I can write **Allah** with a small **A**.
>
> **Is that not dangerous for an educator to do that?**
> Obviously there is a danger. Indoctrination is bad but it is obvious that some of these things are within our system. The danger is there. But I don't think students will lose marks for that. Whether it is a small or capital **F**, there is no problem. After all, in RE we do not mark grammar like in English. It was made clear to me when I started teaching here that I should not mark grammar. What one can mark students down on are religious terms. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 30th May, 2007)

In my initial interview with Mrs. Laban she indicated that she encouraged openness in her treatment of religions yet in practice she concentrated mainly on Christianity followed to a lesser extent by African Traditional Religion and then Islam, because these three religions had been covered extensively in the students' textbook.

There were times when teachers were inconsistent when they presented their lessons. For example, when Mrs Laban was teaching about *"Authority in Religion"*, she asked students to mention the roles of a *"rabbi"* in Judaism and one student said that it was *"to teach the law of Moses."* The teacher accepted the response as correct but contrary to what the student had said, the teacher wrote on the board *"teachers of the law."* That was likely to cause some confusion because the teacher asked a question which was answered correctly by a student, yet the teacher wrote on the board something different. In the same lesson, Mrs. Laban asked the students what *"the role of a scribe"* was, and the response was *"to read the law"* of which the teacher accepted as correct, yet she wrote on the board for students to copy *"They are knowledgeable in the law."* This inconsistency could bring about some confusion to the students.

There were certain practices that were peculiar to some teachers. For example, Mr. Tiro often called out marks of students from a quiz or test. He said that if students' marks were called out they were likely to be ashamed of themselves if they scored low marks hence they would always strive for higher marks. When I asked him about the effectiveness of the practice, he indicated that there were those students who would want to hear their marks being called out especially those who would have done well. He said that, there were those who would have performed poorly and would not want their marks to be called out. Mr Tiro said that he used the strategy at class level unlike other teachers who would pin up the end of month tests on a school notice board for all to see. Mr. Tiro also

indicated that some teachers beat up their students forcing them to read their subjects, hence passing them. He said that he did not adopt any of his colleagues' methods and that is why he resorted to calling out of names and marks. When I asked him if he followed those students whose names were called out to check if they improved with time in their performance Mr. Tiro answered in the positive. When I asked him to comment on the assumption that the improvement in grades might not necessarily be due to the calling out of names and marks but due to some other factors, Mr. Tiro agreed. Miss Rabin also called out marks of the students after they had written a test, for the same reasons.

There were times when teachers were not clear with instructional objectives as shown by Mr Tiro's comment below in relation to how RE is taught.

> When talking about the reasons for teaching RE there is one objective which says that students have to know BTR (Botswana Traditional Religion) and other religions of the world. In this case it suggests that all students who are learning RE are members of a religion called BTR hence they need to know more about their religion compared to other religions out there. (Interview with Mr Tiro, 3rd October, 2006)

There is no instructional objective in the syllabus document that expects students to know BTR, because the curriculum does not enumerate religions to be studied. Furthermore, BTR is a label for African Traditional Religion in one of the textbooks which is not used in the syllabus document. In this particular instance, the teacher had lost sight of the fact that a multi-faith RE is not supposed to compare and contrast religions. When I later reminded him in a post-lesson interview that religions need not be compared in a multi-faith RE curriculum he said:

> I think that it is true because the whole idea of doing RE is if students are to have a religion they should choose it themselves. We need not open up their eyes. Let students make their own choices on religions. (Interview with Mr Tiro, 3rd October, 2006)

Mr Tiro indicated that a multi-faith RE is not meant to convert students because being religious was a personal choice. However, Mrs Koloni was of the view that instructional objectives that compared and contrasted religions were in order, and she emphasised why religions have to be contrasted.

> Let the students see for themselves when they compare the religions. For example, in ethical teachings of Christianity and other religions students need to see which ones are better than the others. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 6th July, 2007)

She stressed that students have to know that some religions are better than others. She indicated that issues of truth and falsity were important in RE. She went on to say:

> If you are comparing and contrasting something, you are just comparing. You do no wrong. I think they did well to include those objectives. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 6th July, 2007)

While RE teachers were of the view that they did not have problems with instructional objectives, Education Officers held a different view. An RE officer based in the Southern Region Inspectorate area, Mr. Mathias, observed that students do not perform well largely because RE teachers lacked the content knowledge and pedagogical skills.

> Teachers have problems with some of the syllabus objectives such as "the **importance of** certain objects or practices and the **use** in different religions." Some teachers use the terms interchangeably, hence the need for workshops to be mounted in order to inform teachers more about these differences. In addition, in the classes and in all schools that I visited and observed lessons, I found that the lecture method was common. (Interview with Mr Mathias, 17th October, 2006)

Even though the Education Officer said that the lecture method was common during his school visits, it was not the case in the two schools that I did my fieldwork. There was not much lecturing because teachers preferred to say little and then divided students into discussion groups as they tackled questions from their textbooks. The RE Education Officer suggested that in-service workshops be mounted for teachers in order to alert them about some of their inadequacies in their teaching practices. He further indicated that teachers were expected to produce lesson plans which they only did when they heard that a team of inspectors was visiting their school. This is what he said:

> When teachers are observed they try their best to vary the methods but the lecture method will still dominate. Teachers will also suggest group work in their lesson plans, but as one observes them, it will be clear that the technique is not well thought out. For example, on realising that they are lecturing, the teacher will jump on to say; *"sit in your groups."* Group work tends to be the easiest way out for the teachers. In most cases I realise that they are unable to achieve most of their objectives as stated in the lesson plan. (Interview with Mr Mathias, 17th October, 2006)

It is true that teachers used the group work technique, and less lecturing. Even though Mr Mathias said that teachers lectured, there was very little of it in the classes that I observed. Furthermore Mr. Mathias was of the view that most teachers do not do research because according to him, their reading only goes as far as the students' textbooks. In his view, this crippled them when it came to classroom teaching. For example, he was

unhappy that teachers do not know how the Botswana Education System operates, and that they are unaware of other important issues in the country like the country's Vision 2016 which is expected to influence the way they live as citizens.

Another RE officer in the Northern Region Inspectorate, Miss Timon, also indicated that lessons were teacher-centred when she said:

> At times teachers can disappoint you! Most of the time they lecture; they are teacher-centred. On the whole teachers do not prepare for lessons. In most instances when we go out for inspection there will be lesson plans designed specifically for us yet there would be no record of work. Though there was a circular to the effect that there should be lesson plans, some schools are reluctant to implement that. In some schools the issue of lesson plans never saw the light of the day. Where there are lesson plans, a school has to have a common format so that an officer can observe across the subjects, and in addition have a record of what is happening in the section. In most cases RE teachers do not have anything to give to me. Teachers' preparations for lessons are not thorough at all – they cannot even go out to get an artifact to use in their lessons. There is a general lack of commitment to duty and lack of innovation on the part of the teachers. (Interview with Miss Timon, 22nd August, 2006)

Miss Timon, was unhappy that RE teachers were teacher-centred in their lesson presentations especially in their emphasis on the lecture method. She also complained about the teachers' lack of professionalism and commitment to their work. However, Miss Timon did not indicate if her office has ever provided teachers with, for example, a template of what is expected of them in a lesson plan, and even how lessons can be executed in class. This can happen if there is consistent contact between the education officers and the teachers. It is not clear where the teachers have to get skills of involving students in their classroom teaching. Teachers did not prepare written lesson plans at all, unless they knew that they were going to be observed by a member of the inspectorate. Miss Timon observed that even when they prepare impromptu lesson plans for Education Officers, their lessons still lacked creativity. When I met Mrs. Laban and arranged for my first observation in her class she said:

> Mr. Dinama, we do not have any written lesson plans, but we do teach. If you expect those, you will not find them. (Interview with Mrs Laban, 22nd September, 2006)

Similarly her colleague, Mrs. Koloni, also asked me:

> Are you going to need written lesson plans? If you do I can make them for you. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 22nd September, 2006)

The statements of Mrs Laban and Mrs Koloni confirmed what the Education Officers in the inspectorate had told me. It emerged that teachers did not make any written lesson plans but in most of the cases, what I observed is that, they would browse through the instructional syllabus objectives and what the students' textbooks suggested were possible class and homework tasks before going to meet their classes. However, I did not ask either Mrs. Laban or Mrs. Koloni to make lesson plans for me, because my study was focusing on what teachers did everyday in their classes and not to intervene in their teaching. If it was part of their normal practice, to make lesson plans I would have asked for them. Though teachers were expected to have lesson plans they did not always have any.

Another Education Officer Mr. Moks also complained that teachers were not creative in their lesson presentations, and suggested that they should always look for better ways of teaching. He also indicated that in the lessons that he observed, lessons were teacher-centred, and that there was need to move away from that practice and look for better ways of teaching the curriculum that could involve students more. What Mr Moks, Miss Timon and Mr Mathias were saying were inconsistent with what I observed, because I witnessed teachers giving students work to do on their own, especially in groups.

When I asked Miss Ray, an RE Examination Officer, how religions should be chosen by teachers when they present their lessons, she indicated that it should depend on the religions that students are familiar with, such as Christianity and ATR. However, the question is: what about introducing students to other religions? However, this is in contradistinction with the syllabus document that does not enumerate religions. If what the Examination Officer said was the case, it would prove that some teachers were correct, that instead of exposing students to various religions, they emphasised one or two religions only. Furthermore, this information was never relayed to RE teachers, especially through circulars or in the RE examination report. This could be one reason why RE is not performed well because some information is not relayed to teachers so that they could adjust their teaching practices in line with the expectations of the examination department.

In their classes RE teachers used the information that students brought along with them in class discussions only but did not use it in tests and examinations. Teachers mainly depended on books and on their own knowledge. That made students feel that their knowledge was not valued and that knowledge existed elsewhere outside of them. Since the teachers said that they valued students' knowledge, is shown in Mrs Laban's statement below.

> We first make use of the learners' knowledge and what they bring into the classroom which is very important, for example, through brain-storming. (Interview with Mrs Laban, 4th October, 2006)

The learners' knowledge was important only in as far as brainstorming was concerned as shown in the classes of the four RE teachers.

The teachers' questioning skills is another pedagogical area that is important because there were times when some teachers were inadequate in this area. For example, when Mrs. Koloni introduced the topic "The value of the family and the importance of living in a family" she started by asking students this; *"What is the value of the family and the importance of living in a family?"* The question was loaded because there were two questions in one. The result was that the students did not immediately answer the question. Below are my field notes on that lesson.

> The teacher then tried other means so that students could answer the question. She first broke down the question by asking what a family is, and then asked students to mention different members of the family. It was only after breaking the long question into shorter questions, that the students started to respond. From this, the teacher asked about the value of the family of which students provided answers such as *love* and *identity*. (Fieldnotes from Mrs Koloni's class, 31st January, 2007)

It is important to note that when Mrs Koloni realised that the question was loaded, she quickly thought on her feet and broke down the question. She immediately and quickly thought of a way of asking the same question in a different way. In this particular instance, as would be expected of her, the teacher thought on her feet. In fact, the long and loaded question that she had previously asked was a combination of two objectives taken from the syllabus document.

I also observed that all the three teachers and their students code-switched in their lessons except Mr. Tiro and his students. When I asked Mrs. Koloni about code-switching, she said there was no particular reason even though she later said that some students learn better in Setswana (the national language of Botswana) and that code switching was done to cater for the "slow" learners. However, even in instances where there was code-switching, those students who were referred to as "slow learners" still did not participate.

In addition, in both schools, the keeping of records was inadequate, for example, there was no file where the RE department could keep and retrieve information at ease. For example, when I asked Mrs. Koloni, who was the RE coordinator at Togal Junior Secondary School if there was an RE file that contained information about her department she said:

> No. Not really. We only have a file for examination papers. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 9th October, 2006)

### 4.4 RE teachers' main teaching technique – group work

There are several techniques that the RE teachers could have used, but they instead emphasised group work and to a lesser extent individual and homework. For group work to be successful, the teacher has to give clear guidance regarding a task. For example, the physical structure of the learning environment should be flexible and be guided by the nature of the task and the needs of the students. Furthermore, in group work the teachers have to relinquish their powers by moving away from the centre stage, hence transferring some degree of control and accountability to the small groups which in turn can be controlled by the students themselves. For that to happen, the "students must be convinced that the teacher has in fact empowered them to make a wide range of decisions regarding the selection of the learning tasks and the nature of the process of investigation" (Sharan, 1995:257). However, teachers have to make available a wide range of resources for students in order for group work to be effective. For example, in addition to the textbooks, other sources such as newspapers, magazines, recorded radio discussions could be used.

Small group work is a departure from the traditional classroom setup, where the teacher is the only person who determines the course of instruction. In small-group discussions, teachers have to design the learning tasks in a manner that would facilitate cooperation and mutual assistance among members of small groups so that they have a common goal and purpose for working together (Sharan, 1995). The task must enable students to work together and to view their group as a social unit worthy of achieving certain academic goals. If the teacher does not create an enabling environment for group work, the small group is likely to disintegrate into a collection of individuals who will be working towards uncoordinated goals. The classroom environment calls for teachers to be always making decisions, about how they organise their instruction. In group work, students can learn to support whatever position that they take, and by so doing, they can develop critical thinking.

In the different classes that I observed, students in their groups chose their own chairperson and recorder, and either the chairperson or the recorder was the one who presented the task to the rest of the class. There was free exchange of ideas at peer level even though there were some students who were dominant in the groups especially during presentations.

Even though teachers mainly used group work, in most instances they did not provide guidelines and skills to students for the groups to function effectively. Each class had 45 students, and groups ranged between 8-10 members. It was only Mr Tiro who had fewer students, who were 13 in number, and the groups in his class consisted of 3-4 members.

In almost all the lessons I observed in the two schools, each class was divided into a number of small groups of students and given a task. This is an example of a task that Miss Rabin gave to her students in their groups. The task was in the form of a story which she had herself created. Below is the task.

> A man raped an old woman and two boys saw that man and reported him to the police. The man was arrested but was later granted bail. While on bail, he strangled and killed the two boys. The questions that followed were:
> a. What was the first crime that the man committed?
> b. Why did the suspect kill the two boys?
> (Fieldnotes from Miss Rabin's class, 6th March, 2007)

Similarly, when Mrs Koloni taught the topic: "The Value of a family" she divided her students into six groups and gave them the following questions:

> a. Discuss the changes in the roles of women and men (boys and girls) in three religions.
> b. Discuss the role of family members in three religions. Discuss how the roles of males and females complement each other.
> c. Discuss the effects of HIV/AIDS on the individual and community. What do any three religions say are the causes of HIV/AIDS?
> d. Discuss how different religions help in controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS.
> e. Discuss how religions assist in making AIDS victims feel accepted and the role of religions in counseling people with HIV/AIDS.
> f. Define contraception. Discuss the views of three religions on contraception. (Fieldnotes from Mrs Koloni's class, 31st January, 2007)

By dividing the students into groups meant that the role of both the students and the teachers differed considerably, since roles and responsibilities were shifted. The teachers assigned students tasks and students were to search for information on their own, using a variety of sources such as books, magazines, videos and television. Furthermore, students had to engage in a dialogue with their peers. In carrying out the assignment in their groups, students assigned each other responsibilities. It is interesting to note that they largely cooperated, hence leading to a collective response. At the end of the group discussions, students in their groups presented their work to the rest of the class. During group reports, the rest of the class in almost all the cases participated, and even evaluated their peers' presentation even when they were not asked by the teacher to do so. The students usually pointed out especially the weaknesses of the presentation by the group, especially in terms of the relevance to the task.

I asked Miss Rabin what she regarded as the best way of teaching students to learn Religious Education and she responded by saying:

> Normally they work in a group and then they present. They research and present on a topic. Since we have four periods a week, most of the time is lecturing and discussion. Normally we give them some objectives to work in a group followed by a presentation. They are expected to research and then present on a topic. Here and there we do presentations and debate. We give them group work where they will be able to help each other. Probably that will be more effective than a teacher standing in front of the class. We divide students according to their abilities by mixing high and low performers. They don't choose their groups, but I choose for them. I do try to balance things and I know that high achievers will be able to help the low achievers. (Interview with Miss Rabin, 29th September, 2006)

Even though Miss Rabin said that they had limited time, hence they tended to lecture most of the time, in my observations, there were few incidents of lecturing. What was happening is that most of the time students were engaged in discussions in their groups. Miss Rabin also said that she at times engaged her students in debate even though in all the months that I visited her in class, she never engaged students in debate. When she said that she engaged her students in research, she meant her students referring mainly to their textbooks. Even though she said that she combined "high and low performers" so that they could help each other, there was no sign in the groups that such assistance was coming forth.

Miss Rabin rewarded her students verbally for responses made to questions during class. She also thanked her students for being a good audience at the end of every lesson. This attitude was likely to enhance the students' sense of self-worth since by thanking them, she acknowledged their contributions. She also shared some jokes, hence making classroom environment less threatening. When teachers reward their students and have a sense of humour, it can enhance their students' learning. Praise can be extremely effective because it encourages students to attend diligently to the task assigned hence they are able to appreciate their self-worth (Wellington (1994). In addition, she emphasised the use of English, because she said that most of the concepts were in that language. Furthermore, after giving students some work she would move from group to group making some further explanations where needed. She would always remind them about the remaining time. Furthermore, her groups were permanent.

Most of the time, the four RE teachers asked students to work in groups so that the students could help each other. They also encouraged their students to cooperate and collaborate in carrying out given tasks. The teachers had earlier on indicated to me that it was easier to have students in groups so that weak students could be helped by the gifted ones. It was difficult to establish if "weak" students were being helped by the more "able" ones. For example, when I asked Miss Rabin if there was a way in which she made sure "gifted" students helped the "weak" ones, she said that there was no way. This is my interview with Miss Rabin on the issue.

> **You say that if students are mixed, the high achievers will help the low achievers.**
> If they know that I expect them to come up with something, definitely they will do something. I also encourage the low achievers to present instead of the high achievers doing it.
>
> **How do you know that they will help the low achievers?**
> Not really. The fact that they will be discussing as a group, one would assume that they will be helping the low achievers.
>
> **How do we know that in a group the discussion might be between the high achievers only?**
> We go round to check whether they are all participating.
>
> **Do you spend enough time with each group to make sure that all speak?**
> We are just assuming they are helping each other.
> (Interview with Miss Rabin, 15th June, 2007)

She indicated that there was no mechanism in place to make sure that students helped each other as they worked in their groups. Though Miss Rabin mixed the students as they worked in their groups, there were still some students who would not talk in class or make any contributions in their groups.

I also asked Miss Rabin if there were any specific skills given to the students as they worked in their groups, and she said:

> There are no specific skills, given to students. We just tell them to read and then present. I just give them the work. I don't tell them how they should do it, except that they should pick from the book what they think are correct answers to the questions. No particular skills are given as what to pick or not to pick. Nothing.
> (Interview with Mrs Rabin, 29th September, 2006)

She indicated that there were no particular skills that were given to students on how to present to a class. However, she expected that anyone from the group could present because they would have discussed as a group. Group work was more of routine to the RE teachers. I had expected that students would be given specific skills when working in their groups since it was the commonest teaching technique. In addition, teachers rarely made any additions to what the students presented or brought along because the information was from the students' textbooks that both students and teachers solely depended upon. Though teachers mainly engaged students in group work, there were no lesson plans to indicate the stages that teachers were to go through during their lessons. Instead of preparing for teaching lessons, teachers mainly depended on their store of knowledge. Even though the teachers' store of knowledge is a good thing, it has to be presented in a logical and consistent manner.

At times, teachers were unable to balance the classroom environment by not involving the majority of students because there were times when only a few vocal ones would be talking, almost throughout the whole lesson. Below are my field notes when one of the groups was presenting in Miss Rabin's class on the topic: *"Functions of a leader."*

> This group was made up of students who seemed assertive hence intimidated their classmates. For example, one female student, Neo, asked the group a question. Before she could finish, the group members who comprised boys only, booed her down. The girl then kept quiet. The teacher did not come to the rescue of the girl by bringing the boys to order. (Fieldnotes from Miss Rabin's class, 18th May, 2007)

When students in both schools were asked about the commonest teaching technique that was used by their teachers they indicated that it was group work. They also mentioned that debate and drama were occasionally used in lessons, though none of techniques was used during my fieldwork.

When I asked Mrs Laban about particular classroom activities that she engaged her students in, she indicated that she mainly used group work as a teaching technique. She told me that debate was one of the techniques that she used in her lessons, but she used it only once. When it was used, almost all the students were involved and were eager to talk and defend their positions. However, she indicated that group work has some challenges largely due to the nature of the class composition where students were of a mixed ability. In response to how she organised her group work she said:

> A slight problem arises when it comes to presentations, because one would want to ask those who are able to talk confidently to present to the rest of the class. This is a problem because we tend to use the same students because the main purpose of a presentation is for the audience to hear what the presenter is saying. We use the same students because they can teach their classmates and explain to them. We try to mix the students. For example in each group there has to be one intellectually gifted child in order to balance the group. (Interview with Mrs Laban, 4th October, 2006)

In her use of group work, Mrs. Laban used the same students in presentations because she indicated that others in the group might be intellectually challenged. In addition, in most cases, she did not announce time to be taken on a task, and did not move from one group to another to see whether students followed the instructions on the task and to make further clarifications where necessary.

Regarding the best way that he thought his students learnt, Mr Tiro also mentioned group work. He indicated that in almost all the cases he achieved his objectives when using group work, mainly because students contributed in various ways in their attempt to respond to the demands of the task. He said that when dealing with the topic "Family Planning," for example, in groups, students were able to identify the importance of "Family Planning" and that every group was able to defend the points they raised.

Unlike other teachers, groups were not permanent and kept on changing. When I asked him why he kept on changing the groups he said:

> I keep on doing what I think will bring some form of learning. In fact mixing students from the two classes make them talk. (Interview with Mr Tiro, 7th March, 2007)

In Mr Tiro's class there were few interruptions from fellow students when a group presented. When I asked him why it was orderly during presentations, he said that he had laid down some ground rules.

When I asked him what students could have particularly gained in group work from one of the lessons I observed on "Human Rights" Mr. Tiro said:

> When presenting and especially when elaborating on their points, I could sense that the students were being conscious of these rights. Some of them suggested examples that do not appear even in their textbooks. It shows that they were able to connect the topic with some human rights organisations, such as those fighting for the rights of women and children. (Interview with Mr Tiro, 2nd February, 2007)

Furthermore, Mr Tiro always announced time that was to be spent on a task. Even though it cannot be clearly be verified, it seemed that Mr Tiro's group work strategy was successful largely because his students were fewer in the class, hence he could make manageable small groups from it. He also made additions on what students would have said or presented as shown in my field notes below.

> The teacher gave students a task and he asked them to use their textbook to answer the questions. He spent few minutes explaining how the task was to be carried out. He asked the students to contact him if they experienced problems in carrying out the task. The teacher gave students 20 minutes to do the task. The students' discussions were both in English and Setswana.
>
> While students were doing their work in groups the teacher was called once in a while by a group to make explanations. The teacher kept on reminding the students of the time. Finally, the teacher announced that time was up and it was time for the groups to present. (Fieldnotes from Mr Tiro's class, 29th January, 2007)

During group discussions and presentations, there was a lot of debate that took place amongst students in Mr Tiro's class. At times students posed to him some challenging questions, and expressed views that were different from those of their teacher. In most instances, there was a dialogue between the teacher and the students. Furthermore, there was always an applause for each group after it had made a presentation.

When Mrs. Koloni was asked about the activities that she engaged her students in she said:

> Class discussion. I tried debate but unfortunately students don't take it seriously. They take it to be entertainment and not learning. You see, with debate, you end up wasting time. Since it is about arguing, they take that to be some form of entertainment. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 9th October, 2006)

Mrs. Koloni said that she gave up on debate and that she never revisited it. There was a problem with group work especially during presentations, in the way Mrs. Koloni handled it as shown in my field notes.

> The presenter was so fast that the rest of the class could not follow especially those who were not from that group. The group that was presenting did not answer questions that were directed to them by the class. For example, the group said that they did not know the name of worship place for the Sikhs and Buddhists yet that was vital information as far as their task was concerned. The information was in their textbooks. (Fieldnotes from Mrs Koloni's class)

In addition, this particular teacher rarely made any additions to what the students presented. I tried to find out how she rated one presentation as shown below in my interview with her.

> **Most of the time during presentations, the presenters read their findings and rarely made clarifications, unless there was a question posed. Why?**
> For the intelligent ones, that might not be a problem, but not for the slow learners. Some of them will not even ask a single question, even when they do not understand. But I think that it is generally helpful when students ask presenters questions.
>
> **At times presenters were asked to repeat the presentation by their classmates. Why?**
> Yes, at times. It happens, if it is a genuine request from the rest of the class because the group's presentation will not have been clear enough. In most cases, it happens when the presenter was fast or when the presentation itself was mixed up. In such a situation the class will be justified to seek clarification. At times they will still ask for a repeat out of sheer playfulness. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 30th May 2007)

When I asked her about the skills she equipped her students with when they worked in groups and when presenting their tasks to the rest of the class Mrs. Koloni said:

> None. I just tell them to work in their groups in readiness for presentation. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 9th October, 2006)

She did not announce time when she gave students a task and when I asked her why, she said it was routine which students knew about.

> They know. We had done something in the first half and they know that we have to do group work in the remaining time. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 24th October, 2006)

### 4.5 Classroom management and discipline in RE classes

Classroom management is one important area in teaching and learning. Wong and Wong (2000) say that good planning reduces incidents of indiscipline in class by three quarters. They assert that students' achievement is directly related to the degree in which a teacher establishes good classroom management and that the teachers' relationship with students is important. When students are engaged in class activities there is less likelihood that a teacher will encounter behaviour problems. For example, if students or a group of students finish a task early, they may start making noise because they may not have been told what to do next.

On the whole, the four RE teachers had reasonable rapport with their students except Mrs. Koloni who had class control problems. One possible reason was that there was very little preparation that she did, since she just followed the syllabus instructional objectives accompanied by the students' textbooks. It seems she did not think rigorously as to how she was going to manage the class activities. Mrs. Koloni did not have robust classroom management procedures. When I asked her why there seemed to be some classroom management problems, in terms of discipline, she said that her students were not motivated enough and that is why they never stopped talking, and she described them as a badly behaved group. In Mrs. Koloni's class there was a high incidence of classroom disciplinary problems and this had an impact on her teaching and the learning of her students. In attempting to manage the class at times she used threatening language and even blackmail, which to her embarrassment and anger the students did not take seriously as shown in my notes below.

> The teacher wrote the topic "Freedom" on the board and asked the students: "What is freedom?" Students immediately opened their books searching for the answer. The teacher was not amused by their attitude because she shouted in what was a form of desperation: "Form 3s!!" She had expected students to answer without consulting their books. About 2 minutes passed before any student could attempt a response. On seeing that students did not answer the question the teacher threatened them by saying: "If you don't want to talk, you will write notes for 80 minutes. Most students protested because it seemed they did not like to write notes for such a long time.The teacher then pointed at Philip, who did not answer the question but just kept quiet. Joseph raised his hand to attempt a response and said: "Freedom is making responsible choices." The teacher wrote on the board "responsibilities and choices." (Fieldnotes from Mrs Koloni's class, 9th May, 2007)

In trying to bring order to her class, Miss Rabin would tell students who were disorderly that she was going to reveal their secrets to the rest of the class. According to her, the strategy worked because on hearing that students usually keep quiet. When I asked her if she really knew any of their secrets she responded in the negative but indicated to me that it was a way of keeping order in class.

### 4.6 Teachers' religious beliefs and their classroom practices

There were no marked difference in teaching skills between RE teachers who said they were actively religious and those who were not when it came to classroom practice. Mrs. Koloni, Mrs. Laban and Mr Tiro indicated that they were Christians, while Miss Rabin said that she had nothing to do with established religion. However, all the teachers mainly drew almost all their examples from Christianity though the curriculum does not spell out any particular religion that has to be used. Similarly there was no visible difference in the teaching styles, content, pedagogical and curricular knowledge between teachers who were Christians and the teacher who claimed that she did not subscribe to any religion. The only difference between the four RE teachers was their perceptions with regard to the role of the multi-faith RE curriculum. For example, Mrs. Koloni declared that she was a staunch Christian. In my initial interview with her, she told me that the multi-faith RE curriculum was good, but in my subsequent interviews with her, she told me that it was a mistake for such a curriculum to have been introduced. She acknowledged that at times she found herself over-emphasising Christianity, which she said was her religion. Though this was the case, there was nothing that showed that religious convictions or lack of them largely influenced the classroom practices of the four RE teachers because all the teachers used group work and emphasised Christianity as the main religion in clarifying

issues. This could have been the case because in their training almost all the teachers were mainly exposed to Christianity. Christianity comprised three quarters of their curriculum especially at university level, because the Theology and Religious Studies courses were Christian based (University of Botswana, 2006). Furthermore, emphasis on Christianity is likely to have been due to the teachers' constant exposure to that religion in their lives and in what was contained in the students' textbooks.

**Conclusion**

I presented the views of the teachers about how they understand the multi-faith RE curriculum. It emerged that teachers have an inadequate understanding of the multi-faith RE curriculum, as they emphasized a particular religion of their own choice and taught around it. The teachers' classroom techniques were limited to group work which was not also adequately coordinated. I described how teachers' knowledge of the curriculum affects their classroom teaching and the different activities that teachers engage in as they teach. I also indicated that the classroom practices of RE teachers are not necessarily influenced by religious affiliation or lack of it.

# CHAPTER 5

## I am concerned about my students passing Religious Education

### 5.0 Introduction

In this chapter I present data on how RE teachers assess their subject, and how they access official documents which are expected to enhance their classroom teaching. I also present findings on the use and role of commercially produced materials and other resources that teachers use. In addition, I report on the physical resources found in the two schools. I present data on how teachers deal with issues of diversity in RE classrooms. I further report on what takes place in schools in terms of mentoring, tracking teachers after completing their training in teaching, and collaboration of RE teachers. Finally, I present data on how RE teachers collaborate with community members and the role of in-service professional development in multi-faith RE teaching.

### 5.1 Assessing multi-faith Religious Education

Assessment is an important aspect in teaching and learning. Emphasis on testing has always resulted in large coverage of disparate topics while narrowing the range of instructional practices. It seems that there will always be an increased focus on test preparation and drilling students for tests. Such emphasis can also discourage teachers from integrating pedagogies that are considered desirable in terms of critical thinking (Falk & Drayton, 2004). Such focus can compromise teaching for high order thinking skills.

I was interested in how the RE teachers assessed their students' work since that is a major component in the teachers' practices. Teachers are professionally accountable for what happens in their classrooms. Students, too, on the other hand have both an individual and a collective responsibility in their learning. I was interested in the different forms of assessments, especially the ones that were easy to observe such as formative and summative forms of assessment. Formative assessment refers to assessment that is done during a lesson and it helps monitor instruction as well as remediate the instructional process. Formative assessment can have problems because classroom teachers may lack

objectivity when assessing the adequacy of their teaching and its effects on students' learning. Teachers derive their main professional satisfaction from instructional successes, which they attain through various forms of assessment. Airasian (1995:292) says that "every time a favourable judgement about instruction or learning is made, teachers are in part rewarding themselves". Summative assessment aims at assessing the learners at the end or completion of an instruction to ensure that students demonstrate how much they have learnt. In my study, summative assessment was in the form of quizzes, end of month tests and end of term examinations. It emerged in my study that one of the problems that teachers faced was on assessment. For example, they had challenges in constructing multiple choice test items, and test scoring especially in essays.

### 5.1.1 Teachers' views on Religious Education assessment

Throughout my fieldwork, the common concern for all the teachers and students was the poor results in RE at national level. The RE teachers largely blamed the Examination, Research and Testing Division (ERTD) for these poor results. Furthermore, the four RE teachers and some Education Officers were unhappy that ERTD was not transparent in terms of sharing information on assessment. Miss Rabin's remarks show that she was uncomfortable with the state of affairs with regard to RE assessment, when she said:

> When we mark the national examinations the students tend to be passing as shown in the raw marks. The raw marks that we enter may be pleasing enough, but when the national results come out they will show that students had performed badly. (Interview with Miss Rabin, 29th October, 2006)

She indicated that as one of the RE teachers, she did not know what exactly caused that inconsistency. She said that such a scenario frustrated RE teachers because they are viewed as failures especially by principals, parents and by RE students, when compared to their colleagues who teach other subjects. She indicated that at school level they are constantly blamed by the school administration for poor RE results. She said that since many students failed RE, it put the teachers in a collision course with the school administrators. She further indicated that school administrators at times accuse them of setting sub-standard tests and school-based examinations. However, she observed that RE is not being done well countrywide. Teachers indicated that RE was performed well at school level, but not at national level.

Mr Tiro was also unhappy about the marking at national level, and this is what he said:

> My colleague who goes for marking, told me that as they mark, students pass but from there, teachers do not know what happens to the results in the process of normalising the results. We understand that there is a formula that is used to adjust marks. For example, if they find that few students passed, they lower the pass mark using the standard deviation, whatever that means. If many students pass, they raise the pass mark leading to students failing. (Interview with Mr Tiro, 3rd October, 2006)

In addition to that, Mr Tiro was unhappy with the poor results, he was not conversant with standard deviation, a statistical formula that was said to be used to grade students. Mrs. Koloni a newer teacher amongst the four teachers had never been involved in marking national examinations before but was unhappy with how ERTD and those who mark, and she said:

> They are very unfair during marking. They expect too much from these students. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 9th October, 2006)

Mr. Tiro suggested that one way in which RE assessment could be made easier was to enumerate religions to be studied. He blamed ERTD for unnecessarily raising grades, and according to him, that was unfair for both teachers and students mainly because teachers in the Botswana education system are judged in terms of the results that they produce, especially at national level. He further observed that due to poor RE results, the relations between school principals and RE teachers are usually strained. Mr Tiro went on to say:

> I am convinced that teachers are able to teach well since they understand what the syllabus requires of them, and have adequate assessment skills. The problem is at the marking centres and at ERTD. Students and teachers do not have any problem, but ERTD has. If there is need to make the examination difficult, then that has to be communicated to the teachers so that they do that at school level. The RE examination reports too are usually not elaborate enough to help teachers regarding where they went wrong. For example there will be something like **Question 2 was not well answered**. That type of information is not useful to the teachers. The report has to be precise and has to provide a key in order to help teachers in the future. (Interview with Mr Tiro, 3rd October, 2006)

He also suggested that teachers need to be exposed to in-service training on how examinations are standardised, so that there is a form of moderation at school level instead of depending only on raw marks. He further suggested that there has to be involvement of all the stakeholders on how marks are processed. These stakeholders are teachers, Education Officers at inspectorate regions, Education Officers at ERTD and statistics officers at ERTD who process the raw marks.

All the four teachers were not happy with ERTD because they indicated that the examining body has certain expectations which they as teachers were not made aware of, such as how they should assess their students. For example, Mrs. Laban was unhappy that there was no communication between ERTD and the teachers regarding RE assessment. She suggested that to take care of the gap, the following should be done; mounting workshops for teachers, reviving RE clusters, and that teachers who are invited for marking should brief those who did not participate in national marking.

Students in both schools were also unhappy with RE results at national level. For example, students at Makala Junior Secondary School indicated that RE was not popular in their school, because it was not passed well, because there were never any first class passes in RE in their school.

Just like the teachers, other Education Officers had a vague idea regarding how grades were arrived at and what happened to the grades once they left the marking centre. They too, did not know the statistical formulas that were used. Mr Mathias, an Education Officer, was unhappy with ERTD. He said:

> We do not know what the ERTD people do, because students get high marks as we mark, but we then get the shock of our lives to find that the schools that were doing well when we were marking failed. For example, schools will not have A's or B's as compared to the As and Bs that we saw when we were marking. (Interview with Mr Mathias, 17th October, 2006)

He too had problems with ERTD because he said that he did not know what happened to the raw marks that they enter during the marking session. Mr Mathias also said:

> If I had my way I would suggest that there should be a change of markers every three years so that as many teachers as possible are given the feel of what marking entails, because those involved in marking gain a lot of experience as they mark, hence improve on their classroom teaching. (Interview with Mr Mathias, 17th October, 2006)

He was of the view that different teachers should be exposed to national marking in order for them to improve on their teaching skills and interpretation of syllabus objectives. However, he indicated that it was unfortunate that as Education Officers, in the inspectorate they had little say in the nomination of teachers who were invited for marking at national level. Another Education Officer, Miss Timon indicated that part of

the reason why the multi-faith RE curriculum tended to be difficult and cannot be passed well was because the teachers' testing skills were not good enough.

The RE Examination Officer indicated that, she too, did not know what happened once the marks left the marking room. She further indicated that she did not know what formula was used to arrive at the different grades, because what she did was to forward marks to the data processing unit within ERTD. She said that she was not involved in the computing of marks. The general picture is that teachers and Education Officers responsible for RE were not aware of the formulae that were used to arrive at the different grades once the marks were forwarded to the data processing unit of the ERTD. This could be the reason, and that is why RE teachers felt that grades were "doctored." When I asked the RE Examination Officer to give me a picture of how RE was generally performed in the country she referred me to the data processing unit within ERTD. However, she indicated that the cause of poor results could be that teachers may not be emphasising important aspects of the curriculum because that is revealed in the way students answered questions. She said, for example, students spell wrongly certain religious concepts, such as names of festivals. Furthermore, she indicated that students fail to answer high order questions and that some of them have a poor grasp of basic religious concepts. She also indicated that the marking key is a problem since it has to cover *"six major religions."*

Due to the teachers' approach that emphasized passing of examinations instead of internalizing concepts, students too were pre-occupied with accumulating points or marks at the expense of an entrenched knowledge. The tradition was that success was viewed as being equivalent to collecting more points in quizzes, tests and examinations. It is interesting to note that the four RE teachers, drilled students in preparation for the final Junior Certificate (JC) examinations hence little time was spent exploring issues in depth. For example, the teachers used exercises in the students' textbooks for classroom work and also for tests. Teaching for examinations which is information-based was largely the case in the two schools. This practice left little opportunity for both the teacher and the students to see beyond information and facts, hence making interpretations and inferences which are integral in a multi-faith RE difficult to achieve, hence learning became a short term goal. The aim of the curriculum to produce critical thinkers was then defeated.

### 5.1.2 Teachers' skills in testing multi-faith RE

Even though teachers taught for tests, I observed that teachers did not always attach marks in most of the work that they gave to the students in terms of formative classwork assessment, unlike in the final national examination where there are marks attached against a question. This led students not to know how much they were expected to write on a question. For example, when I asked Miss Rabin how she awarded marks on an end of term examination question: *"Discuss the creation of human beings according to the scientific explanation"* she said.

> I expected them to write on evolution but they were confused, because most of them wrote everything they knew about the creation of human beings. (Interview with Miss Rabin, 9th March, 2007)

When I asked her if there was a way in which the question could have been framed, and also to make awarding of marks easier since she suspected that students were confused Miss Rabin said:

> Yes, for example, I could have asked it like: *Describe the 4 stages of human development according to science.* (Interview with Miss Rabin, 9th March, 2007)

Miss Rabin used the instructional objectives from the syllabus document as it was, without any modification to it. It was more of an instructional objective than an examination question. An instructional objective could be taught in several lessons and a variety of issues could emerge. At times she asked test questions that demanded a lot but with little marks as shown in the following question. *Give and explain the two types of leadership.* (2 marks) It is reasonable that 2 marks would be awarded for naming "the two types of leadership", and the explanation which is of a high order cognitive level would be worth much more.

When asked about her view regarding the assessment of the RE curriculum Mrs. Gatt, an RE Curriculum Development Officer said:

> We should have a way of examining it. At the moment we have multiple choice and short answer questions. This tends not to assess RE fully because the subject is very open. For example, a question such as: **"describe marriage in a religion of your choice"** – students are likely to answer that one correctly. There are times when students are afraid to venture into other religions, hence stick only to Christianity and African Traditional Religion leading them to get high marks. Since we are going to review it, we will have to think of how we can reduce the openness of the syllabus. We are thinking of having core religions, like in England where they have two or more religions as core ones. (Interview with Mrs Gatt, 15th August, 2006)

She largely blamed the nature of the curriculum for students' poor performance, and suggested that the solution was to have core religions so that the bulk of questions could largely be based on those religions. Another RE officer Mr Moks was of the view that the syllabus was too open hence most students passed leading to a lot of moderation of the grades, ending in the pass mark being raised and if that happened many students were likely to fail. He complained that the RE examinations do not discriminate against candidates because they are open and easy.

Contrary to what the RE Examination Officer Miss Ray had told me earlier, that she did not have an idea how students were graded, she indicated that ERTD use T-Score in grading the students. She said that they were moving towards what he said was judgemental grading, whereby according to her, teachers would determine the final grade of the learners. This is what she said about judgemental grading:

> This is whereby we empower teachers because they know their students better. The teacher looks at the question and then provides answers. From there the teacher marks scripts according to his or her own judgement but against a marking key. However, a teacher might overate or under rate a student. After marking, the grades are then forwarded to the data processing unit within ERTD for computation. In judgemental grading, teachers look at questions, mark them and make judgements as to what grade a student should get. We discovered in our pilot grading that in judgemental grading, the grades were spread as compared to when we used T-score, where they were crowded in pockets. (Interview with Miss Ray, 7th November, 2006)

According to the Examination Officer, in judgemental grading, teachers determine the cut-off point, which is not the case now. She was, however, not clear as to how the cut-off point was going to be determined by teachers, especially without the guidance of ERTD officers.

Most of the tests and quizzes that teachers set were of a low order, because they comprised knowledge or recall questions as shown in the common test that Miss Rabin and Mr. Tiro at Makala Junior Secondary School gave to their students.

1. Define friendship.

2. Give 3 qualities of good friendship.
i. ----------
ii. ----------
iii. ----------

2. State 2 ways in which people may become friends.

4. State 2 things which can attract someone to the other person in making friendship.
i. ----------
ii. ----------

5. Give 3 importance of friendship.
i. ----------
ii. ----------
iii. ----------

6. Give any 3 obstacles to friendship.
i. ----------
ii. ----------
iii. ----------
(Fieldnotes from Miss Rabin's class, 26th June, 2007)

There were no marks attached to the above questions, yet marks allocated to a question can give students a hint regarding the depth of a question. The other problem is that at times some of the questions that teachers asked were poorly constructed like Question 5 (Give the three importance of friendship) above, because it flouts grammatical rules.

When Mrs. Laban was revising a multiple choice examination paper that was written in the previous term, I observed that there were several grammatical rules that were flouted, for example words such as *"Allah"* and "*Modimo"* (Islamic and Setswana words for God respectively) were written in small letters yet they are proper nouns. Some of the distractors were too long hence making them obviously correct or incorrect. For example, there was one question that had three of the options being phrases and one being a word hence making it to be the key or an obvious distractor. This is shown in my field notes below.

**Question 5**
Which of the following best describes puberty?
A. end of life
B. birth
C. new stage in life
D. readiness for marriage
(Fieldnotes from Mrs Laban's class, 11th May, 2007)

Alternative **B** in the question is obviously wrong or correct because it is a word whereas the rest are phrases.

**Question 7. Which of the following are types of festivals?**
A. Christmas and new year
B. Eid-ul fitra and hajj
C. Succot and letsema
D. Passover and eid-ul-adha
(Fieldnotes from Mrs Laban's class, 11th May, 2007)

Students had problems with **Question 7**, because of the way it was phrased. When it was revision time, students wanted to know the difference between a festival and a ceremony but the teacher was not sure on the difference. The teacher later on indicated that the question was not well-phrased and that it should have been phrased like **festival/ceremony**. Unfortunately, students had already lost marks and were not given free marks in retrospect even though the examiner was at fault. In addition, all the words are proper nouns and should have had the first letter written in a capital letter. (Fieldnotes from Mrs Laban's class, 11th May, 2007)

I had an interview with Mrs. Laban after the revision exercise of a school-based examination as shown below.

**There seems to be some inconsistency in the examination paper?**
One reason could be that the examiner lacks the assessment skills and may not have any knowledge how alternatives are supposed to be. At times it is because the examiner will have just used a past examination question paper without studying it first.

**In your view, how can teachers improve their assessment skills?**
We need workshops on assessment. We have problems in the way we ask questions. Due to poor assessment skills, at times teachers decide to give a free mark for a vague question.

**Since you point out that teachers' skills in assessment are inadequate, don't you think that this could contribute to students' poor performance?**
Yes. In addition, I would suggest that subject teachers should mount school-based workshops, for about 3-4 people who teach a subject. These people could be joined, if possible, by teachers of a related subject. With us in RE, we could be joined by ME (Moral Education). We could then exchange ideas on assessment. Some teachers here have skills since they participate in national examinations marking. These are able teachers here, who could help. (Interview with Mrs Laban, 23rd May, 2007)

Mrs. Laban acknowledged that part of the problem in teaching RE was lack of good assessment skills by teachers and the teachers' limited content knowledge. She suggested that the solution to the problem was to mount assessment workshops for teachers.

There was an incident where Mrs. Laban's students complained that they gave an example of a religion of their choice but were penalised for having chosen a religion with a few points. I asked her why that was the case, and she said:

> It is the marks allocated per question that should guide students as to what choice they should make regarding a religion. Several religions will have been dealt with, but the student should choose one with more points in order to score more. (Interview with Mrs Laban, 23rd May, 2007)

Even though she had expectations that students should be guided by the marks allocated, there was nothing in the question to suggest to students how they could choose questions. Similarly, there was no prior information that was given to the students about how they were to make a choice of religions when answering questions. When I suggested to her that it would be unfair since a question will not have been clear regarding what it needed, she indicated to me that there was need to evaluate the RE curriculum because it was the cause of the problem.

Mrs. Laban blamed the RE curriculum that it was long overdue for revision and hoped that its revision would include the input from teachers. She also suggested that if it were to be revised, certain topics could be discarded such as *Freedom* and *Human Rights*, while others could be added or retained. She said:

> The syllabus is long overdue for revision. It is now ten years old. I think the root of all the problems is the curriculum itself, though assessment might be another one. I also think and hope that the revised version will take the input of teachers on board. I also think that there are topics that can be discarded such as Freedom and Human Rights. (Interview with Mrs Laban, 4th October, 2006)

Mrs. Koloni indicated that the reason why students fail is that teachers may not have a good grasp of certain RE concepts. She indicated that teachers could be lacking in their content and pedagogical knowledge. She also suggested that part of the solution to the problem of assessment at national level, was to give chance to newer teachers, so that they too could gain insight regarding what is happening during national examination

marking. Regarding the allocation of marks in class exercises and quizzes, she said that it depended mainly on the teachers' discretion than on a particular established frame.

Mrs. Koloni was unhappy that there were many religions that they were expected to teach, hence, according to her, that makes assessment difficult. She also indicated that some topics in the syllabus were very long, and as a result they took a long time to cover them. She suggested that fewer religions should be specified and taught when she said:

> A colleague of mine who teaches RE at Seagull Junior Secondary School once suggested to me to cut on the religions we use, at least to two or three. I think that is why their students perform better than ours. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 9th October, 2006)

At times, teachers were not sure if some objectives were in the syllabus or not. Most of the time teachers used questions that were obtained directly from the textbooks and did not verify if questions were in line with what was in the syllabus document and with what they taught in class.

When I asked for his view on the way in which the multi-faith RE was assessed Mr. Tiro said:

> RE is examination oriented and I am mostly concerned about my students passing. The way RE is assessed is clear since a teacher may choose to teach one religion and emphasise it and students will pass. Most questions are about choosing one religion of the students' choice. One can teach just up to two religions to take care of the "compare" and "contrast" questions. I am unhappy with the lot of information that students are given when in fact one religion will be asked for. Students fill up their note books yet the examination will be on one religion or at most two. It is a waste of both the teachers' and students' precious time. Religions should be specified so that there are specific questions on specific religions. (Interview with Mr Tiro, 3rd October, 2006)

In order for their students to succeed, some teachers interpreted the curriculum in a way that best suited them like when they decided to choose religions that they emphasised when teaching. Teachers did that because of the nature of RE that is examination-oriented as shown in my interview above with Mr Tiro.

There was a problem with awarding of marks in assessment as shown in the classwork that Mr Tiro gave to his students.

> 1. Briefly explain how authority in your school positively affects your daily routine (3).
> 2. Give and explain any 2 types of leadership (2)
> (Fieldnotes from Mr Tiro's class, 20th June, 2007)

In the first question it is not clear what "briefly explain" means that would warrant three marks, and in the second question the marks allocated to the question seem too little in relation to what the question demanded. For example, mentioning two types of leadership would warrant 2 marks, and explaining how those two types of leadership function would be worth much more than the two marks awarded by the teacher. The questions were obtained directly from the students' textbook and the teacher had not scrutinised them first. Below are quiz questions that Mr. Tiro gave to his students, and the questions did not carry any marks.

> 1. Account for the fact that morality in one religion may not be morality in another religion, giving five examples from different religions.
> 2. State and explain five aspects that show how loyalty is important in society.
> 3. Compare and contrast myths of creation from any two religions you have studied.
> 4. Discuss marriage in any religion of your choice clearly showing five rituals performed to solemnise it.
> (Fieldnotes from Mr Tiro's class, 22nd June, 2007)

The verbs account, state, explain, compare and discuss demanded different levels of input from the students. Below is part of my field notes of what transpired during one of Mr. Tiro's lessons when he gave back to students their scripts of the above quiz.

> **Mr Tiro:** How would you answer this question? *Account for the fact that morality in one religion may not be morality in another religion giving five examples from different religions.*
>
> **Student A:** Something that is good in one religion may not be good in another religion.
> **Mr Tiro:** Give an example.
> **Student A:** For example, that polygamy was accepted in ATR and not in Christianity.
> **Mr Tiro** (making an addition)**:** a cow is a sacred animal in Hinduism and not in Christianity since it could be killed in weddings and funerals.
> **Student B:** In Shintoism twins are killed because they are believed to bring bad luck, whilst in Christianity it is believed twins are a blessing from God.
>
> [The teacher did not make any comment regarding the contribution of Student B about Shintoism].

> **Mr Tiro:** In Islam women have to wear clothes that cover their whole body while that is not a requirement in Christianity.
>
> In **Question 2**, most of the examples for questions 2-4 were provided by the teacher. Regarding **Question 3**: *Compare and contrast myths of creation from any two religions you have studied.* The comparison was between Christianity and Islam which are both Judeo-Christian religions and their creation myths are similar and they have the same context.
> (Fieldnotes from Mr Tiro's class, 22nd June, 2007)

The reports from the ERTD (Botswana Government, 2005, 2004b, 2003) confirmed the poor results because between 2003 and 2005 all schools in Botswana attained less that 2% in grade A in RE and the majority of students were concentrated in grade D which is a fail category. Regarding questions that involved choosing a religion of one's choice, students chose Christianity and African Traditional Religion, hence leading them not to be diverse in their responses.

### 5.2 Access to official documents

In order to be informed on how teachers understand and implement a multi-faith RE curriculum, I referred to documents such as the RNPE, RE syllabus document, RE examination papers and reports, schemes of work and lesson plans. It is important to note that the general understanding of the RE curriculum and particularly the pedagogical skills can be enhanced if teachers have access to government documents such as circulars especially in relation to their area of specialisation as well as their general professional requirements.

I found that within school and outside school, teachers prepared schemes of work mainly for administrative purposes and not necessarily to help them in their classroom instruction. There has been little emphasis on schemes of work and lesson plans at secondary school level in the Botswana education system. They were not part of the secondary school teachers' culture. It is only recently that the inspectorate required teachers to operate with updated schemes of work and lesson plans. Schemes of work and lesson plans are tools that are meant to make teachers' work lighter by providing guidance. I also found that at times teachers did not have easy access to some important government and other official documents especially circulars and reports. For example, teachers did not have easy access to the RE examination reports from ERTD. Teachers

also indicated that examinations reports from ERTD reached their schools almost half way into the following year. Mrs. Laban said:

> These reports rarely reach us. If they do, it is when we had forgotten about them. (Interview with Mrs Laban, 4th October, 2006)

Teachers indicated that examination reports rarely reached them on time. If they did, in most cases they ended in the file of the Head of Department or in the principal's office. However, teachers also said that they never bothered to enquire about them even though they knew about those annual reports. The official reports could help them in their classroom instruction. However, even after reaching schools, teachers hardly treated them as important. For example, they seldom included them in their departmental meeting agendas. The newer teachers in both schools indicated that they had never laid their hands on the ERTD reports since they joined teaching, but that they heard that such reports were there in their schools. For example, Mrs. Koloni told me that she depended on what RE senior teachers in her school told her about the reports. Furthermore, even though Mrs. Koloni was coordinating the RE Department she did not have a copy of the report. She said that one of the senior RE teachers had shown her the report, but did not give her a copy. She also said that she was not aware if the report of the previous year was in her school or not. As a way of knowing what the RE report entailed, I tried to get the latest copy of the report for the previous year from the teachers and after several attempts I managed to get one from Mrs. Laban who got it from the office of the principal. Teachers knew of the report but they did not know its contents since they did not have it in their possession. After she gave me the report, I made copies for all my four participants including her so that I could discuss assessment issues with the teachers with ease of reference in relation to the report. There were no ethical implications in distributing it to the teachers since they are supposed to be in possession of the document. It also emerged that teachers were not interested in reading some government documents even those that were made available to them.

A few days after I had given copies to the participants, I asked Mrs. Koloni if there was something in it that she felt worth sharing with me. She admitted that some of the information she had given to me earlier was not correct because for example, she now indicated that grammar was important even in RE. She indicated that she realised that, for example, students have to use the right conjunctions when answering questions that require them to compare and contrast.

This is what she said:

> It is a good report. For example it explains certain things such as "making the difference between *"general ethics"* and "*religious ethics."* Students do not know how to contrast and to compare, they use the conjunction "but" when comparing, instead of using "and". For example, when contrasting an extended family and a nuclear family they would use "and" instead of using "but". I think these are the things that we have to stress as we teach. I now realise that these minor things can cost students some marks. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 6th June, 2007)

She told me that all along she had been depending on what her RE colleagues told her instead of referring to the relevant documents. This time around, when, I asked her if language mattered she said:

> Yes, language matters. We have to be conscious about language as we mark our students' work. I was made to believe that language is not an issue. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 6th June, 2007)

She also went on to relate a content issue that was raised in the report.

> Also, there is this question on inter-marriage in religions. Now I'm not sure if it is there in the syllabus. I once had difficulty teaching it because there was no information on it. I then asked one of my colleagues how to go about teaching it. The colleague advised me to indicate that all religions are against inter-marriage. But now you can see what the report is saying. Most students would say religions are against inter-marriage, but the question demanded students to go further. You can see that teachers may also contribute to the failing of the students. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 6th June, 2007)

The report enabled Mrs Koloni to critically review the information that she got from her colleagues. After reading the ERTD report, Mrs Koloni was able to reflect on her own teaching practices as shown by her comments above. The RE report highlighted the pedagogical as well as content knowledge issues.

However, there were certain issues that were not correct in the report. For example, the report indicated that a question such as *"Give one religion and state its view …"* was a high order question. When I asked Mrs Koloni, if she agreed with the report on that matter, she answered in the positive. However, as our interview progressed, she said that it was not a high order question because in stating a view one was just making mention of something. She concluded by saying that the chief examiner can make mistakes too. She also admitted that there were questions on *"comparing"* and *"contrasting"* as shown in the past examination paper, something that she had disputed before seeing the report.

When I asked her to make any general comments about the RE report Mrs Koloni said:

> If teachers can read the report, they are likely to lead students properly. You see, we teach and mark some of these things correct when they are wrong. It would be better if RE teachers were to meet and talk about the report then go through it, respond to it and make their own suggestions which would then be sent to ERTD. We need to let them (ERTD) know what we think. Unfortunately, it is a one way business. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 6th June, 2007)

Her view about teaching and assessment were changed by the report which she had read of late. She also complained that there was too much red tape in her school and that was why some communication never reached teachers especially from ERTD. Furthermore, when I asked the teachers why they did not read the report of the previous year they indicated that they were aware of the existence of such a report but there was no particular reason.

Mr. Mathias, an Education Officer, in the Southern Region Inspectorate area had a different view from that of teachers. He said that teachers rarely read government documents. He gave an example, when some teachers were called for interviews most of them did not do well because they were unable to support their applications with general knowledge of the Botswana Education System. This is what Mr Mathias said:

> Some teachers don't read at all. Their reading does not go beyond textbooks. For example, teachers who came for interviews for senior Teacher Grade 1 posts were blank when they were asked about Botswana's Vision 2016. They also did not know anything about the emerging issues, because they mentioned "double shift" when they were asked about those issues. He complained that such an attitude was disturbing for intellectual workers such as teachers. (Interview with Mathias, 17th October, 2006)

Even though teachers had access to computers, it emerged that all the four teachers were reluctant to type their tests but preferred the school secretary to do it, hence leading to several errors in their tests and school-based examinations.

### 5.3 Resources in the two schools

#### 5.3.1 Commercially produced curriculum materials and other resources

Out of the numerous resources that teachers have at their disposal, textbooks are very important, because of their role in learning and teaching. A textbook is a comprehensive learning resource which is bound and in print or electronic form. Its contents are properly organised and are intended for use with a given curriculum. Every curriculum is usually accompanied by curriculum materials, especially in the form of textbooks. Textbooks can also be a source for most of the classroom instructional activities. Although a textbook cannot adequately cover all aspects of a curriculum, it can provide sufficient guidance to a particular topic, area of study or theme in a curriculum. For example, it can provide basic information which includes activities that can be helpful to the teachers and their students.

Textbooks can simplify the subject matter to its simplest form, hence facilitating ease of understanding. For example, textbooks can appropriate subject content and help explain it. As a result, textbooks empower the teachers by enabling and enhancing their teaching, letting them see what to teach and what matters most, helping them teach content in more depth, guiding their assessment of learning (Newman & Newman, 2006). It is perceived that textbooks support learning and make school work easier to understand for students and teachers. They are used as a basis for classroom activities.

Even though there are several commercially produced curriculum materials, textbooks are the commonest teaching and learning resources that the RE teachers use. However, textbooks have disadvantages such as tending to cover breadth at the expense of depth. Many textbooks are concerned primarily with content, and contain more information than is practical for students to learn in the time available. At times topics may not receive in-depth treatment, hence would not allow students to develop meaningful and lasting understanding. They may omit or de-emphasise key concepts, especially if they are controversial; and they may fail to differentiate between more important issues from ancillary concepts. They may lack key curricular components such as inquiry activities, assessment activities, and connections with other subjects. A textbook is a tool that can contribute to learning a variety of ways, especially if used in conjunction with other teaching and learning aids. Textbooks need to have the potential to help teachers to foster reason-based understanding which was not the case with the four RE teachers.

Textbooks are important artefacts in the cultural socialisation of children because they can present official versions of publicly sanctioned knowledge. In this context, they can serve to transmit and reinforce the dominant cultural hegemony of a nation as was the case with RE textbooks that emphasised Christianity. Textbooks can act as important instruments in the process of constructing legitimated ideologies and beliefs, since they act as a reflection of the history, knowledge and values that are considered important by the powerful groups of society. For example, textbooks may be used to promote certain ideologies and sets of political ideas because they are social constructions.

There was a clear over-dependence on textbooks by the four RE teachers and they were the teachers' single most widely used teaching and learning resource. Throughout my stay at the two schools there was little that suggested that teachers learnt and researched more than what the textbooks provided, as shown by Miss Rabin's comment below.

> We always encourage them (students) to stick to what is in their books and not what happens at home. (Interview with Miss Rabin, 29th October, 2006)

This shows that students were advised to study their textbooks only, and any other sources of information were not promoted. This over-dependence on books limited the students' contributions in terms of their knowledge and experiences. The over-dependence on books is also shown in Miss Rabin's response on why she gave students incorrect information when she said in Botswana and elsewhere armed robbery was one of the crimes punishable by death, and when I asked her about the correctness of that piece of information she said:

> No, it is not correct. But it is what is in the book. We go with what the textbook says. It is because that is written down. I may know what is correct but I must make sure that my students pass. (Interview with Miss Rabin, 9th March, 2007)

There were times when students who were presenting to the class after a group discussion, could not answer questions because there were no answers provided in the textbooks. For example, in one of Miss Rabin's classes a group was presenting on *"The Importance of Authority"* and when they were asked by their classmates to provide examples from the information that they gave, they could not provide any largely because

the examples were not in the textbook. Teachers emphasised Christianity because textbooks covered it extensively.

When Mrs. Koloni gave students notes on the topic *"Views of different religions on capital punishment"* she referred to Christianity, Islam and Buddhism largely because the textbook she was using was elaborate on these three religions in relation to the topic. Furthermore, in almost all the cases where examples of religion were demanded, Christianity was usually one of the religions since the textbooks, namely, *Junior Secondary Religious Education for Botswana* and *Religion for all* were elaborate on it. Furthermore, Mrs Koloni also said:

> I want them (students) to get more information from the text books. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 30th May, 2007)

Mrs. Koloni indicated that other than the students' textbooks she never used any other teaching aid. In terms of choosing the religions that she had to refer to, she said:

> I look at the information that is available – the information that can help the students answer a question. The information in the students' textbooks has been presented in a way that students easily understand because it has been broken down. In the end a teacher, has nothing to add. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 9th October, 2006)

She indicated that her dependence on textbooks was for practical reasons because they are a source where students can easily tap information and understand it without difficulty. When I asked her why she did not use some of her university books, Mrs Koloni said that those books were of a higher standard.

> The authors of the junior secondary schools textbooks were catering for JC (Junior Certificate) students. With the UB (University of Botswana) books, I have to break down the information when I present information on some religions. For example, you know how complex Hinduism is. I never touch that religion! (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 9th October, 2006)

When I asked Mrs Koloni why she did not use the information that she got elsewhere outside the students' textbooks, she said:

> The problem is with the examiners. They may decide to reject a certain piece of information. That is why we try to stick to these textbooks. You give students a piece of information that is not in the textbooks, and you will be shocked to learn that children are marked wrong. It could also be that at times, the examiners are not aware of new information. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 9th October, 2006)

She indicated that what was most important was for her students to pass the examinations. She also indicated that if she provides information that is not in the textbooks, and which the examiners may not know of or familiar with, that might disadvantage her students because they are likely to be marked down. There was a clear over dependence on textbooks by Mrs. Koloni as shown in the interview:

> **What would be your response if someone said that the first two paragraphs on capital punishment in *Religion for All* with reference to Christianity do not show that Christians support or do not support capital punishment?**
> *Religion for All* says Christians hold two views – for and against. This information is in the students' textbook. The book indicates that punishment and forgiveness can be achieved simultaneously. But like you are saying, we take it for granted that students understand what that means. Perhaps we assume a lot and do not come down to the level of the students.
>
> **Under the same notes, that you gave to the students, would you say revenge and avenge are "Christian principles of justice" as you say it, as seen in Exodus 21:23 "… an eye for an eye".**
> Some Christian denominations.
> (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 30th May, 2007)

Mrs. Koloni was able to see the danger of depending solely on textbooks, yet in her view, she had little or no alternative since examinations are based on textbooks. She admitted that there is a lot of reading between the lines that is needed when using textbooks, even though it was not clear if students were skilled to read between the lines like their teachers. In almost all the lessons that I observed, a textbook was used. For example, even though the textbook that she used indicated that there are two views on capital punishment according to Christianity, it did not clearly enumerate them. By saying that punishment and forgiveness can be achieved simultaneously in relation to capital punishment does not show the two different positions. What the textbook provided, was information about what Christians think in relation to capital punishment. In fact it is a contradiction that punishment and forgiveness can be achieved simultaneously. The textbook authors say the same thing about Islam largely because they do not want to commit themselves. It is, however, clear that the book does not enumerate the two positions for and against capital punishment in both Christianity and Islam, yet it is the book that teachers and students heavily depend on. The book should have shown the Christians' position for and against capital punishment.

In Miss Rabin's lesson on "*Ways of administering capital punishment,"* her students gave her answers that they got directly from their textbook. She complained that the books did not cover enough religions for her to draw from as per the instructional objectives in the syllabus document. For example, she said that the textbooks did not have information on some religions such as Zoroastrianism, Taoism, Jainism and Shintoism.

Even though teachers depended on students' textbooks, RE teachers in both schools, had access to internet facilities where they could access information especially on some of the religions that they said had inadequate information in the textbooks. Another observation worth noting is that teachers rarely used internet facilities. For example, Miss Rabin said that she rarely used the information from the internet because she barely visited any website.

When I asked Mrs. Koloni if she used any other teaching aid other than the textbook she answered in the negative and indicated that she had never used for example CDs or DVDs in her RE lessons. When I further asked her if she could record some of the programmes on TV to use in her teaching, she said that she did not have the recording devices to do it.

The eight in-service RE teachers also indicated that they depended on students' textbooks. They said that lack of resources and information on some of the religions such as Bahai Faith at times made it difficult for them to teach those religions effectively.

The RE Curriculum Officer suggested that posters and videos need to be brought in as additional teaching and learning resources. The Curriculum Officer together with the Textbook Prescription Committee, determine what main resources are supposed to be used in schools. The Examination Officer at ERTD, Miss Ray expressed her unhappiness about the quality of the textbooks, especially since according to her, several of them were full of errors and she said:

> The level of the textbooks is poor because at times an author writes just to answer a syllabus objective and would not expand it. Authors should be authors for all times and not for a particular syllabus. What would happen if a syllabus is phased out? This is a deficiency on the part of the writers. .
> (Interview with Miss Ray, 7th November, 2006)

Mr. Mathias, an Education Officer, indicated that RE teachers are not innovative enough to think and design good teaching aids and that is why they depended on textbooks. Another Education Officer, Mr. Moks, also indicated that teachers mainly use textbooks. He suggested that other teaching and learning aids such as posters and videos could equally be helpful. However, he indicated that teachers are unaware of the usefulness of some of these aids because teachers never think of any other teaching and learning aids besides the students' textbooks. He said that the idea of prescribing textbooks for teachers was not helpful because that led to teachers not researching. Miss Timon an Education Officer in the northern region inspectorate area concurred with her colleagues that teachers solely depended on students' textbooks and do not research beyond students' textbooks. She said that teachers emphasise Christianity since they have easy access to its information, and as a result other religions are ignored. She was also unhappy that teachers do not go out and research, for example, visiting a mosque, or temple to get information.

In addition to textbooks that were used in the two schools, reprographic machines such as photocopiers and scanners were inadequate. Mr. Tiro told me that in the past, the end of term examinations papers were printed at the Ministry of Education Regional Offices because the school did not have the resources. He indicated that at times they duplicated their work in the nearby schools if the machines there were working. Due to this problem, he wrote a test on the blackboard and students had to copy the questions first into their answer sheets before they could answer them. This is what he said regarding shortage of resources.

> Since we do not have photocopiers one has no choice but to write a test on the board. But if they write their end of month test we are forced to run around. At times we even get our papers photocopied at Bruberg Police Station. But if it is just a quiz we cannot go there because that will be asking too much from them. (Interview with Mr Tiro, 30th October, 2006)

Mrs. Laban indicated that there were enough computers in her school to use but she complained that teachers including her were too lazy to use them. She said that at her home there were two computers and a laptop yet even when she had to type something she had to ask either her husband or one of her children to do it for her. She further indicated that even though the school library had a lot of teaching and learning aids in the form of videos and DVDs she acknowledged that RE teachers barely used those resources.

> The library has videos, some of which are relevant to some of our topics. Unfortunately, we rarely use the resources and the opportunity. We are just lazy. For example, I rarely watch TV, except when there is a special programme.
> (Interview with Miss Laban, 4th October, 2006)

I observed that teachers did not use the computers in their schools to type their quizzes, tests and examinations even though they had access to the school computer laboratories but would instead give the school secretary their papers to type. This did not work well since the secretary had piles of work especially from the principal. At Makala Junior Secondary School teachers had access to computers in their school. Mr Tiro indicated that there were adequate computers in the school which all teachers had access to even though he rarely used this resource because of his limited computer skills. When I asked why he wrote notes on the chalk board instead of using a computer where he could store them and later adjust them at will without re-writing everything again he indicated that he would try that in future.

Even though teachers were dependent on students' books, Mrs. Laban complained that one major problem was that the existing textbooks did not cover some topics as she would have expected. She pointed out that it could be one major factor why students did not pass RE. To some extent, she could have been right in her assertion because RE is largely test-based hence the need to have resources readily available to respond to its demands.

Similarly, students too, indicated that they depended on textbooks even though some of the information they got from textbooks was inadequate and at times inaccurate. They further said that their learning would be enhanced if, for example, some religious practitioners could be brought in as resource persons or the students could visit them. One of the students, Kabo at Togal Junior Secondary School said:

> Time should be shared between being taught normally and watching videos and DVDs. The learning should be varied, because we learn better when we watch a video or DVD. We just never go anywhere.
> (Interview with students at Togal Junior Secondary School, 26th October, 2006)

Peter, a student at Togal Junior Secondary School said:

> Since teachers may not know certain information, they at times feel that whatever information we bring is obviously wrong. They want us to only write what is in the textbook and not what we know, even though it might be correct. They do not want us to write what we know about out traditions except to stick to what is in the textbook. For example they accept Christianity because it is in the textbooks, and the textbooks emphasise the Roman Catholic Church. When we did the topic "contraception" all the examples were from the Roman Catholic Church. Most of the examples in the textbooks are from Botswana and not from other parts of Africa. (Interview with students at Togal Junior Secondary School, 25th October, 2006)

At Makala Junior Secondary School students complained that they never had access to any other resource except the students' textbooks. They indicated that even in the examples of religions that are given, almost all of them are from the textbooks hence leading them to concentrate on those that they think are easy, such as Christianity and African Traditional Religion. They further, indicated that at times textbooks are not very informative like in a topic such as "*The scientific theory of evolution"*, which they said their textbooks were not helpful because at times they provided misleading information. They complained that in such situations, teachers too tend not to be helpful in clarifying issues. Rachel, a student at Togal Junior Secondary School said:

> We are always allowed to say our views but we are not allowed to stick to them especially in tests and examinations. Most of the material that we use which is accepted is the one that is from the textbooks, yet these books have errors. (Interview with students at Togal Junior Secondary School, 26th October, 2006)

The students at Togal Junior Secondary School complained that when they used their experiences and knowledge they were usually marked down by the teachers. They said that the likely reason why their teachers never take them out on trips is because they wanted them to use the textbooks only. This is what one student, Tefo, said:

> The problem is even worse when we go out to research because teachers just look only at what is in the textbook and mark you down on something you bring up that is not in the textbook.
> (Interview with students at Togal Junior Secondary School, 26th October, 2006)

From their comments students were calling for a variety of resources. The students further indicated that they never watch any videos in RE classes and also that they never took any educational trips.

### 5.3.2 Physical resources in schools

In both schools there was a shortage of chairs and tables for students. The classrooms were also inadequate in both schools, since they resorted to using outdoor teaching areas. For example, at Makala Junior Secondary School it was a school policy that first year RE students were to use outdoor teaching areas. The reason for doing this according to Miss Rabin was because RE was an option and did not have what she referred to as "practical activities" like other optional subjects such as Home Economics, where for example, the students would be knitting and cooking. She, however, indicated that it was a problem since the lessons did not go well if it was raining, cold or windy. Another problem that she observed was the noise that came from different directions if students used an outdoor teaching area. For example, at Makala Junior Secondary School, almost all of Mr Tiro's classes, including the one that I observed were held in an outdoor area and there was a lot of distraction because of the noise and movements as shown in my notes below:

> Surrounding the outdoor teaching area where the class was, there was litter all over and there was movement of students who were going towards the garden where there was a standpipe to drink water. Also, there were some goats that were grazing a few metres away from where the class was, there was a strong smell of the he-goat. I wondered if students were also sensitive to its smell or they had just given up to it. About five metres from the outdoor class there was an incinerator and the smoke coming from its chimney had engulfed the area.
> (Fieldnotes from Mr Tiro's class, 29th January, 2007)

Both schools had white boards but instead teachers used the blackboards and when I asked them why they did not use the whiteboards, they said that they were never supplied with whiteboard markers. In most instances a few minutes had to be spent waiting for a student who would have gone to another class to ask for a blackboard duster. On the whole, the resources such as classrooms, chairs and other resources were inadequate at both schools. For example, there were times when teachers worked from their houses because there were inadequate chairs in the staff room.

### 5.3.3 Educational visits and resource persons

Visiting and inviting speakers can be an integral part in the teaching of RE since it could help develop various thought capacities in children. Educational tours can be an important part of the RE curriculum and can enrich teaching since students can learn from religion and learn about religion. Furthermore, if students engage in educational trips they can experience awe, wonder, relationships and the search for meaning and purpose of life as they observe the practitioners. Education tours can help students to understand better and to appreciate the lived world of religion.

The four RE teachers did not give students first hand experience such as visiting nearby places of worship. In both schools, students indicated that they were never taken out on educational trips, even though they expressed that it could enhance their learning. They also wondered why they did not engage in educational trips, even though most of the religious sites were within reach. The students suggested that they could learn a lot if students from other schools who are practicing other religions could be invited to come and talk to them about their religions because it would be easier to interact with them because they are their peers. In the eight months I was in the two schools, no teacher took their students on an educational trip. The teachers indicated that students had to be fed if they were taken out on educational tours. However, some of the religious sites and resource persons were within a walking distance, and did not need students to be fed.

Furthermore, RE teachers did not invite resource persons from within and outside their schools to their classes. Mrs. Laban had initially told me that RE teachers in her school do invite resource persons to their classes, but that did not happen during the time I spent in her school. There was no one who was invited to her class or that of her colleagues from within or outside her school. As a result, teachers did not help students to understand and appreciate the outside world in relation to religion. Students at Togal Junior Secondary School suggested that they need to be given a chance to see things in their natural environment in order to remember them even more than just reading about them in their textbooks. They also suggested that they should be allowed to visit RE fairs because they could learn a lot since there are several activities that take place there such as quizzes, debates and public speaking. Students were unhappy that only a few students are allowed to attend the RE fairs leaving out the majority of them. They suggested that if a fair was held in a place that they had access to, they should be allowed to participate,

and an exception could only be when distant travelling was involved. Teachers indicated that they did not have problems with transport, but the difficulty was in feeding students if they were to engage in an educational trip.

It is important to note that at Makala Junior Secondary School, there were three religious sites which were about two hundred metres from the school. These religious sites were two church buildings and a Hindu Temple. Similarly, close to Togala Secondary School, there was a Bahai Centre and a church which were about three hundred metres and two hundred metres away respectively from the school. All the sites were within walking distance and would not need any transport to reach them. Furthermore, the teachers indicated that they were aware of these religious centres but that they never invited anyone from these places.

### 5.4 Teaching RE in a diverse classroom environment

For classrooms to have meaning, teachers need to have some knowledge of their students' personal, social, emotional as well as their academic knowledge (Airasian, 1995). A teacher's classroom then becomes a social as well as an academic site where different individuals meet. Teachers need to know and understand the diversity of their students, in terms of language, ethnicity and economic status especially if they do not come from the same cultural background (Ladson-Billings, 2005). This point is further stressed by Stodsky & Grossman (2000:127) when they say that "teachers need to genuinely respect students from different backgrounds and be receptive to the funds of knowledge" that children bring to the learning environment. Moreover, RE teachers need to be aware of how RE teaching affects the way in which they understand reality, in terms of, for example, of answering questions they did not anticipate from different students. The teachers have to avoid hate language and hurtful comments especially about religions or perspectives that students or their parents may hold dear. Some forms of disrespectful speech, have to be avoided even when used jokingly, in case they hurt some students.

The RE teachers admitted that they did not know their students' social and cultural backgrounds. The teachers' lack of knowledge of their students' background could affect their teaching since they could not easily tap into the knowledge that their students bring along. Lack of knowledge of students' background could be a major reason why teachers did not want to accept their students' knowledge and experiences in tests, quizzes and examinations. Of significance, is that the students' knowledge and experiences are rich resources that the teachers can utilise. For example, when I asked Mrs. Koloni if she knew where her students came from she said:

> No. I only meet parents when they come to collect their children's reports. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 30th May, 2007)

She also indicated that she did not know much about the community from which her students came from. She admitted that if she knew their backgrounds she would be able to understand them better. She indicated that in rural areas, teachers tend to know the community from which their students come from unlike in towns. When I further asked her if knowing where her students came from could enhance learning and teaching, Mrs. Koloni said:

> Yes. It could help because one would know the child's background. For example, one would know the challenges a child faces outside school. Unfortunately, we teachers in Gaborone do not have time for that unlike teachers in rural areas. They are better off. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 30th May, 2007)

With regard to dealing with a diverse classroom environment, as well as her personal values when teaching RE, Mrs Koloni said:

> You see, one is a teacher and also a human being. One cannot avoid being affected by all these. For example, one needs patience. Teachers need to appreciate that they are dealing with many different types of students in their classrooms. At times, teachers have their personal problems hence they need to exercise a lot of restraint. (Interview with Koloni, 16th March, 2007)

Mr Tiro at Makala Junior Secondary School also said that he had little knowledge of students' background and that he only meets parents once at the end of the school term when they come to collect their children's progress reports. He also indicated that he accepted the different students' experiences. However, his students said that their knowledge and experiences were only acceptable during class discussions and not in tests, quizzes and examinations.

Mrs. Laban indicated that she always made use of students' knowledge and experiences. This is what she said about accepting students' knowledge.

> We use the students' knowledge and we accept it. At times they (students) share their knowledge and experience with us. We accept what they tell us because sometimes they know certain things that we do not know.
> (Interview with Mrs Laban, 4th October, 2006)

Similarly, Miss Rabin did not know much about the background of her students. She even encouraged them to concentrate on what was in the textbooks and "forget about their denominations" which was partly their background and a source of their knowledge and experiences. She further indicated that she emphasised the form of Christianity which was mainly from the commonly called Established Churches. She was biased against some Christian denominations which some students could have belonged to. For example, she said that she would not accept any example that students brought, such as from African Independent Churches because those Christian denominations emphasised healing.

When the eight in-service teachers were asked how they dealt with and accommodated cultural differences, Pasco, a teacher from a school in a rural area said:

> Normally what I do is to find out more about the culture of the students and those people around me. I do this in order to start with the students' culture. It is not right for me as a teacher to come up with examples that are foreign to the world of the students. (Interview with a group of RE teachers, 7th September, 2006)

Another in-service teacher, Beatrice, also from a school in a rural area added:

> Normally, I tell them about my culture and then I ask them to share theirs with the rest of the class. In the event I actually learn a lot. (Interview with a group of RE teachers, 7th September, 2006)

It is interesting to note that some RE teachers appreciated the diversity of their classes whilst others barely did.

## 5.5 Mentoring and collaboration in RE

### 5.5.1 Mentoring new RE teachers

The quality of teaching can be improved through teacher collaboration, since there will be a relational trust that is built within a school. "Teachers who get help from colleagues who are more expert than they are may also gain important new information from those interactions that extend what they learn from formal professional development" **(**Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi & Gallagher, 2007:930).

The four teachers in my study reported that they were not being mentored in RE. For example, Mrs. Rabin indicated that in her first two years in the field she was on her own because she was the only RE teacher when the multi-faith RE was introduced and that she did not receive any support from any senior teacher of a related subject. The four RE teachers said that the older and more experienced teachers do not have time to mentor new members, and also that there is no arrangement in the schools for such an exercise. One of the newer teachers Mr Tiro indicated that he felt that his senior teacher would like to help him but she could not because she was overwhelmed by her work which involved administrative work and classroom teaching.

Another newer teacher Mrs. Koloni who had been teaching for five years admitted that she was never given any form of orientation in her school and that she was never observed teaching in a class, not even once.

> I find a relaxed scenario here where I teach. If you are observed like fortnightly, by a supervisor, you are likely to be helped, because he or she will be able to identify your mistakes. But if you have never been observed like me, you may keep on doing what may not be correct. (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 30th May, 2007)

She indicated that most of the time she was on her own. She suggested that teachers need to be observed teaching in class in order to help the supervisor identify their teachers' strengths and weaknesses. She argued that inexperienced teachers, may repeat wrong practices if they are not corrected, and that, since she started teaching no one ever told her about her strengths or weaknesses.

### 5.5.2. Collaboration amongst RE teachers

Collaboration has become one of the catch-words in curriculum reform all over the world, where teachers are expected to be more collegially active. Klette (2002) says that there are new demands on teachers, including collaborative decision making such as the need to work together as colleagues. On the whole the role of the teacher tends to have immensely changed. It therefore becomes difficult to tell the extent to which teachers have control and influence over their work in terms of the content of what they teach, methods and even how they pace their lessons.

As a way of enhancing their professional lives, it is in the best interest of a teacher to relate with fellow teachers since they need each others' support and care in order to better understand and implement the technical aspect of teaching (McLaughlin, 1997). In his study on teacher collegiality, Clandinin (1986) observed that 75% of his participants who were teachers stated that they would like to observe another teacher teaching in order to learn from colleagues, teachers indicated that they did not have the opportunity to do so. However, in the same study, an even larger number indicated that they never observed other teachers teach, though they would have wanted to. The main reason why they never observed their colleagues was that there was little contact among teachers outside the classroom. Furthermore, Fullan (1991:119) observes that teachers also struggle with their "problems and anxieties privately, spending most of their time physically apart from their colleagues". MacLaughlin (1988:77) contends that if teachers can work together, they may accomplish a proposed change, even though she found that teachers generally experience "professional isolation and a lack of shared sense of practice."

It emerged that there is very little collaboration, generally among RE teachers within and across subjects and schools and many multi-faith RE teachers are on their own most of the time. For example, older teachers indicated that there used to be collaboration when RE "clusters" were still functional. Clusters are groups of teachers from adjacent schools within a geographical locality who come together to discuss ways of improving their RE teaching practices. The older teachers indicated that clusters used to prepare end of term examinations in a particular inspectorate area and that was no longer the case.

Collaboration among RE teachers was inadequate because, for example, they did not prepare a common scheme of work, and setting of tests and examinations. The RE teachers told me that if there was adequate collaboration, they could set common tests and school based end of term examinations, and that each teacher could be assigned a paper to set and then present it to others. Mr Tiro said that in his school, a teacher is assigned an examination paper, and is expected to provide a marking guide as well for the paper. He said that even though teachers set examination papers, they never provided a marking guide. This led Mr Tiro to complain when he said that:

> There has always been no marking key since I joined the school last year, though I always suggest one. I personally need a marking key especially for **Paper 1 (Multiple Choice Questions)** because there is likely to be some differences in identifying the "most correct" answer or the key. I don't have any problems with **Paper 2 (Structured and Essay Questions)**, since I can easily tackle it. It is a cause for concern that we never meet as RE teachers to discuss end of month tests and end of term examinations.
> (Interview with Mr Tiro, 3rd October, 2006)

Even though Mr Tiro had earlier on indicated that there was some level of working together, he later suggested that poor junior certificate results could be a result of lack of collaboration by RE teachers in his school. He gave an example when they were asked by the principal in his school, as RE teachers to account for the poor RE results and did not have a common position, but instead each one of them gave their own interpretations about the poor results. This, according to him, was a sign of lack of collaboration.

In my interview with Mrs. Koloni, she told me that there was no collaboration amongst RE members because she had never taught a topic for a colleague or vice-versa. When I asked her how often they met as RE teachers, she told me that it was rare because most of the issues were discussed informally. She said: "Our meetings are rarely formal" and pointed out that there is less coordination in the RE Department. However, during the time I spent at her school, they never held a single departmental meeting. The information about tests, quizzes and examinations and other RE related issues was mainly communicated informally. On collaborating with teachers of other subjects Mrs. Koloni said:

> No we don't. We tried but it does not work. Yes, informally we do. There are topics where I get help from Social Studies teachers, on a topic such as "Evolution." (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 8th March, 2007)

RE teachers in the two schools did not have the chance to watch each other teach as a result they lost an opportunity to discuss their practices with their colleagues. Teachers indicated that they could benefit a lot if there was collaboration between schools and between teachers within the same school. Miss Rabin indicated that there was little collaboration even at inter-school level when she said:

> Since I came here in February, 2006 we never had a common cluster examination paper. However, I am told that before I came here, a cluster would have a common mock examination paper. I am not sure if this term we are going to have one. We haven't met and I haven't heard anything from the cluster chairperson. (Interview with Miss Rabin, 29th September, 2006)

Miss Rabin indicated that as a cluster or a group of schools they never met to set a common examination paper. She also observed that there was lack of collaboration within schools because teachers across subjects did not work together. She further indicated that collaboration across subjects could be of help since teachers could learn from one another especially since most subjects were related in one way or the other. For example, RE, Moral Education and Social Studies could benefit from each other because they are related subjects. According to her, the advantage of collaboration is that there are issues that may be discussed extensively in another subject than in a teacher's own subject. She gave an example, of the topic "Evolution" which is found in both RE and Social Studies but is covered extensively in Social Studies. So teachers of Social studies could be invited to present a lesson on evolution.

Mr Tiro indicated that inviting other teachers could also motivate students, since it would be someone different from the teacher that they are used to. However, during my field observation in the two schools, there were no colleagues who were invited to RE classes even though there were topics that were found across several subjects such as "human rights" and "freedom." These topics were found in Social Studies, Moral Education and RE.

Lack of collaboration on another level was confirmed by Mr Mathias, an Education Officer, who said that there was no collaboration even between officers in the Ministry of Education, when he said this about his fellow officers:

> There is no time when we can all come together and discuss how we can help our teachers. For example, I do not even know the officer responsible for RE at TT&D (Teacher Training and Development Department). There is totally no collaboration among the Ministry of Education Officers. (Interview with Mr Mathias, 17th October, 2006)

Another Education Officer, Mr Moks concurred with Mr Mathias that there was no collaboration among RE officers even in the same department. He said that each officer wanted to do his or her own thing without involving other officers yet the work of one impacted on the work of the other. While there is lack of collaboration and cooperation, amongst officers, teachers tended to be pawns and were held at ransom because they were caught in *"the officers' cross-fire"* (emphasis mine). Another Education Officer, Miss Timon, concurred with the other officers that there was no collaboration and cooperation among officers and said that is why the problem has never been attended to collectively. She admitted that she rarely attended meetings called by sister departments in the Ministry of Education such as the Department of Curriculum Development and ERTD. She said:

> We RE officers have never met to look at the curriculum and other issues related to it such as the welfare of teachers. Furthermore we do not have a forum where we can meet as officers to articulate our concerns and other issues.
> (Interview with Miss Timon, on the 22nd August, 2006)

Miss Timon said that there was need for all RE officers in the Ministry of Education to work together, by exchanging views and ideas on the RE curriculum, especially with regard to assessment which tended to be a problem area for many. Just like other officers, Miss Ray, from ERTD indicated that there was little collaboration between RE officers in the different departments of the Ministry of Education. She further observed that few teachers were aware of the recurring problems in the assessment of RE because a handful of teachers were invited for marking where most of these issues were discussed. Furthermore, no officer was obliged to relay to teachers whatever transpired during marking sessions. She observed that there was no one who took the responsibility of informing teachers about new developments in RE hence there seemed to be no coordination in information dissemination.

### 5.6 RE teachers collaborating with the community

Another form of collaboration that is desirable is between teachers and the community. Teachers need to know the communities that students come from and also tap on the diverse resources and traditions of these communities. According to Giroux and McLaren (1986) teachers need to familiarise themselves with the culture, economy and historical traditions of the surrounding community so that they "understand the relationships and forces that influence their students outside of the immediate context of the classroom" (Giroux & McLaren, 1986:236). They further advise that teachers should do that because in most cases forms of knowledge from the community are often ignored within the dominant school culture. They note that "it is unfortunate that when communities are ignored by teachers, students often find themselves trapped in institutions that not only deny them a voice but also deprive them of a relational or contextual understanding of how the knowledge they acquire in the classroom can be used to influence and transform public sphere" (Giroux & McLaren, 1986:237).

The four RE teachers said that they had little contact with parents, politicians, employers and their supervisors. They similarly observed that there was little involvement of the parents and community leaders in school related activities. For example, parents only visited the school to collect reports or when their child was having disciplinary problems.

This is what Mrs. Koloni said about her relationship with parents and other community leaders as shown in my interview with her.

> **How much support do you get from the parents?**
> None. We only see parents during report collection.
>
> **How helpful is your meeting with them?**
> Not that helpful, because you may find that a student's performance does not improve even after talking to the parents.
>
> **Are there times when parents volunteer to help their children?**
> Yes, I think they do. But you can only be certain that they do something if the performance of the child improves. It might be that parents only pay lip service, but do little to help their children.
>
> **Under which constituency does your school fall under?**
> I don't know. Gaborone North or West!
>
> **Do you know your councilor?**
> Yes, but I don't know his name.

**How much support do you get from your councilor?**
I don't know the extent to which he is involved in the school activities.

**In your view, do you think he should be involved in the school activities as a politician?**
May be he could help with issues such as discipline and drug abuse.

**What about your area MP?**
By the way who is our MP?

**How much support do you get from Teaching Service Management** *(TSM- the department that recruits teachers)***?**
Are they not the ones who provide schools with books?
*(Researcher provides an explanation on what TSM is)*
(Interview with Mrs Koloni, 30th May, 2007)

What also emerged is that teachers do not collaborate with tertiary institutions such as colleges of education or the universities. For example RE teachers do not have a forum where they can exchange ideas with lecturers from teacher training institutions. Similarly, the teacher training institutions do not track their graduates.

## 5.7 In-service professional development

Professionalism is not an absolute word but a socially constructed and a contested concept, and the context determines how it is used and understood. The concept is not static but it keeps on changing depending on the context and it is constantly being refined and in different ways and at different times to serve different interests. For example, Evan (2008:23) says that "teacher professionalism incorporates a focus on teachers taking a greater responsibility for defining the nature and content of their work." Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi and Gallagher (2007) observe that in most cases professional development activities meant to help teachers on an occasion of reform are short and usually inadequate and have no follow-ups at all. They further indicate that curricular reforms are demanding on teachers, so much that if there are no comprehensive professional development activity follow-ups, teachers "either assimilate teaching strategies into their current repertoire with little substantive change or they reject those suggested changes altogether" (Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi and Gallagher, 2007:929). They suggest that professional development should take a longer duration and time span relevant to the

kind of learning opportunities needed by teachers to integrate new knowledge into their classroom practice. Professional development is fundamentally required for supporting implementation on an occasion of curriculum reform. According to Glatthorn (1995), teacher development involves the growth in teachers' knowledge, skills and professional judgement, and in the contributions teachers make to the professional community.

The four RE teachers, in my study, reported that there were no easily available grants for them to further their professional training. They indicated that while they had to line up in a long queue to be sponsored for further studies, to their disappointment there would be a backlog of teachers due for further training. Another problem is that the teacher training institutions in Botswana do not offer part time degrees in education especially at undergraduate level. Furthermore, Mrs. Laban complained that performing teachers were never rewarded accordingly. She suggested that instead of only being complimented by the school principal for good results, the teachers' efforts needed to be appreciated by being sent for further studies in order for them to develop professionally. This is what she said concerning rewarding teachers.

> There are teachers who produce good results, but when opportunities such as going for further studies come, these teachers are rarely considered but are side-lined. On the contrary, there will be one teacher who is not serious with his or her core business of teaching, who does not produce good results, whom you would find being considered for further studies or even promotion. (Interview with Mrs Laban, 8th May, 2007)

Mrs. Koloni said that she has never been exposed to any form of professional training, for example, in relation to classroom management, curriculum development and assessment in RE since she joined teaching. She also indicated that there were no school based-workshops on professional development and argued that school based workshops were possible since there are fellow teachers who may possess some skills that may benefit their colleagues. When I asked Mrs Koloni what she would ask the staff development department in her school to conduct workshops on, she said:

> I want a workshop on this RE syllabus. Just to discuss it. It has to be looked into so that we also come with our own contributions. I also take it that there are topics that can be deleted and others added. There has to be workshops on assessment that will encourage our school-based supervisors to constantly assess us.
> (Interview with Mrs Koloni, 30th May, 2007)

Mrs Koloni indicated that as teachers, they needed professional in-service training to further enhance their classroom teaching. She suggested that resource persons could come from her school while others could be from the Ministry of Education, especially from the Curriculum Development and Evaluation Department (CD&E). She, however, added that she did not think that teachers were experts enough to talk about assessment issues. All the four teachers indicated that they needed in-service training in terms of workshops.

Mr Mathias, an Education Officer, indicated that teachers needed workshops, though he said that they as Education Officers in the inspectorate spend most of the time doing inspections and hardly hold any workshops for teachers. He noted that the Department of Teacher Training and Development (TT&D) has to spearhead in-service training of teachers including workshops. He further observed that even though this department is responsible for in-service training, it did not have an RE Officer. He admitted that there was little in-service training for RE teachers in his region, partly because even if he had time to conduct workshops, there would be no funds available. He complained that teachers expect him to organise workshops yet there is no vote for such activities in his department.

One of the officers Mr Moks indicated that one of his main duties was to supervise teachers. However, in the months I spent in the two schools there were no Education Officers who visited the four RE teachers in their schools. He had initially said that he was responsible for the in-service training of teachers, but in the months I was in the two schools he or his colleagues did not arrange anything for the teachers in that inspectorate area. However, he later acknowledged that he was more into school inspection than on in-service training. All the education officers indicated to me that in-service training was the responsibility of TT&D since they had their own main responsibility which was school inspection.

Another way in which RE teachers could articulate their concerns regarding their professional development was through an association, such as the Botswana Religious Education Association (BOREA). However, both teachers and education officers indicated that the association is mainly concerned with RE fairs and not with the welfare of teachers. RE fairs are RE related competitions amongst schools. The emphasis is on students' understanding and appreciation of RE as a subject. The main activities involve

general RE knowledge, debate and public speaking. The newer teachers were not even aware of the existence of this association. For example, when I asked Mrs. Koloni about the usefulness of BOREA, she said: "I don't know anything about BOREA." However, older RE teachers indicated that they knew about it and that it was mainly concerned with RE fairs in secondary schools. According to Mrs. Gatts, an RE Curriculum Development Officer, she said that BOREA is effective only in as far as organising RE fairs. Mr Moks an Education Officer, said this about BOREA:

> This association was founded on the basis that it would improve the teaching practices of RE teachers. What is presently happening is that it is only concentrating on RE fairs. (Interview with Mr Moks, 6th September, 2006)

Another Education Officer, Miss Ray, suggested that the association can be meaningful if it can move beyond RE fairs in secondary schools and involve other relevant stakeholders like colleges of education and the university.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I presented the data from the field on RE teachers' views on assessing a multi-faith RE especially their emphasis that religions should be specified in order to make assessment easy. The RE teachers were reluctant to research widely because assessment was mainly based on what was in the textbooks. Similarly, teachers did not encourage their students to use other forms of resources in order to access information except the textbooks. I indicated that it is not easy to assess this curriculum mainly because of two possible reasons; firstly because of the teachers' inadequate grasp of a multi-faith RE curriculum and secondly because of teachers' lack of assessment skills. It was revealed that teachers do little research and mainly depend on students' textbooks. Inadequate resources are a factor that could contribute to students' poor performance in examinations. The analysis also revealed that teachers rarely used students' knowledge and experience in tests, quizzes and examinations. In addition, teachers do not know the backgrounds of their students, and that could have an impact in relation to how they relate to their students. Teachers have little contact with parents and other important community members such as councilors and area Members of Parliament. Lastly, the analysis revealed that teachers are rarely exposed to in-service professional training, because workshops are rarely mounted that make them aware of any changes in

education and in RE curriculum in particular. It emerged that teachers at times do not have access to government documents that might help them in their teaching. Lack of collaboration amongst teachers was raised as a factor that negatively affected the RE teachers' classroom practices.

# CHAPTER 6

## Discussions, recommendations, implications for educational practice and research

### 6.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I report that when the curriculum was initiated, teachers received little guidance on how to teach it and were left to their own devices when they prepared for lessons. While a multi-faith curriculum does not require that there should be certain religions that should be enumerated and learnt, teachers in their struggle in interpreting the multi-faith RE curriculum chose some religions and concentrated on them. They adopted this practice as a way of helping their students to pass their final Junior Certificate RE examinations, since the Botswana Education System is test-oriented. While the teachers' concentration is on testing, the study revealed that they have inadequate assessment skills. I indicate that even though there are several teaching techniques, RE teachers concentrated on group work. In a similar vein, while there are several resources, the teachers concentrated on textbooks. Furthermore, the RE teachers rarely made use of the students' knowledge and experiences that they brought along with them to the learning environment. Similarly, teachers did not see the relevance of community members especially parents, largely because they under-rated their students' knowledge and experiences. In trying to interpret the multi-faith curriculum, teachers rarely collaborated, within their schools and across schools. The study shows that teachers are blamed by Education Officers, principals and even fellow RE teachers for poor classroom skills when they teach RE.

### 6.1 The Philosophy of the multi-faith RE curriculum

The findings in the study indicate that teachers were not informed about the broader reform, that is, the Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE), that informed the development and eventually the implementation of the multi-faith RE curriculum. Teachers were not made aware of the relationship between the multi-faith RE curriculum and the policy whence the multi-faith RE curriculum originated. The participants indicated that the multi-faith RE curriculum is educational and is capable of bringing about openness, tolerance and awareness of the differences that exist amongst different

people. However, the participants were not eloquent on how that awareness can positively change the behaviour or attitude of the students. Furthermore, the participants indicated that it was not easy for them to locate the rationale of RE within the wider cultural, technological, moral and historical contexts, in order to create students who are rounded people. This is largely the case because new initiatives of teaching are usually presented to teachers without making clear the rationale on which the initiatives are based.

The multi-faith RE curriculum is not meant to judge religions, especially by comparing and contrasting them. Even though this is a basic principle in a multi-faith RE curriculum, some teachers did not see any flaws in the syllabus document where there were instructional objectives that compared religions. However, this view is out of step because by comparing and contrasting religions, this calls for what is good and what is bad in religions. If this becomes the position of the curriculum, then students will be expected to judge religions from a moral standpoint, in terms of right and wrong, good and bad, as well as the truth and falsity of religions.

It is also important to note that RE teachers have a general idea of what the multi-faith RE curriculum entails, yet they lack detail and precision with regard to its philosophy. The teachers emphasised religions of their own choice hence disregarding the nature of the multi-faith RE curriculum that does not require enumerating of religions that are to be learnt. For example, teachers' chose to emphasise Christianity, because they had easy access of information to this religion. The danger of such an approach is that it can lead to indoctrination. However, there could be three reasons why teachers adopted this approach in their teaching, the first being that, Christianity is extensively covered by the authors of the RE textbooks, which both the teachers and their students largely depended on. The second one is that the phenomenological approach upon which the seven dimensional model description of religion espoused by Smart, is based on Christianity, hence teachers readily linked Christianity with whatever they taught. Thirdly, it is because Christianity is said to be the commonest religion in Botswana.

Furthermore, there are indications that some of those in positions of leadership in government within the Ministry of Education may not have accepted the multi-faith RE curriculum on the basis that Botswana is a Christian country. This lack of acceptance of this curriculum exerts constant pressure on teachers and curriculum officers in justifying its existence. There are two reasons for lack of acceptance, first, it could be that when the curriculum was initiated, it did not dawn on to some senior government officials what multi-faith RE entailed. Secondly, it could also be that politicians were under pressure to be seen to uphold principles of tolerance and openness in Botswana as it would naturally be expected in a liberal democracy hence reluctantly adopted this curriculum.

Introducing the multi-faith RE curriculum into Botswana junior secondary schools implied innovation and change, yet the teachers' understanding and classroom practices remains essentially unchanged. Even though the multi-faith RE curriculum is relatively new in Botswana classrooms, the cultures of teachers in terms of understanding and practice remain the same. When introducing the RE curriculum there was a potential for improvement, yet it can now be said that in this particular curriculum innovation, it did not necessarily lead to a better teachers' understanding and teaching of RE. For example, when some of the teachers were attempting to establish religious truth claims which is not the focus of the curriculum. RE teachers emphasised areas that they were comfortable with because they had more knowledge in them, for example, when they emphasised Christianity and not other religions because the different textbooks, provided extensive information on this particular religion, hence legitimated it as the true religion. The other reason, as indicated earlier, is that teachers emphasised Christianity because in their initial teacher training programme, it was the religion that was stressed in their training programme. Furthermore, teachers showed that they did not provide any knowledge but reproduced what was expected of them by external forces such as educational officials, parents and the community. That is why they did everything possible that could enable their students to pass the examinations.

It is also interesting to note that the schools allowed the Christian faith to infiltrate the school system and hence became part of the school tradition. Presently, several events are sanctioned under the Christian auspices and it has become normal, according to the participants, for schools to invite Christian leaders to schools to conduct sermons especially in the morning assemblies, even though schools are public institutions that are not supposed to support and promote any particular religion. On the one hand, the RE

teachers have an uphill task to fight against the ethos and traditions of schools that have their systems deeply rooted in the Christian tradition, whilst on the other hand, they have become part of the tradition. This is a complex and contradictory scenario whereby teachers are unable to detach themselves from this web especially since the presence of the Christian practices in schools is supported by the Education Act. Assemblies in Botswana schools are used as occasions for religious observances of the Christian religion, and by so doing, turning students into captive converts which is tantamount to imposing religious uniformity among students. Assemblies in Botswana schools are conducted in Christian prayers and various staff meetings in many schools are started and ended with a Christian prayer. Similarly, there are some schools that have made arrangements with some pastors to preach to students on certain days, even though it is uncommon that a similar invitation could be extended to members of other religions. In order to level the ground, it would be in order if school assemblies could be used for celebrating diversity along the values of the Botswana Constitution which is secular in nature whereby teachers are expected to teach and students to learn religions in a non-confessional manner and where religions under study are treated equally.

Regarding how RE could be popularised, some Education Officers suggested that RE teachers have to market the subject while others argued that the subject should not be viewed in terms of career opportunities but with regard to how it can build a person. However, some RE teachers suggested that the multi-faith RE could be introduced at primary school level, and in my view, this suggestion may not be tenable because pupils at this level may not be cognitively mature to deal with it. The RE students suggested that the subject can be marketed by teaching and learning it in a more lively manner than it is done at present. Students suggested that RE could be made popular to students by watching religious and religious related films, visiting religious sites, listening to talks by religious practitioners especially religious leaders.

In suggesting a way forward with regard to RE, some teachers were suggesting that there has to be core religions as it is done in England and Wales. If that suggestion can be entertained, it will naturally defeat the idea of a multi-faith RE curriculum which is not premised on “core religions.” If that becomes the case, several questions will be raised including the basic ones which are: Which religions are core? What makes them core? The issue of power is also raised leading to the question: Whose ideology and interests are being promoted? The other reason why such an approach will be deficient is that its

emphasis will be on the cognitive and not the affective which the multi-faith RE curriculum is premised and will naturally emphasise testing more than understanding.

It also emerged in the study that RE teachers have little understanding of the multi-faith RE curriculum in terms of translating the instructional objectives into classroom practices partly due to lack of in-service professional training. For example, the teachers had constraints in terms of lack of subject content knowledge and pedagogical content skills such as the choice of effective teaching techniques and strategies. However, Education Officers who are expected to assist teachers in interpreting the curriculum, for example, in terms of in-service training, were unable to help teachers because there was no forum in place to afford them that opportunity.

**6.2 RE pedagogy**

When the multi-faith RE curriculum was introduced, RE teachers received inadequate guidance regarding how to teach it. When the RE task force drew up the RE curriculum, it did not guide teachers on how it was to be translated into classroom practice. The curriculum had a teaching syllabus that had specified topics as well as instructional objectives. Even though a curriculum is a guiding framework, RE teachers were not helped on how to teach it, for example, in terms of what they were to stress and how deep they were to go in teaching the various topics. There was pressure to teach the new curriculum yet the guidance and support they got was limited because even Education Officers in the inspectorate did not suggest to teachers what a good lesson in a multi-faith RE curriculum is expected to be like.

Furthermore, the training institutions where the multi-faith RE teachers were trained, emphasised instructional objectives at the exclusion of their relationship with the RNPE. This situation has not changed over the years despite complaints by teachers that they do not receive adequate guidance regarding the pedagogical aspects of the curriculum. From an administrative viewpoint, it was urgent that teachers had to teach the new curriculum yet they were not provided with the necessary support which they needed. Similarly, even teachers who initially taught the single faith RE were not re-trained for a multi-faith RE curriculum. The best that was done for those teachers was to mount a few workshops that informed them about the philosophy of the new RE curriculum whose content was a variety of religions. It is likely that it is against this background that even though RE

teachers understood the new curriculum to be their core business, and their responsibility, they could not effectively teach it.

Though there are several student-centred techniques, RE teachers concentrated on one which is group work and also viewed students working in groups as not in need of any particular skill in order to carry out their tasks effectively. RE teachers equally viewed students as self-taught in as far as group work was concerned by assuming that the students would know what to do as long as they were in their groups. This meant that those students who did not fit in the group work technique were left out because teachers assumed that it was adequate to group the students and then ask them to attend to a task. The RE teachers did not have any clearly laid down strategies to deal with such a situation where the able ones could share difficult tasks with the "weak" ones. Students were not guided on how they could help each other especially the weak ones during group discussions. The teachers rarely moved around to check on how the groups arrived at conclusions. The RE teachers took for granted that since they would have asked students to work in groups, students would naturally know how to get information, process it and finally present their findings to the rest of the class. Group work was followed by presentation to the whole class, and teachers rarely made additions to what the students presented and if ever they did, it was brief. It is also important to note that some teachers did not establish ground rules and expectations for group work, hence leading students not to live up to the expectations of the teachers. For example, RE teachers expected the students to be fully involved in terms of how they searched, selected and finally presented the information to the class.

Teachers did not make use of a variety of learning activities such as drama, artwork, and videos in order to enrich their lessons as well as to tap into the students' sense of imagination and awe. When it came to classroom teaching and learning, teachers did not show skills that could encourage students to be open and tolerant, while teachers themselves were not tolerant and open in their treatment of the various religions. Their lack of tolerance is seen in the way in which they stressed some religions at the expense of others. The RE teachers did not create a situation where those students who were not Christians and those who did not belong to especially, the Christian mainline churches could be listened to. By denying students to refer to their religions or Christian denominations, which was their way of life, they were denying them their sense of identity hence the RE teachers were inadvertently denying students to bring to class their

knowledge and experiences. This suggested that there were denominations that were right and true whilst others were not hence RE was not producing democratic citizens who are free and self-reflective. Even though this was the practice, multi-faith RE classrooms are places of freedom of thought and expression, and should create a multi-cultural climate. To discourage students from bringing to class their experiences is a practice that runs in opposition to the spirit of a multi-faith RE curriculum and is contrary to a student-centred pedagogy which the RNPE emphasises. At times, teachers did not engage their students in a manner that brought about open enquiry and debate especially on sensitive and controversial issues. While teachers indicated in the initial interviews that their classes were student-centred, in their classrooms, they hardly accepted the views and experiences of the students. When they did, it was only in as far as brainstorming was concerned especially when introducing a new topic.

There was also the practice of calling out of marks by Mr Tiro and Miss Rabin which they said led to an improvement in students' performance, a practice they could have adopted from their former primary or secondary school teachers. At worst, this practice could have been a form of student harassment and ridicule. Even though they said that this practice led to improvement of performance, that too, could not be established whether it was the calling out of names or some other factors like teachers' subject and pedagogical knowledge that brought about the change.

To some extent at least Mr Tiro, Mrs Laban and Miss Rabin embraced the RE curriculum, since they viewed it positively, while Miss Koloni did not. Irrespective of their views in terms of the curriculum, the four RE teachers used whatever time and space provided by the situation to create practices of coping with the curriculum reform effort. The four teachers interpreted the curriculum differently. For example, Mr Tiro was excited about it partly because of his teaching techniques, whereby he mainly involved students and was free to express his own views even when his students did not agree with him. For example, when dealing with the topic: "Authority" he said that he supported the president of Zimbabwe Mr Robert Mugabe on his land reform policy. Even though his students did not agree with him, he nevertheless expressed his views on this particular issue. However, there are two ways of looking at the statement. The first one could be that he wanted to challenge his students so that they could think beyond what they read, in their textbooks, other print media and television. The other could be that it was his position and invited his students to challenge it if they wanted to. Whichever position he

could have adopted, enabled his students to emulate him by being able to express their own views.

However, teachers complained that programmes at colleges of education and the University of Botswana did not adequately equip them with skills to face classroom challenges because teachers need some form of empowerment in order to respond to new challenges with confidence and resolve.

The four RE teachers, who are the main participants in this study, individually attempted to implement the curriculum in the best way that they deemed fit. They attempted to "adjust" the curriculum so that it suited their own understanding of and made the curriculum understandable to themselves and engaged in practices that were consonant with their own ideas. For example, while the curriculum expected teachers to use a variety of religions when addressing an issue, teachers decided to use particular religions especially those that they had easy access of information to. The information they used was the one found, especially in the students' textbooks. The RE teachers were responding to the reform efforts in different ways including the emotional aspect. They interpreted the RE curriculum differently, in terms of first, if they embraced or rejected it, and secondly how they implemented it, depending on whether they accepted or rejected it given the circumstances. In their interpretation and implementation of the curriculum, teachers brought to the reform efforts certain commitments and particular emotional responses that either supported or undermined the implementation of the curriculum.

Communication was a problem between teachers, schools and the relevant departments of the Ministry of Education. Education Officers too, did not help create an enabling environment so that RE teachers could be aware of the importance of government and other official documents, by making sure that these documents reached the teachers on time. The RE teachers did not readily accustom themselves with official communication that was in the files, partly because at times accessing a file was difficult hence that discouraged them to ask for files. It also emerged that government documents that can help teachers in their classroom teaching were at times not made easily available to them. For example, the RE examination reports did not readily reach schools and if they did, they rarely reached, especially junior teachers.

The study revealed that information meant for teachers at times did not reach them mainly due to red tape – at department level within the school, at school level within the school administration, and at regional level with Education Officers. The study further revealed that lack of information and knowledge regarding new developments in education leads to teachers' being lethargic, burnt-out, frustrated and uninterested in work due to their apparent powerlessness caused by the inadequate access to information. Furthermore, during my fieldwork in the two schools, there was no time when RE teachers had a special meeting to discuss their RE results as shown in the league table. The RE teachers did not discuss as a department the RE examinations, for example, on how questions were attempted by students. As a result, the teachers' work was not largely informed by official documents. It also emerged that teachers do not have a culture of reading since they never bothered to read the report even though they knew about it. For example, teachers rarely read government circulars even when they have access to them, hence they do not follow the latest developments and trends in education in general, including what is happening in the Botswana education system.

Code switching was common among the three RE teachers except for Mr Tiro. Though teachers said that the practice was meant to help the intellectually challenged students, there was no incident where it could have been said that it was done for what they referred to as "slow learners". In my view, code switching did not add value to the lesson because it was not used particularly to explain new concepts especially in vernacular that were introduced.

### 6.3 Assessment

The study showed that teachers focused on students passing tests and examinations at the expense of developing understanding and enjoyment of the RE subject matter. The RE teachers were expected to be accountable for the RE results hence teachers taught to test, and that prevented them from delivering high quality instruction that is focused on students. This is contrary to what government expected of teachers in a student-centred environment. As a result, the teaching techniques and strategies of teachers were restricted, narrow, compromised and routinised because the focus was on preparation for examinations. The RE teachers' greatest challenge was the success of their students in the examinations since they had to account for the results hence RE classroom practices were examination driven, because teachers were mostly concerned about their students passing

examinations. While teachers were barely involved in the initial planning of the curriculum, good examination results were expected from them. Similarly, while a lot was expected from teachers in terms of good results, policy makers did not take into consideration various factors, such as the location of the schools, availability of teaching and learning resources as well as the contradictions in terms of power struggles, and the various ways that teachers devised in order to resolve challenges.

Newer RE teachers too adjusted to the traditions of the schools whereby passing was the main objective. While in theory the curriculum has to emphasise knowledge and understanding, in practice, RE teachers modified it so that it could answer the quest of the school tradition and that of the parents and society, that is, by focusing on examinations. Passing examinations is made a priority over knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. Since the curriculum is mainly examination oriented, that led teachers to teach for marks which are short term inclined, and not for long term understanding. For example, teachers studied how examinations are set and then taught their students around the expectations of the examinations. External pressures weighed heavily on the RE teachers' values and beliefs since they wanted their students to succeed. Due to the pressure exerted on them, RE teachers rarely used students' knowledge and experiences as they would have wanted to, because they wanted to satisfy the expectations of their principals and those of society at large. The pressure that RE teachers worked under, encroached on their autonomy and professional judgment. Similarly, the pressure was equally heavy on both the new teachers and those that have a wealth of experience in the field.

In assessment, teachers need to have subject, pedagogical and curricular knowledge, and it is mainly in their pedagogical content knowledge whereby assessment skills are supposed to be embedded. Though the ERTD expects teachers to possess certain assessment skills, teachers have not been made aware of such skills. Furthermore, the education system in Botswana does not encourage the moderation of examinations at school level so that teachers can also become accustomed to what happens at national level in terms of grading. At present the ERTD is not transparent in informing schools and subject Education Officers about the formula that they use in grading students especially the cut-off points. What the RE teachers and RE officers in the inspectorate know are the raw marks that they enter at the end of the year at the marking centres, but they do not know what happens to the marks beyond the marking centres.

The statistics section of the ERTD works independent of other stakeholders because it is not transparent in terms of grading students. The statistical formulae that they use are not made known to teachers and officers in the inspectorate. At least the Education Officers should have the inside information so that they are able to explain to teachers how raw marks are translated into grades. Since RE officers in the inspectorate did not know how marks are finally computed, this rendered them helpless especially when teachers needed help that was related to assessment. Furthermore, what was of concern to both the Education Officers and the RE teachers was that the computing of results was privy to the ERTD officers only, and particularly to those in the data processing section.

In a liberal democracy like Botswana, transparency has to be one of its cornerstones. However, due to lack of transparency there could be continued blames and counter-accusations regarding students' results among different stakeholders such as students, teachers, principals and Education Officers. Furthermore, due to lack of transparency, RE teachers and Education Officers suspected that ERTD manipulated the marks after they were submitted to them. Of importance is that according to the RE teachers, raw marks that they submitted to ERTD were relatively good, but they expressed concern that after those marks had been processed at ERTD they turned their texture because students would have failed. Furthermore, it emerged that there was little collaboration between the Examination Officer and the data analyst at ERTD because the former indicated that she had little information about the process of converting marks into grades.

The Examination Officer at ERTD indicated that a new form of grading was to be introduced soon, which she referred to as "judgemental grading". If judgemental grading is to be effective, teachers would need in-service training in order to carry out that task successfully. Teachers would need to be made aware of whatever statistical formula that would be used. Even though the ERTD officer had hope in the envisaged grading system, there was little hope that much would change whilst there is still a statistical formula that is set to determine the cut-off point and the pass rate of students. For example the same teachers will be teaching and marking, while the same statistics unit at ERTD will still be computing the marks and converting them into grades. However, teachers are the ones who are on the receiving end because they will always be blamed for their students' performance. Furthermore, teachers do not always have easy access to the ERTD examination reports hence they are likely to continue repeating the same content and pedagogical mistakes. In both schools, the RE teachers did not give themselves adequate

time to study the reports but mainly depended on what the coordinator or a senior teacher told them. However, at times the senior teachers did not alert junior fellow members in the department about the existence of such a report or new information. In case where the reports were posted to schools, teachers ignored them because they were posted to schools long after individual schools had done their own examination results analysis. By the time the reports were posted to schools, teachers would have lost interest in them, since they would have already debated issues revolving around examinations at the beginning of the year. The reports reached schools towards the end of the first term and at times at the beginning of the second term.

Both the teachers and Education Officers were unhappy with how ERTD handled the grading of students because they claimed that grading depended on the general performance of the students and not on the performance of individual students. For example, if fewer students passed, the cut-off point would be lowered, and by so doing, more students could pass and if on the other hand, more students scored high marks, the cut off point for passing would be raised. If the assertions by the Education Officers and RE teachers were true, then it would be unfair for students to be failed by a statistical formula when in actual fact they will have passed. Furthermore, that could put unnecessary pressure on the students and on their teachers, culminating in blames and counter-accusations. As a way of satisfying this external pressure the teachers prepared their students for final examinations by adopting certain teaching techniques and strategies. For example, the knowledge, experiences, learning and teaching resources that they accepted were mainly influenced by external factors such as expectations from parents, principals, Education Officers and the general public. Teachers were not even aware that RE examination officers merely did the administrative work of compiling raw marks and then presenting them to the statistics section of the ERTD which then used a formula to grade students. Even though passing examinations was what teachers aimed at, few RE teachers in Botswana schools have been exposed to rigorous training in the various forms of assessment. Both teachers and Education Officers largely laid blame on the RE curriculum when it came to inadequate assessment skills.

### 6.4 Collaboration, professional development and record keeping

The study revealed that RE teachers rarely collaborated because many of them worked on their own. In collaboration, teachers can learn from each other and can cover the weakness of one another. Teachers could share responsibility for a group of students and when doing that, and in doing so, they can no longer be everything and all things to their students. For example, in team teaching, one teacher's weakness is likely to be covered by another's strength. If RE teachers were to watch each other teach, and then give each other feedback, it would be an opportunity for them to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of their practices. Furthermore, when teachers meet to share their experiences, in terms of how they use the various teaching techniques and strategies, they indirectly help one another to teach better. In collaboration, teachers may develop a sense of trust of each other as they use the opportunity to engage colleagues in giving them reliable forms of feedback.

The study further revealed that older RE teachers reported that they had benefited from regional and cluster workshops which were no longer functioning while the new RE teachers reported that they had never attended any Religious Education workshop, since they started teaching. Furthermore, there is presently no forum for teachers to research issues of effective teaching because it is through such fora that they could expand their understanding in as far as the dynamics of RE teaching practices are concerned. The study revealed that there was little teacher collegiality, because teachers rarely shared skills, ideas and teaching materials to support each other. Wherever there were collegial relations, they tended not to be coordinated, like when they spoke to each other informally about their classroom practices. Collectively, in their interactions, RE teachers rarely shared their successes, failures, and concerns about RE implementation and in both schools teachers reported that they never met formerly as a unit, hence there were no minutes in the RE department. Teachers also reported that they were not organised and coordinated enough to monitor their own professional development mainly because there is no collaboration amongst themselves within their schools and with other RE teachers in nearby schools.

RE teachers were for the most part on their own and were doing whatever they could under the given circumstances to implement the RE curriculum. That is why it was possible for teachers to keep their old ways of teaching and not devise new ways of teaching, largely because they were not adequately supported and guided especially by the senior teachers and Education Officers. The study also found that newer RE teachers lacked in subject, pedagogical and curricular knowledge hence leading to frustration caused by lack of support. Furthermore, there is no coordinated and sustainable mentoring programme in schools for new RE teachers. This situation may lead to new teachers developing their own tradition which may not be informed by expert knowledge. Furthermore, it emerged that there was no forum where teachers could communicate their problems, especially collectively, to the education officers. RE teachers further reported that they were not adequately supported by the different Ministry of Education Departments, such as the Departments of Curriculum Development & Evaluation (CD&E), Examinations Research and Testing Division (ERTD), Teacher Training & Development (TT&D) and Teaching Service Management (TSM). Education Officers blamed teachers for their lack of testing skills, yet they did not help them acquire good ones.

Collaboration, at another level, that is, between schools and tertiary institutions was lacking. For example, the teacher training institutions do not conduct tracer studies, whereby they track their graduates to find out how they perform as a way of further improving relevant training programmes in those institutions. In addition, there was no mechanism in place to check if the university or colleges of education produced competent RE teachers because once they graduated, RE teachers were not tracked by the teacher training institutions.

There was lack of collaboration and coordination among Education Officers because they indicated that there was no forum they could meet and talk about their relationship with teachers as a group. They indicated that though in principle they were expected to collaborate and cooperate, they worked independently of each other hence they could not assist teachers in a coordinated manner even though they were collectively accountable for the RE teachers' interests. They also indicated that there are times when RE teachers are not updated in a coordinated manner on educational changes. This updating is important because teachers need to know whom to approach when they need guidance on curricular, content and pedagogical issues.

It emerged from the study that the Botswana Religious Education Association (BOREA) was no longer helpful as it used to be. Older RE teachers related what this association used to do, while newer ones did not know anything about it. Education Officers too, were disillusioned by the mandate of the association because they said that the association was more into organising RE fairs than in helping equip teachers with some skills in teaching. Furthermore, RE teachers indicated that they did not collaborate with members of the community like councillors and Members of Parliament because they did not see how these members could help them or their schools.

The teachers indicated that professional development especially in terms of in-service training through workshops was non-existent. Workshops are important because they are a means of introducing an innovation or a new idea and through them, teachers can be helped to work with their peers in order to reflect systematically on their practices as well as to strengthen their knowledge base. Another important issue that emerged was on record keeping, because it is difficult to imagine how information about RE in a school is preserved for future reference if there are no records. It may not have been easy for teachers to keep records bearing in mind that they did not support the idea of schemes of work and lesson plans which are basic record keeping tools in teaching.

### 6.5 Resources

The two schools had similar resources in terms of physical infrastructure, student enrolment and human resources. In both schools, physical facilities were relatively limited and some were old. For example, at Togal Junior Secondary School, all the desks had no lids and students had to use their laps when writing. Classrooms in both schools were not enough for the eighteen streams, hence some lessons were held outside in what they referred to as “outdoor teaching areas” which were not conducive environments since students were disturbed by movements of especially people and noise from cars.

Even though the RE teachers’ environment in both schools tended to be awash with information from several sources, teachers mainly relied on pupils’ textbooks. They did not use a range of resources to increase their own knowledge and that of their students about religions. However, a central part of the teachers’ work is to interpret curriculum materials and to decide how to use these materials in the classroom bearing in mind that a

good curriculum requires more than just a textbook. In addition, teachers rarely made use of the school library which had easily available resources especially the encyclopaedias, which had more information than the textbooks. There was little to suggest that both old and newer RE teachers looked elsewhere other than the RE students' textbooks for more information in order to confirm and strengthen what the students' textbooks presented. The RE teachers viewed textbooks as sources that could cover every religion that they wanted to teach about, and to their disappointment the textbooks did not. In addition, some of the suggested activities in the textbooks were not appropriate for the skills and knowledge described in the syllabus document.

Furthermore, the RE teachers did not explore the possibility, for example, of developing a bank of resources by downloading from the internet information that they could either directly use or modify for use in their RE classes. In both schools, RE teachers had access to resources such as internet where they could retrieve information especially on some of the religions that had inadequate information as presented in the textbooks, yet they rarely made use of this facility. Furthermore, RE teachers did not listen to CDs, watch DVDs and even record some programmes from the television as part of the resources.

The RE textbooks that were being used were elaborate in some religions and not on others. The authors may be doing this not necessarily that these religions are less complex but because writers had easy access to information on those religions that they wrote about. The RE teachers taught what was presented in the students' textbooks as the only facts and truths, while not using other sources, including the students' knowledge and experiences. The teachers did not view educational tours and inviting resource persons as resources that could help their students to pass examinations.

Lastly, there are RE teachers who sit on some committees such as the Book Review Committee, Examination Committee and the RE Panel or Task Force and are in most cases updated on many curricular issues. These teachers have specialist knowledge largely because they have access to information by virtue of them being members of these committees, hence they can be resource persons for their fellow teachers. However, this is not the case because there is no arrangement where their expertise can be tapped by being used as resource persons to disseminate information to their colleagues.

### 6.6 How teachers view the students' diverse backgrounds

The RE teachers made little attempt to acquire the knowledge of students' backgrounds, skills and interest, hence that information was missing in their planning and in their teaching. While it would be expected that in a multi-faith RE curriculum, during the learning process, students should bring along their experiences to the learning environment, that was not the case as teachers did not use the students' experiences and depended instead on what was mainly in the textbooks. Teachers did not use students' experiences as a resource, for example, in relation to their religious affiliation or lack of it. By not making use of the students' personal knowledge and experiences, teachers did not acknowledge the importance of the students' background. Furthermore, the teachers rarely asked questions in examinations, tests and quizzes that drew from students' knowledge and experiences. Teachers were not sensitive to issues of diversity because they did not entertain the belief systems of the students or even lack of them.

Students' knowledge was accepted only in as far as brainstorming in a new topic or issue was concerned. The students revealed that though they were expected and asked to use their knowledge and experiences, they were in most cases usually marked down when they brought in their knowledge and experiences, because teachers wanted them to use the material that was in the textbooks. From what I observed in the classes, students' experiences and knowledge were not readily applied in tests and examinations while diversity on religions was mainly about diversity within Christianity. Since students' experiences were not exploited in the classrooms it was not easy for a multi-faith RE curriculum to have promoted tolerance and respect for persons because teachers did not view students' as a unique and valuable teaching and learning resource. If teachers cannot acknowledge students' knowledge and experiences, that could lead to lack of enthusiasm in learning, because students may think that both their knowledge and experiences are worthless.

## 6.7 Recommendations

Religious Education teachers should be provided with more opportunities to receive professional development, and the training of teachers should be a process that has to occur over an extended period of time. The in-service professional development of teachers, need to be encouraged, by being spearheaded by the Department of Teacher Training and Development of the Ministry of Education. This department needs to have a particularly clear policy for both pre-service and in-service training of teachers regarding their professional development. This is important to note because teachers need to keep current with change since students are constantly evolving and also because pedagogical resources and even techniques can quickly become outdated. Of significance is that, RE teachers like other teachers are normally expected to do a variety of things at the same time whilst engaged in the teaching activity. For example, they need to know how to deal with different students – moving between the social and the academic daily in their classrooms.

The professional development of teachers has to connect the teachers' existing knowledge with the current one by reflecting on their beliefs, teaching practices and the relationship between their beliefs and the new curriculum. In their professional development, RE teachers should be treated as important stakeholders and not as passive consumers of pre-packaged knowledge from either the reform initiators or researchers. The RE teachers' expertise and craft knowledge has to be recognised, while Examination Officers at ERTD should be able to offer expert advice to teachers in order for the teachers to test the multi-faith RE curriculum more effectively. ERTD has to mount some in-service workshops on assessment, for both the Education Officers in the inspectorate and their teachers so that all the three parties work from a common ground regarding assessment issues as a measure against accusations between different parties.

Religious Education teachers need professional training regarding how they can use assessment in order to plan and design for future lessons. Teachers need to make students aware that as they progress in their studies they accumulate more knowledge than when they first went into a secondary school, and that whatever grades they get will tie to the knowledge they gained. In addition, RE teachers need to indicate marks against questions in tests and quizzes given to students because this would give both teachers and the students an idea about the weight of a question. Equally important is that the ERTD has

to be transparent and be able to inform both the RE teachers and the Education Officers, especially in the inspectorate in terms of how final grades are arrived at.

Collaboration is needed on an occasion of reform because it is one way teachers shape their professional development. This is important because working together may provide active learning opportunities for RE teachers so that they take responsibility of their own learning as well as their professional development through sharing teaching techniques strategies and experiences. Collaboration is one way of developing a professional community that responds to and explores common issues in teaching. Furthermore, such practice can help RE teachers to continually reflect on their practices to see to it that they are in tune with innovations as well as in deepening their knowledge. This has to be done because, there are times when teachers are so preoccupied with their students that they forget that they too need to consult other teachers as a way of learning, and if they do not collaborate, they end up tackling classroom issues alone.

There is need to develop a sustainable partnership between RE teachers and curriculum designers. It is only in partnership that the expertise of curriculum implementers has to be appreciated and where classroom RE teachers can view themselves as invaluable contributors in the education system. There is also a need for constant contact, monitoring and exchange of views between education officers and RE teachers. Furthermore, the study recommends that there be coordination, collaboration and clear channels of communication within the Ministry of Education Departments especially teacher training, secondary, curriculum and examination departments.

Even though the multi-faith RE curriculum has its basis in a liberal form of education, it can also be transformed so that it becomes more relevant by using critical pedagogy which draws heavily from various traditions especially critical theory. It is in the use of critical pedagogy that teachers will be aware of the importance and relevance of students' backgrounds in terms of their knowledge and experiences. Teachers need to know and understand the diversity of their students in terms of language, ethnicity and economy because it is through this knowledge that teachers can understand their students' realities. Teachers need to have room in their space to learn about their students' backgrounds because good teachers are of necessity good learners. It is therefore necessary that teachers should acknowledge and use the students' knowledge and experiences where

possible in their teaching. This strategy could be impressed upon teachers especially during their pre-service and in-service professional development.

It is significant that teachers should be constantly focused, hence the need for them to have lesson plans so that their classroom teaching is well coordinated. This does not mean that they have to be dogmatic in their use of the lesson plans because they can still be flexible.

RE teacher preparation curriculum should be designed to ensure that new teachers have the conceptual knowledge, skills and understanding of RE as a body of knowledge. Teachers in the field should be helped to have strong planning skills to enable them to arrange and align appropriate goals, methods and assessment in their plans. There is need to equip RE teachers with skills as to how they can best use and combine multiple sources of materials to support their students' learning, rather than relying on only one type of resource. For example, RE teachers must be able to collect, organise and use materials from a variety of sources, including community resources in the curriculum.

### 6.8 Implications on policy formulation, curriculum and further research

Several recommendations are made that are commensurate with a multi-faith RE curriculum, and one of the suggestions is that more quantitative and qualitative studies need to be carried out in order to understand how RE teachers interpret a multi-faith RE curriculum. For example, in terms of how RE teachers can succeed in promoting the ideals of liberalism, such as instilling a sense of tolerance, unity, democracy, freedom, self-reflection and respect for people..

Understanding how RE teachers use a multi-faith RE curriculum is an issue of importance for RE educators and researchers in general. This research will be an addition to an already existing pool of data that emphasises teachers' understanding of the curriculum by elaborating the knowledge that teachers bring to bear when they interpret a curriculum. Effective interpretation of a curriculum involves the consideration of students and teachers as well as curricular materials. The extent to which multi-faith RE teachers have or have not enabled their students to stand outside their own cultural beliefs and certainties or lack of them, need to be further investigated. This involves how RE

teachers enable their students to alter their personalities so that they have new social experiences.

There is also need for research on how the RE curriculum reform emotionally affects RE teachers in terms of how they accept, modify or reject it. In addition, a new curriculum should allow teachers adequate time to communicate with each other, and also communicate with students in a meaningful way. There has to be time provided to give teachers and students opportunities to be thoughtful and reflective as they interpret the curriculum.

Further research should aim at investigating how multi-faith RE teachers should shed off their preconceived biases so that they are ready to learn and teach diverse groups of students. Research has to find out if by emphasising some religions, RE teachers are not colluding with and inadvertently promoting the interests of particular dominant groups. Research has to further find out the extent to which multi-faith RE teachers understand the role of the school in terms of knowledge and power, that is, how the school enables students to question how knowledge is produced and distributed.

Lastly, while there have been voices calling for a multi-faith curriculum at primary school level so that there is continuity, I suggest that in its present form it cannot be introduced at that level because it is premised on high order cognitive thinking which pupils at this level are likely not to have achieved.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I discussed how the multi-faith RE curriculum is interpreted by RE teachers, indicating that there is little collaboration, first among RE teachers within a school and secondly across schools. I also indicated that Education Officers do not collaborate with each other and with RE teachers. RE like most subjects on the Botswana education curriculum is examination-oriented, hence renders teachers to teach for examinations, a practice which is mainly meant for short term understanding. In addition, even though there are several resources that teachers have access to, RE teachers mainly depend on students' textbooks which do not have guides to accompany them. The RE teachers rarely use students' background in terms of the knowledge and experience.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A Letter from the editor

University of Botswana
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Department of Languages and Social Sciences Education
Private Bag UB 00702, Gaborone, Botswana
Telephone: (267) 355-2336/2337 Fax: (267) 3185096
Block 230; Office 130/128
E-mail address: Lang&Soc@mopipi.ub.bw

Ref:

**To:** Dean
Faculty of Education
University of Pretoria

**From:** Dr T. V. Moumakwa
Dept. of Languages and Social Sciences Education
University of Botswana

**Date:** 26 June 2009

**Re:** **EDITING A DRAFT THESIS FOR MR BAAMPHATLHA DINAMA**

This is to confirm that I Dr Tshiamiso V. Moumakwa, lecturer in the Department of Languages and Social Sciences Education at the University of Botswana, Faculty of Education, edited the draft thesis of Mr Baamphatlha Dinama titled *"HOW RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHERS UNDERSTAND AND IMPLEMENT A MULTI-FAITH CURRICULUM – CASE STUDIES FROM BOTSWANA."*

Sincerely yours,

Moumakwa.

Tshiamiso V. Moumakwa

E-mail: moumakwt@mopipi.ub.bw

www.ub.bw

**APPENDIX B -1**

TELEPHONE:
3655400 TELEX:
2944THUTOBD
PAX:
351624/3655408
REFERENCE: E-11/17/XXXVIII(17}

REPUBLIC *Of* BOTSWANA

MINISTRY *Of*
EDUCATION
PRIVATE BAG
005
GABORONE
BOTSWANA

20 July 2006

To: Baamphatlha
Dinama
University of
Botswana P/Bag
00702
Gaborone

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

We acknowledge receipt of your application to conduct research that will

> How *RE teachers in* Botswana understand the *multi-faith curriculum*
> *How the multi-faith curriculum affects the teaching practices of RE*
*teachers in Botswana.*
> *How different frame factors impact on RE teacher's translation of the*
*multi-faith curriculum into practice..*

You are granted permission to conduct your research entitled:

**HOW RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHERS UNDERSTAND AND IMPLEMENT A MULTI-FAITH CURRICULUM- CASE STUDIES FROM BOTSWANA.**

**This permit is valid until 30 December 20O6** You are reminded to submit a copy of your final report to the Ministry of Education, Botswana

Thank you,

Phiri
For /Permanent
Secretary

**APPENDIX B -2 Extension of research permit**

TELEPHONE 3655400
TELEX: 2944 THUTO BD
FAX: 351624/3655408
REFERENCE: E 11 /17 /XXXIX(69)

REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
PRIVATE BAG 005
GABORONE BOTSWANA

25 January 2007

To: Baamphatlha Dinama
University of Botswana
P/Bag 00702 Gaborone

**RE: EXTENSION OF RESEARCH PERMIT**

We acknowledge receipt of your application for the extension of your permit.

Extension is granted to conduct your research entitled:

**HOW RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHERS UNDERSTAND AND IMPLEMENT A MULTI-FAITH CURRICULUM -CASE STUDIES FROM BOTSWANA .**

**This permit is valid until 30 June 2007.** You are reminded to submit a copy of your final report to the Ministry of Education, Research Unit, Botswana

Thank you,

Ml. Phiri
**For /Permanent Secretary**

**APPENDIX C**

ANNEXURE D

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

| | |
|---|---|
| **CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE** | **CLEARANCE NUMBER : EM06/11/05** |
| **DEGREE AND PROJECT** | PhD Policy Studies<br>How religious education teachers understand and implement a multi-faith curriculum – case studies from Botswana |
| **INVESTIGATOR(S)** | Baamphatlha Dinama - 2535725 |
| **DEPARTMENT** | Educational Management and Policy Studies |
| **DATE CONSIDERED** | 27 February 2007 |
| **DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE** | APPROVED |

*This ethical clearance is valid for* 3 *years from the date of consideration and may be renewed upon application*

**CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE** Dr S Human-Vogel

2 November 2006

CC Dr Newton Stoffels
Mrs Jeannie Beukes

This ethical clearance certificate is issued subject to the following conditions:

1. A signed personal declaration of responsibility
2. If the research question changes significantly so as to alter the nature of the study, a new application for ethical clearance must be submitted
3. It remains the students' responsibility to ensure that all the necessary forms for informed consent are kept for future queries.
4. According to the student's research permit from the Ministry of Education, Botswana, the student may not continue to do fieldwork after 30 June 2007.

Please quote the clearance number in all enquiries.

**APPENDIX D**

**Teachers' biographical questionnaire**

I thank you for participating in this research study that will help me have an insight into how RE teachers understand and implement the multi-faith Re curriculum in Botswana junior secondary school. I will need this information in order to better understand who you are and how you understand this curriculum.

1. Gender: _____
2. Age (you may indicate range e.g. 20-30). _____
3. Religious affiliation (if any) _____
4. Highest qualification/s: _____
5. Number of years teaching RE: _____
6. a. Any school that you taught at before (if any) _____

6.b. If yes, what are they?

6.b.i. similarities in terms of the school administration?

6.b.ii. differences in terms of teaching and learning facilities?

7. Why did you choose to become an RE teacher?
8. What kind of training did you undergo for RE?
9. In your opinion, what does the notion of 'multi-faith' curriculum mean to you?

10.a. In your opinion what are the strengths (if any) of the multi-faith curriculum as practiced in Botswana?

10.b. In your opinion what are the weaknesses (if any) of the multi-faith RE curriculum as practiced in Botswana?

11. How does the multi-faith RE curriculum differ from the previous RE curriculum in terms of major changes?
12. What is your view are the changes in the present RE curriculum?
13. If you studied at secondary school, describe the experiences that influence your perception of the current RE teaching and learning?

14. a. What do you think the Ministry of education official (e.g inspectors) expect from RE teachers in terms of facilitating the multi-faith curriculum?

15. a. How do prescribed texts (if any) for RE influence your teaching?

15. b. Apart from prescribed texts what other:

i. resources do you use or are available at your school?

ii. facilities are available?

16. Describe RE workshops you attended (if any in terms of relevance to the multi-faith curriculum.

17. If you have ever been invited to mark the national RE examinations, please describe briefly how it is done.

18. How does the Botswana Religious Education Association (BOREA assist you in teaching of RE?

19. What other comments (if any) would you like to make that are not covered in the questionnaire?

**APPENDIX E**

**Interview schedule on the teachers understanding and implementation of the multi-faith RE curriculum**

1. Could you describe the main features/elements of the multi-faith RE?
2. Could you describe how RE is perceived in school by: (a) RE teachers (b) other teachers (c) RE students (d) other students (e) school administration.
3. You have taught the RE curriculum for several years, and based on your experience, what do you think are its strengths?
4. You probably had some interesting teaching experiences in multi-faith RE curriculum. Can you recall them?
5. What do you think led to the revision of the previous curriculum?
6. What will be your response to those who say that the former Bible centres curriculum was effective?
7. To what extent does the present RE curriculum promote tolerance and awareness of diversity?
8. Please tell me about your typical day as a religious education teacher.
9. Could you tell me how you accommodate/recognize religious and other forms of diversity in a class? [where applicable]
10. Could you describe how you accommodate different cultural and religious backgrounds of your learners in RE lessons? [if any]
11. Could you share with me any particular interesting topic/s in the curriculum?
12. What do you think is the best way the students learn RE?
13. What are the activities that students engage in, in a typical RE lesson?
14. Describe how you choose religions that you use in your lessons.
15. Could you tell me about the teaching aids you use in your teaching?
16. Could you describe how RE may help learners to understand events in the world?
17. Tell me about RE examinations at: (a) school level (b) cluster level (c) regional level (d) national level.
18. What is your view about teachers collaborating? [*follow up*]
19. How much has college/university education prepared you to teach the multi-faith curriculum?
20. There is a view in education that the teachers' role is to care and develop the minds of the young. What is your view in relation to RE?

21. There is a view that RE is an easy subject to teach? What is your reaction?

22. A basic principle in teaching a multi-faith curriculum is that a teacher does not have to be religious. What is your position on this?

23. What personal values do you bring to your class when teaching?

24. Some people say that teaching RE alienates RE teachers from the rest of the teaching staff. Do you agree or not?

25. Can you share with me your experiences about the Botswana Religious Education (BOREA) in terms of its usefulness to you as an RE teacher? [*if any*]

26. How much do you know about the community surrounding your school in terms of their faith and diversity?

27. Could you mention examples of your school policy that affect your classroom practice?

28. What opportunities do you have that can help you further develop your teaching practices?

29. How does the number of contact teaching time affect your teaching?

30. Can you share with me any additional information of interest that we may not have talked about?

## APPENDIX F

### Teachers' pre-lesson interview schedule

1. Could you describe how you are going to introduce the lesson today?
2. Could you describe the major aspects that you will focus on?
3. Can you tell me about the teaching resources that you are going to use?
4. How is your content going to accommodate diversity?
5. In the lesson that you planned today, what are the constraints that could have influenced your planning.
6. How are you going to relate the learning experience with real life situations?

## APPENDIX G

### Teachers' post-lesson interview schedule

1. How useful were the teaching techniques, strategies and resources?
2. To what extent was the lesson consistent with the stated objectives?
3. To what extent was the lesson comprehended by the students?
4. How did your understanding of religious concepts in your interaction with the students?
5. To what extent were the students intellectually engaged? What did they do?
6. How did your classroom management style enhance the quality of your lesson?
7. What were the strengths of your lesson? *[follow up]*
8. How did you relate what you taught with the wider context/
9. Would you say that you were confident in your presentation of the lesson?
10. How did instructional activities reflect your attention to issues of diversity? *[where applicable]*
11. How were your questioning strategies likely to enhance students' understanding?
12. What did you do to encourage all your students to participate?
13. How did you ensure that students' ideas, questions and contributions were respected?
14. What personal values did you bring to class in relation to the lesson/
15. How would you rate the lesson you taught today in terms of achieving the objectives?
16. Do you think the lesson made any difference in the life of the students/

**APPENDIX H**

**Class observation schedule**

1. Is there any link of the lesson to students' previous knowledge?
2. Is the lesson aligned to the stated instructional objectives?
3. Is the lesson developed in a logical sequence, varied and suitable techniques and strategies used?
4. Does the teacher involve students by engaging them in activities and asking questions?
5. Does the teacher use different teaching techniques (e.g. debate, drama, role-play etc) in helping students to learn?
6. Is the teacher comfortable with the subject matter?
7. Does the teacher give information, question students and provide feedback?
8. Does the teacher encourage learners to take down notes while teaching?
9. Does the teacher use audio-visual aids? How appropriate are these aids?
10. Does the teacher encourage and praise students when working on working on tasks and giving responses?
11. Does the teacher encourage and praise students when working on tasks and when giving responses?
12. Is the teacher able to recognise the students' strengths? What does he/she do to enhance them?
13. Does the teacher encourage students to reflect on what they learnt?
14. How is the classroom arranged e.g. for group work, discussions etc?
15. Is RE taught in a regular classroom or in any other space?

**APPENDIX I**

**Interview schedule for education officers**

1. Could you describe to me your main responsibilities as an RE education officer?
2. What are the aims of the multi-faith curriculum?
3. What do you think led to the revision of the previous RE curriculum?
4. In your opinion, what do you think are the strengths of the present RE curriculum?
5. In your opinion how would you rate RE in relation to other subjects? [*e.g. in terms of popularity*]
6. There are those who suggest that RE gives an insight into what is happening around the world. What is your view?
7. There is a view in education that the teachers' role is to care and develop the minds of the young. What is your view in relation to RE?
8. A basic principle in teaching a multi-faith curriculum is that a teacher does not have to be religious. What is your position on this?
9. There is a view held by some people that RE should be excluded from the school curriculum. What is your position on this?
10. Some people say that teaching RE alienates RE teachers from the rest of the teaching staff. Do you agree or not?
11. How does the multi-faith RE curriculum affect a teacher's outlook of life?
12. How are teaching and learning resources chosen?
13. How does the number of contact teaching time affect the RE teachers' effectiveness?
14. Describe other resources other than the textbooks that are provided to teachers. [*if any*]
15. How do teachers choose religions that hey use as examples in their lessons?
16. Could you describe for me some of the in-service workshops you organized for the RE teachers?
17. How often to you organize workshops for the teachers?
18. Are there any workshops that you intend to organize for teachers?
19. Some people say that RE is an easy subject. What is your view on this matter?
20. When inspecting schools which teaching methods tended to be common?
21. How are the long term effects of RE on students determined?
22. How would you rate students' performance in RE?
23. How effective are the annual RE fairs organized by BOREA?
24. How do the RE fairs relate to classroom teaching and learning?

**APPENDIX J**

**Interview schedule for students** [Focus group]

1. Can you tell me how RE can be of benefit to you? [follow up]
2. What are the activities that you usually do in RE lessons?
3. Could you tell me of a lesson this week which was interesting? What made the lesson interesting?
4. How popular is RE according to you?
5. Some of your schoolmates say that RE is an easy subject. What is your reaction to this perspective?
6. Other than the textbooks, what other resources do RE teachers use in their lessons?
7. In learning RE you are not expected to be religious. What is your reaction?
8. Can you share with me an interesting topic/s in the syllabus? [*if any*]
9. Give me an example of instances when you were allowed to use examples from your background such as religion or gender.
10. Do you think learning RE makes any differences in your lives?
11. What does the teacher do to encourage you to participate in class?
12. Give examples when your ideas, questions and contributions were respected by your teacher?
13. What personal values to you bring to an RE class? [follow up]
14. Can you share with me any additional information of interest that we may not have talked about?

**APPENDIX K**

**Letter to Parents**

**University of Botswana**
**Faculty of Education**

**Private Bag 00702, Gaborone**
**Botswana.**

**Telephone:** 3552970
**Cell phone:** 72163096
**Fax:** 3185096

Dear ( Parent/Guardian),

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHERS' CLASSROOM PRACTICES RESEARCH PROJECT**

I am a teacher educator at the University of Botswana currently on study leave at the University of Pretoria where I am pursuing a doctoral degree in educational policy studies.

I have been granted permission by the office of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education to conduct my study in secondary schools. This study is funded by the University of Botswana.

I am writing to request you to grant me permission to interview your child who is doing Religious Education (RE) about the effective ways of learning the subject. The child will be in a group of about 8 selected students. The interview session for students will be done once and will last between 30-40 minutes. I will also negotiate with students through their teacher the best time to conduct the interview. I will audiotape and transcribe the interview for analysis.

The study attempts to explore how RE teachers understand and teach this curriculum and what students view as effective ways of learning RE bearing in mind the effective techniques and strategies that teachers use. The curriculum is intended to cultivate in learners a sense of tolerance bearing in mind the diversity found in Botswana in terms of ethnicity, religion, education and the socio-economic background of the people. The study is also informed by Vision 2016 which envisages a Botswana society which will be tolerant.

There are no risks for participating in this study. The names of the participants will be changed in any written reports or articles to protect identity and guarantee confidentiality. All research participants will be informed that participation is voluntary and they can withdraw from the study anytime.

When completed, a copy of my dissertation study will be presented to the school head for use in the school library. The copy will also be available online at the University of Pretoria and in its libraries, Ministry of Education (Director of Secondary Education), Botswana archives and records, National Library Services and the University of Botswana library.

Please feel free to call me if you have any questions or would like more information about this study. I can be reached at 3931201 (home), 3552336 (work) and 72163096 (mobile).
.

Yours faithfully

_____
B. Dinama (Mr)

Cut here----------cut here----------

**CONSENT FORM**

I _____ **(name of parent/guardian)** allow my child _____ **(name of child)** to participate in the study on how religious education teachers understand and teach Religious Education. I understand that the participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw my child from this study anytime without any negative consequences. I also grant you permission to interview my child. I realize that the interview recordings will be used for educational and research purposes related to this study.

_____ _____
Parent/Guardian's Signature Date

**APPENDIX L**

EXAMINATION RESEARCH AND TESTING DIVISION

JUNIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

COMPONENT CODE 31/2

DECEMBER 2006

## SECTION 1 – GENERAL COMMENTS

Candidates for the year 2006 also performed according to their abilities in comparison to the previous year. High achievers demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of religious concepts such as basic teachings and beliefs as the paper demanded. They managed to attempt high order questions, which required critical thinking like showing how the beliefs in life after death influence the life of followers. The low achievers demonstrated a limited understanding of such religious concepts.

The paper structure was good as it progressed well from simple to complex items and enabled candidates to write their responses in the spaces provided. It was also evident that an erratum sent to schools to correct question 6(c) did not reach the majority of schools as candidates stated only two death rituals instead of three.

Candidates were generally neat in their writing except for a few who drew strange pictures and wrote strange comments on their scripts. There was also a problem of duplicate examination numbers by candidates. This delayed examiners as it called for cross-checking with core subjects to establish the candidate's real numbers. Schools are asked to check for such mistakes before submitting their centres to avoid unnecessary delays. Some schools also enclosed the attendance registers and sitting plans with scripts. These should be submitted to the department to assist in the processing of receipt forms before marking.

## SECTION 2: COMMENTS ON INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS

### QUESTION 1 (a)

**What is meant by characteristics of religion?**

Most candidates correctly answered this question by stating that characteristics are traits, elements features or qualities of a religion. However, there were some words used such as 'things' to explain characteristics of religion. Such responses do not answer the question. Students should be reminded to refrain from using definitions such as 'thing' or to define a term by itself.

**QUESTION 1 (b)**

**Give three examples of characteristics of religion**

Most candidates got this question correct except for those who spelt 'practices' wrongly as 'practises' and 'beliefs' as 'believes'. Spelling of RE technical terms is vital. Candidates need to show knowledge of religious concepts.

**QUESTION 1 (c)**

**List three different beliefs from two religions practised in Botswana**

A majority of our candidates overlooked the word **different** hence repeated the beliefs given for thee first religion. This made the candidates to lose marks due to failure to follow the instructions. Some candidates overlooked the word 'Botswana' and stated the beliefs of a religion not practiced in Botswana as a result, they lost marks.

Spelling of Religious Education technical terms wrongly, is another area of concern. Religious terms such as Christianity, Prophet Muhammad were spelt wrongly. Botswana Traditional Religion was abbreviated to BTR or referred to as Botswana African Traditional Religion or African Traditional Religion. These made the candidates to lose a lot of marks and this area needs to be attended to as a matter of urgency by Religious Education teachers.

This question (1c) also revealed that some candidates confused 'beliefs' with 'attributes' or 'teachings' e.g. God is the creator or God is eternal are attributes.

**QUESTION 2 (a)**

**What are religious teachings?**

Grade A candidates performed fairly well in this question.

**QUESTION 2(a)**

**Give three reasons why religious teachings are important to followers of religions**

The candidates who got 2(a) wrong also got 2(b) wrong as 2(b) is connected to the former. Expected responses were e.g. 'To uphold believers faith' or 'enlighten followers about their religion'.

**QUESTION 2C**

**What is the difference between Myths and religious Ethical Codes?**

Most candidates did very well in this question except for a few who failed to *differentiate*, though they correctly stated what Myths and religious ethical are: Contrasting terms such as 'while', 'whereas' or 'but' must be used during teaching to assist candidates to perform their task and score better. The word 'and' as a conjuction should not be used to.

**QUESTION 2(d)**

**State two different ways in which two religions practiced in Botswana are involved in the fight against HIV/AIDS**

This was a good question though most of the candidates did not interpret it well. Their responses were focused more on how to help those already infected by HIV/AIDS than on what religions are doing to fight against HIV/AIDS.

**QUESTION 3(a)**

**State the religious importance of animal life in any two religions. Give a different answer for each religion.**

To score all the marks candidates were not supposed to repeat the answer in ''a' religion for religion (b).

Candidates' performance was not satisfactory in this question. Our candidates failed to distinguish between 'importance' and 'use'. Popular responses were on use of animal life rather than on importance.

**QUESTION 3(b)**

**Give two ways in which human beings can abuse animal**

Most candidates answered this question very well some confused abused with destruction hence giving wrong responses such as killing them.

**QUESTION 3(c)**

**State two ways in which plant life is used in two religions**

The question did well as it discriminated candidates very well. Grade A and B candidates gave the religious use of plant life while the low achievers stated the general use of plant life such as for decoration of a Christmas tree etc.

**QUESTION 3(b)**

**State two ways in which human beings can benefit from animal life**

This question was generally well done by all candidates.

**QUESTION 4(a)**

**State three reasons why people commit murder?**

The question was generally well answered except a few who did not answer the question well.

**QUESTION 4(b)**

**Give three reasons why murder is considered wrong by the society**

The majority of the candidates performed well in this question except for those who gave very general responses.

**QUESTION 4(c)**

**What is the difference between suicide and euthanasia?**

This was another question which demanded differentiation of two concepts. (see 2c)

**QUESTION 4(d)**

**State one view on death penalty n any religion practiced in Botswana**

The candidates performed badly in this question. They were expected to give views of a particular religion and not human rights.

**QUESTION 4(e)**

**Give two disadvantages of death penalty**

Generally well done by most candidates.

**QUESTION 5(a)**

**What is marriage?**

Most candidates failed to explain marriage as a union of a man and a woman resulting in them becoming husband and wife. The union was rather explained as occurring between husband and wife which is post marriage.

**QUESTION 5(b)**

**Give three reasons why marriage is important?**

Generally well done by most candidates. The candidates managed to at least get two popular answers correct:

- to start a family
- for procreation

Some stated ‘to unite two families’ as a response. This answer was considered as a reason for marriage. One does not marry to unite families but for thee responses stated above. Unity of families if at all it occurs happens after the marriage.

**QUESTION 5(c)**

**Name two religions and describe two different rituals performed to solemnise marriage in each religion.**

Generally well done by most candidates except for some who repeated rituals in religion A when responding to religion B. Students need to show a wide understanding of these rituals in order to do well in examinations.

Rituals and procedures also confused candidates. It was evident that some candidates failed to clearly distinguish the two.

Some candidates have failed to distinguish Christianity from Botswana Traditional Religion as has been in the past for example payment of bogadi (bride price) was given as a response for Christianity and this resulted in candidates losing marks. Religious Education teachers need to assist students in drawing the line between the two religions.

**QUESTION 5(d)**

**Give one religion and state its view on inter-religious marriage.**

Candidates like in 4(a) failed to state the view. Majority of them went as far as stating ‘there are against inter-religious marriage’. The question is of a high order, it demanded that candidates go further and state why these religions are against or in support of inter-religious marriages.

**QUESTION 5(e)**

**Give one religion and state its view on divorce.**

All the candidates managed to score the one mark allocated to it simply stating ‘it is not allowed or is not allowed’.

**QUESTION 6(a)**

**Explain the difference between a religious ceremony and a religious festival.**

Majority of candidates failed to differentiate between a religious ceremony and a religious festival. Their responses were mostly concerned with time factor not what the concept is e.g. – a religious festival has a fixed date while a religious ceremony does not.

**QUESTION 6(b)**

**Give two names of religious festivals from any religion of your choice.**

This was a simple recall question however some candidates failed to score marks. Others still gave responses such as Ramadan as a festival for Islam, Christmas as a festival for Botswana Traditional Religion.

**QUESTION 6(c)**

**Name and describe two death rituals performed in any religion of your choice.**

This question proved to be difficult for most candidates. Some described the rituals instead of naming them while others stated procedures instead of rituals as has been noted in 5(c). Some candidates stated the importance instead of describing the ritual.

## SECTION B

**QUESTION 7**

**Explain five advantages of being part of a family**

This question proved to be difficult for candidates as they were not able to give an advantage and explain it to score the two points per the five advantages. Some stated the advantage and failed to give the explanation or give an explanation or give an explanation and not state the advantage. Many of our high performers did not organize their work well to score the 10 points in the essay.

**QUESTION 8**

**Discuss how belief in life after death influences the lives of followers of a religion of your choice.**

This was the most difficult question in section B. Majority of the candidates especially those who chose other religions rather than Botswana Traditional Religion scored a maximum of two marks out of ten. Candidates failed to show how the belief in li after death influences the lives of believers of a particular religion. Some tended to narrate the story of the lizard and chameleon which attempts to explain why human beings die and never come back to life. There is need to interpret the objectives properly.

**QUESTION 9**

**Discuss five ways in which roles of women have changed in a religion of your choice.**

Generally, the question was satisfactorily answered. Candidates were able to discuss how roles of women have changed. However, some candidates confused these changing roles with duties of individual members of the family like father, mother, daughter and son.

Some candidates confused changing roles of Botswana Traditional religion with that of Christianity and the secular world. Emphasis needs to be made on these problems.

Some candidates carelessly lost marks by not stating the religion being discussed and this meant loss of all the ten marks. Teachers really need to encourage students to start always with a religion if they are to discuss views of religions.

**APPENDIX M**

**TOGAL JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL**

**MIDYEAR EXAMINATIONS**

**JULY 2007**

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

**PAPER 2** **FORM 3**

**TIME: 2 HOURS** **MARKS: 90**

Centre Number: _____ Candidate Number: _____

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Write your examination number in the space provided.
2. Answer **all** questions.
3. Answer in the spaces provided
4. You will be allowed fifteen minutes to read through the questions.

During this time you will not be allowed to write.

**FOR EXAMINER'S USE ONLY**

| **Section** | **Marks Scored** |
|---|---|
| **A** | |
| **B** | |
| **Total Marks** | |

**This question paper contains 9 printed pages. Do not turn over the page until you are told to do so.**

**Section A** **[60 marks]**

**Answer all questions in this section.**

1 (a) What is meant by characteristics of religion

_____

_____

_____

_____ (1)

(b) Give three examples of characteristics of religion

(i) _____

_____

(ii) _____

_____

iii) _____

_____ (3)

(c) List three different beliefs from two different religions practiced in Botswana. Give different beliefs for each religion

Religion: _____

Beliefs: _____

_____

_____

Religion: _____

Beliefs: _____

_____

_____

2 (a) What are religious teachings?

_____

_____

_____ (1)

(b) Give three reasons why religious teachings are important to followers of religions

(i) _____

_____

(ii) _____

_____

(iii) _____

_____ (3)

(c) What is the difference between myths and religious ethical codes

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____ (2)

(d) State two different ways in which two religions are involved in the fight against HIV/AIDS

Religion: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____ (2)

Religion: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____ (2)

3 (a) State the religious importance of animal life in any two religions. Give a different answer for each religion.

Religion: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____ (2)

Religion: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____ (2)

(b) Give two ways in which human beings can abuse animal life

(i) _____

_____

(ii) _____

_____ (2)

(c) State two different ways in which plant is used in two different religions

Religion: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____ (2)

Religion: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____ (2)

(d) State two ways in which human beings can benefit from animal

(i) _____

_____

(ii) _____

_____ (2)

4 (a) State three reasons why people commit murder

(i) _____

_____

(ii) _____

_____

(iii) _____

_____ (3)

(b) Give two reasons why murder is considered wrong by the society

(i) _____

_____

(ii) _____

_____ (2)

(c) What is the different between suicide and euthanasia

_____

_____

(d) State one view on death penalty in any religion practiced in Botswana

Religion: _____

_____

_____ (1)

(e) Give two disadvantages of death penalty

(i) _____

_____

(ii) _____

_____ (2)

5 (a) What is marriage?

_____

_____ (1)

(b) Give three reasons why marriage is important

(i) _____

_____

(ii) _____

_____

(iii) _____

_____ (3)

(c) Name two religions and describe two different rituals performed to solemnize marriage in each of the religions. Give different rituals for each religion

Religion: _____

Ritual _____

_____

_____

_____

Ritual _____

_____

_____

_____ (2)

Religion: _____

Ritual _____

_____

_____

_____

Ritual _____

_____

_____

_____ (2)

(d) Give one religion and state its view on inter-religious marriage

Religion: _____

_____

_____ (1)

6 (a) Explain the difference between a religious ceremony and a religious festival

_____

_____

_____ (2)

(b) Give two names of religious festival from any religion.

Religion: _____

(i) _____

(ii) _____ (2)

(c) Name and describe death rituals performed in any religion of your choice.

Religion: _____

Ritual: _____

_____

_____ (1)

Description: _____

_____

_____

_____ (2)

Ritual: _____

_____

_____ (1)

Description: _____

_____

_____

_____ (2)

Ritual: _____

_____

_____ (1)

Description: _____

_____

_____

_____ (2)

Section B [30 marks]

Answer all questions

1. Explain five advantages of being part of a family.

_____

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(10)

2. Discuss how beliefs on life after death influence the lives of the followers of a religion of your choice.

(10)

3. Discuss five ways in which the roles of women have changed in a religion of your choice.

(10)

**APPENDIX N**

**MAKALA JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL**

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

**END OF MARCH EXAMINATIONS**

**FORM 3- 2007**

**MARKS ;40**

**INSTRUCTIONS**

**1. ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS IN THIS PAPER**

**2. WRITE YOUR NAME IN THE SPACE PROVIDED BELOW**

**NAME …….**

**CLASS ……**

1. What is capital punishment?

A. A death sentence

B Life imprisonment

C Killing prisoners

D Abstinence

2. Which of the following is the main reason for family planning?

A To reduce population

B To space the children

C To protect the mother's health

D To protect oneself from sexually transmitted diseases

3. Which of the following **is not** a method of contraception?

A Withdrawal

B fertilization

C Rhythm

D Abstinence

4 Which of the following is a non religious festival?

A Christmas

B Botswana day

C Boxing day

D Easter

5 Which of the following problems **is not** caused by substance abuse?

A Criminal activity

B Increased birth rate

C Mental illness

D Soured relations

6. The characteristic that differentiates human beings from animals is the ability to

A Breath
B Move around
C understand life
D Feel

7 Which of the following **is not** an effect of abortion?

A Sterility
B Stigma
C Abdominal pains
D Breast cancer

8 Which of the following is a possible reason for murder?

A Mercy
B Love
C Tolerance
D Empathy

9 Why do some people have a negative attitude towards people living with HIV and AIDS?

A They know that HIV and AIDS is incurable
B They associate HIV and AIDS is with poverty
C They think that they may also loose relatives
D They think that they may be infected by contacts.

10 How can HIV and AIDS is infection be avoided

A By avoiding mosquito bites
B By not sharing utensils
C By keeping toilets clean
D By practicing safe sex

11 Which of the following is not a death ritual?

A Washing of the body
B Shaving of the body
C Covering the body with a shroud
D Burying or cremating the body

12 In some cultures certain trees are not supposed to be cut. This is an example of

A aforestation
B Plant protection
C Plant importance
D Plant worship

13. Which of the following is a direct way in which human beings use animals?

A For security
B For shelter
C For school fees
D For clothing

14. Which of the following is not in the UN charter?

A the right to employment
B the right to life
C the right to share property
D the right to marry

15. Why is Religious Education taught in schools?

A For moral instruction
B To promote religious tolerance
C For religious conviction
D To provide social information

16 Which of the following reflects the importance of sacred literature?

A Healing of followers
B Regarded as divine
C Decorating places of worship
D Entertaining followers

17 How can animal life be destroyed

A By dehorning
B By breeding
C By poaching
D By conservation

18 Which of the following can be controlled by human being?

A Time of birth
B Colour of skin
C Type of marriage
D Family membership

19 Which of the following **does not** lead to destruction of plants?

A. Contaminated water
B Floods and heavy winds
C Crafting of plants
D Conserving natural habitats

20 Which of the following is a legal reason for committing abortion?

A To avoid embarrassment
B To avoid health risks
C To control population
D To terminate pregnancy due to rape

21 Which of the following can be the effect of suicide on the society?

A Loss of skilled manpower
B Loss of bread
C Change in laws
D Bad luck

22 Which of the following attributes of God is common in most religions?

A The sun
B The spirit
C The father
D The compassionate

23. Which of the following best defines a religious festival?

A A communual celebration
B A religious gathering
C A celebration to mark an important religious event
D A celebration to mark an important occasion in a religion

24 Which of the following birth rituals is found in all religions of the world?

A Strengthening
B Purifying
C Naming
D Anointing

25 Puberty rituals are important because they

A Foster virginity
B Promote culture
C Promote individuality
D Prepare the young for adulthood

26 Which of the following practices is not associated with marriage?

A Initiation
B Dowry
C Negotiations
D Bride wealth

27 Which of the following does not explain the importance of ethical teachings in religion?

A Control people
B Establishing harmony
C Reducing violence
D Guiding behaviour

28 Which of the following religions is not found in Botswana?

A Bahai faith
B Christianity
C Jainism
D Sikhism

29 A myth is a story meant to

A. challenge people s thinking
B. explain issues that puzzles people
C. provide the moral meaning of creation
D. convince people about how life began

Read the passage below and answer question 30 to 31

**A teenager was abused. The only people she could turn to were teachers. They took her to a doctor who gave her medication. She was too scared to take the medication home. She feared that the family would demand to know where she got it from and who she had told about the abuse. Mentally, she was deeply affected by years of abuse.**

30. Which human right was the teenage girl denied?

A. The right to protection and opportunity to grow physically, spiritually, socially and emotionally.

B The right to adequate nutrition, housing, recreation and medical services.

C The right to protection from discrimination based on race and religion

D The right to protection from discrimination on the bases of sex, political affiliation or social position.

31 The girl told teachers about her problems because they

A serve a religious function

B have special abilities

C have valid legal opinions

D serve a social function

32 What is religion?

A A spiritual nourishment that people enjoy

B The way people express their understanding of the meaning and purpose of life

C A process of creating spiritual awareness in life

D The way creatures express their understanding of the meaning and purpose of life

33 What is freedom

A Knowing one's rights

B Doing what one likes

C Making responsible choices

D Making choices of others

34 Which of the following is a characteristic of human intermediaries

A Immortal

B Intagible

C Visible

D Invisible

35 What is natural abortion?

A Delivering of a baby without an operation

B Expected expulsion of the baby from the womb

C Unexpected expulsion of the foetus from the womb

D Death of a baby immediately after birth

36 Which of the following is a long term result of substance abuse?

A Physical handicap

B Physical stimulation

C Mental deterioration

D Mental stimulation

37 Which of the following **is** not a stage of human development?

A Puberty

B Initiation

C Marriage

D Birth

38 Inter-religious marriages happen between religious people who belong to

A different areas

B same area

C Same_religion

D different religions

39 What is the role of religion in solemnizing marriage?

A To strengthen it

B To promote it

C To bless it

D To protect it

40 What is a basic teaching?

A Ethical code

B Spiritual fact

C Vital instruction

D Spiritual practice