



The Teaching of Religious Education in Zambian Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT:

Religious Education (RE) refers to an education in a school that places a strong emphasis on the beliefs associated with a particular religion. It is a subject taught in schools that educates about the different religions of the world. RE develops self-concept and self-esteem, explores spiritual, moral, and social frameworks, and encourages learners to reflect on experiences and emotions. Therefore, this study was directed to analyze the teaching of Religious Education in Zambian Secondary Schools. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods and a descriptive survey design that sampled head teachers, RE teachers, and learners of RE at the selected schools. Data was obtained from the respondents by means of interviews and questionnaires. Data were analyzed by the use of software; Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 26) and Microsoft Excel (version 16). Frequency tables, graphs, figures, and pie charts were also used to analyze the qualitative and quantitative data. The findings indicated that values and practices help progress in education, hence, the role of Religious Education prepares learners to be morally upright and influences them to fear God and respect fellow human beings. Additionally, the findings revealed that the teaching of religious education is a critical component that enables the school-going youth to acquire morality by instilling the right attitudes toward social obligations and responsibilities in society. The study therefore recommended that; since Religious Education has the power to reduce the frequency of disciplinary cases in schools, to impart practical ability for learners to discriminate between right and wrong and choose what is right in day-to-day life; the Zambian situation is in a changing process and so is religious knowledge, therefore, the religious knowledge that is taught should constantly be revised to match with the declaration Zambia as a Christian Nation and that the Ministry of Education and other relevant authorities should treat Religious Education like any other academic subject, considering it in selection for Higher Education and sensitizing secondary schools to include it in all subject combinations.

Keywords: Behavior, Community, Learner, Moral Development, Teaching, and Religion Education.

INTRODUCTION

Religious literacy helps citizens to develop their sense of identity and belonging in a plural society. Religious literacy promotes values and attitudes needed for citizenship in a democratic society by helping learners understand and respect people of different beliefs, practices, values, and cultures (Tritter & Taylor, 2012). In a world where, for some, religion and faith have no lasting value, and the educational ground is constantly moving, it's now an opportunity to reflect on the place and the importance of RE within the school's curriculum. Just recently the RE report card provided a national overview of RE from the value of the qualification, its place in society, and the future of the subject in the wider curriculum (Chizelu, 2016). One of the biggest talking points was the fact that 64% of the adult population views education in religion and worldviews (or RE) as an important part of the school curriculum. With the number of students taking Religious Studies GCSE rising by nearly a third in the last ten years, society still sees great value in its role in the curriculum. A pupil's experiences are as important as anybody else's as a starting point. Today's lessons are led by everyday concerns such as telling the truth, looking after the planet, treating everybody as equal, or just plain listening. These basics are about the human condition, and in Birmingham, are summed up in 24 values or dispositions. People from faith traditions and non-religious traditions have been involved in devising, updating, and voting for the new Birmingham Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. Although it is still centered on teaching through dispositions, it is now expanded to consider the changing landscape of belief. It has a local flavor which is owned by the communities in which you teach.

Chanda (2023), points out that one of the modes of provision of education is through Christian religious education. Christian religious education is defined as the process where by Christian learning takes place. It often involves teaching which enables practicing Christians to adopt and deepen their Christian belief, values and dispositions to experience and act in a Christian way (CDC, 2000). This has led to different teaching methods being employed, some of which have led to indoctrination and confessionalism in class. Religious education (RE) as it is taught in the schools of Zambia today has three main strands. First, it seeks to enable pupils to develop a knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and practices. Since Christianity has played such a significant part in the historical development of this country, its beliefs and practices feature prominently in the Religious Education programme of all schools. However, the law makes it clear that pupils should also be given opportunities to develop an understanding of the religious beliefs and practices of the other major religions represented in Great Britain as well (Kamuwanga, 2015). The religions that are usually taught in schools include Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism in addition to Christianity.

For the pupils in Birmingham to be good people, they need to be able to think about what they believe in on a deeper level. You will want them to consider what sort of person they might become and what sort of city and society they might want to live in. Fowers (2018) says that learners are expected to think for themselves around these values. In learning to critically interpret and evaluate the content that is presented, pupils will grow in their ability to discern. In the new Agreed RE Syllabus, pupils will be encouraged and challenged to reflect evaluate, and think critically about what they have learned. In doing so, they will begin to understand that the interpretation of these sources can be used both legitimately (and inaccurately) to support a particular point of view. Pupils will learn how individual aspects may conflict with each other and acknowledge that plurality exists in religious traditions and non-religious worldviews, which leads to divergence in practice. This process will involve reflective and interpretative skills, as well as the ability of pupils to examine themselves in the light of the information encountered. As pupils learn about the things that concern us all, they will be educated on what religions think about them, as well as people like humanists, atheists, and people who do not have a firm tradition (Bull, 2019). By sixteen, young person will know a lot more about what drives them in their lives and realize what motivates the people they see in their day-to-day lives. Pupils may decide whether they are religious or not. Or they may not think this particularly affects their character. They will understand a person's particular religion or worldview from what they have learned about their values. Pupils will also identify that the people around them have made their own decisions about belief and character, just as they have.

Zambia is a multicultural and multi-faith country, with among the main religious traditions, Christianity, Zambian Traditional Religion(s), Islam, and Hinduism. The country is officially Christian, as per the declaration found in the preamble of the Zambian constitution, though Part III Article 19 recognizes and guarantees the freedom of conscience, which includes freedom of thought and religion Musongole (2012). This religious outlook has greatly influenced the education sector, from historical times, with Religious Education (RE) enjoying a relatively good status on the school curriculum. Although RE is an academic subject like any other, it has for a long time been considered different by many including those in the teaching fraternity. Western education was introduced to Zambia by Christian missionaries who used the school as an agent of evangelization and conversion. Religious Instruction (RI), the precursor of Religious Education (RE), was thus at the core of the curriculum and enjoyed high status with the highest number of contact hours (Chanda, 2023). Before the advent of Christianity, African Traditional Society had different ways of teaching and maintaining morals. According to kafuwa (2017), the child learns by imitation, observation, and participation. The foundation of moral action was based on social theories such as the good of the community and the well-being of the people.

African morality is based on obedience to a powerful authority and fear of punishment dominates motives. A child who refuses to obey the moral teachings of the parents and the elders is thoroughly beaten and neglected. There is a high rate of moral decadence in the country today. Many educationists are of the opinion that through the study of religion or deep religious awareness, sanity can be restored in Zambian schools. The introduction of formal education by the church resulted in the introduction of Religious Studies and moral education into the school curriculum. It became difficult to separate moral education from religious education, but religion often provides the motivational and inspiring basis for morality. Early in Zambia's educational history, the church was in control of education as schools were mostly owned by the missionaries. Such a control involved strict moral and religious discipline among teachers as well as the pupils (Chizelu, 2016). Following the government's involvement in the education of the people, things started falling apart. The moral standards started to deteriorate. Indecency among pupils in schools became even worse when the Patriotic Front (PF) abolished corporal punishment in schools. Religious education is the agent of socialization through which its teaching can help greatly in correcting and alleviating the ill behaviors of the pupils in schools.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Ill behavior among learners seem to be rampant, this is associated with the fact that learners come from different backgrounds with different dominions and culture. One of the problems of the present-day secondary school pupils is the deteriorating moral standards among pupils (Henze, 2020). The moral delinquency of the youth has been of great concern to the people generally. However not every learner has an ill behavior, some are well-principled and well-behaved (Getui, 2013). With Religious Education being an optional subject taught in most secondary schools with learners who possess different behavioral traits i.e. good or bad, it drew the attention of this study to analyze the effects of Religious education learners in the selected secondary schools, especially those who take the subject. The main goal was to establish if at the teaching of Religious Education in Zambian secondary schools influences pupils' behavior in a negative or positive way.

1.3. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze the teaching of Religious Education in Zambian secondary schools, specifically in Lusaka district of Zambia.

1.4. Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

- Analyze the effects of Religious Education on learners in selected secondary schools of Lusaka district in Zambia.
- Establish possible ways of improving the behavior of learners through the teaching and learning of Religious Education in selected secondary schools of Lusaka district in Zambia.

1.5. Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Cognitive Learning Theory. Cognitive Learning Theory is about understanding how the human mind works while people learn. The theory focuses on how information is processed by the brain, and how learning occurs through that internal processing of information (Mayer, 1998). It is based on the idea that people mentally process the information they receive, rather than simply responding to stimuli from their environment. The Cognitive Learning Theory is a broad theory used to explain mental processes and how they are influenced by both internal and external factors in order to produce learning in an individual. The theory is credited to Educational psychologist Jean Piaget (1936, 1950). He believed knowledge is something that is actively constructed by learners based on their existing cognitive structures. The study used the Cognitive learning theory because the main focus was to analyze the effects of Religious Education on learners in selected secondary schools of Lusaka district.

1.6. Significance of the Study

It is hoped that the findings of this study would be of great significance to the Zambian secondary schools and the rest of society. It would also bring to light the effects of Religious Education on the learners in secondary schools. The discovery of this study would be of great help to both teachers and school administrations to identify the solutions needed for the root causes of moral decadence in their domain. For this reason, it might be good to encourage giving increasing recognition to this subject. The findings of the study would also give the Ministry of Education an insight to begin monitoring textbooks that are being written so that the Bible-to-life approach is followed. Furthermore, the findings of this study would provide useful insight for teachers of RE to recognize the loopholes in the subject and see how best the subject can be taught to gain desired results among learners in secondary schools.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Study Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The design aims at describing the state of affairs as they exist. A descriptive survey is a process of collecting data in order to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject. Due to the nature of this study, a mixed-methods approach which is a combination of both the qualitative and quantitative research paradigms was also adopted. The use of two methodologies was found to enhance research findings by providing a well-rounded understanding of the phenomenon under study. The mixed methods approach allowed the study to not only ensure the validity of the findings but also collect rich information from different perspectives. This mixed methods approach was used because it enabled the study to collect both quantified and personal verbatim which was of good help in furthering understanding of responses from the intended respondents.

2.2. Research Site

This study was conducted in Lusaka district, the capital city of Zambia.

2.3. Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure

The population for the study comprised head teachers, RE teachers, and learners of RE from the selected schools. The target population was 1200. The sample size involved a total of 120 respondents which included five (5) head teachers, one (1) from each selected school. ten (10) RE teachers, two (2) from each selected school. One hundred-five (105) learners of RE, twenty-one (21) from each selected school. The study used both purposive and simple random sampling on different participants. Simple random sampling was used on the learners of RE, this is because there were too many to participate, hence simple random selection was preferred. On the other hand, purposive sampling was used on the head teachers and RE teachers for convenience purposes.

2.4. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed qualitatively as the semi-structured interview schedules were used as data collection instruments. A thematic approach was used where data analysis started with the categorization of themes from the semi-structured interview schedules. The data gathered was analyzed according to the themes of the study and the order of the research objectives. Data generated from the questionnaires were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 26) and Microsoft Excel (version 16) to come up with frequency tables, pie charts, and bar graphs.

2.5. Ethical Issues

Permission from the District Education Board for Lusaka district was sought in carrying out this study. Interviews were not conducted on a one-to-one basis; instead, participants were grouped and identified using their titles. Informed consent was sought from the respondents before collecting information from them and guaranteed them with security of the information they provided. Furthermore, the main objective of gathering such information was made clear to the respondents. The study avoided pressuring respondents to take part in the research. In this research, the study was fully conscious of the need to abide by the ethical rule of respecting the privacy of individuals taking part in the research. In the same way, all the respondents of the research were

to remain unidentified to the public as all their valuable views, opinions, and perceptions were only known by the researcher for use only in the research, and participant's identities will forever remain hidden.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following findings and discussions were presented according to set research objectives:

3.1. Effects of Religious Education on Learners

Table 1: Responses from the Learners on the Effects of Religious Education

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Learners develop a positive self-image	34	22.7%
Personal maturity	40	26.7%
Awareness of moral choices	48	32%
Gives broader perceptive of how to view other Religion	20	13.3%
It covers everything, social life inclusive	8	5.3%
Total	150	100

Figure 1 below shows that most of the learners represented by (30%) said that R.E. makes them aware of moral choices, while 20% of them were of the view that personal maturity is one of the effects of Religious education on pupils' behavior. The other (25%) of the respondents indicated that R.E makes learners develop a positive self-image, (15%) of the respondents said that Religious education has made some learners honest (truthful) in their lives, while the other (10%) said that pupils have a positive interaction with other people (Social life inclusive). According to Gatumu (2013), R.E is the critical initiation of learners into the religious dimension of reality. By its nature, education implies the transmission of ideals which society considers important and desirable. Overall, R.E is meant to contribute to social knowledge and understanding. It can therefore help pupils understand how religion relates to society. RE also contributes to historical knowledge and understanding. For example, pupils can learn about the influence of Christianity on Zambian life. Finally, RE can contribute to the moral well-being of human beings. In the 1996 education policy, R.E has space because it contributes to the holistic education of the learner (MoE, 1996). Education is thus seen to be a process of inducting young members of society into the culture, norms, and habits of the society. The young are taught the values and virtues of the society. Education philosophers in the classical world regarded education as having the responsibility of promoting acceptable behavior. They saw education as having the role of transmitting desirable knowledge, skills, and ideals (Armon, 2014). Durkheim (2016) regarded education as having a vital role in the process of socialization. He argued that people are not born human in a social sense but it is through education that they are made human. What is worth noting from the views above is that R.E is part of education and a powerful tool for transmitting morals and acceptable behavior. The existence of RE is, therefore, not only a reflection of the inherent interest of its subject matter but of the work of dedicated and professional teachers as well as faith communities who have stood by the subject. In this sense, RE assists learners to develop a positive self-image, personal maturity, awareness of moral choices, and socialize with other people (Kanyimba, 2016).

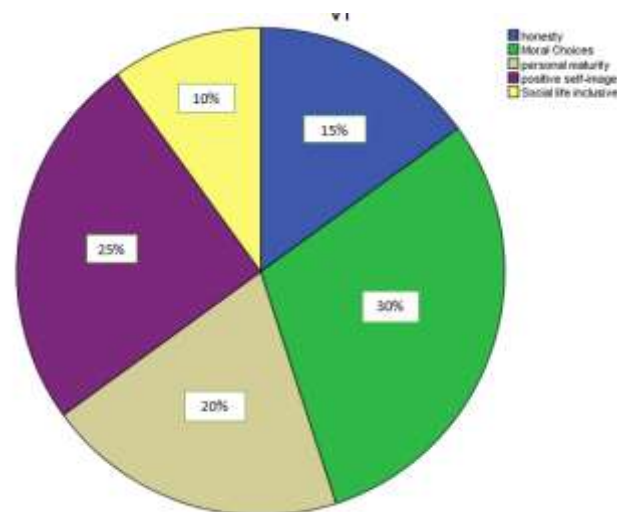


Figure 1: Effects of Religious Education on Learners' Behavior

In the questionnaire, learners were asked to indicate how Religious Education has changed their behavior. The majority of them, 66 (44%) said that they have developed an attitude of sharing, followed by 42 (28%) who said they are now able to obey not only teachers but also their parents, 33 pupils represented by (22%) said they have self-control while 9 (6%) of the pupils said that they are truthful (Honesty) as a result of learning Religious education. The respondent's responses are shown in Figure 2 below.

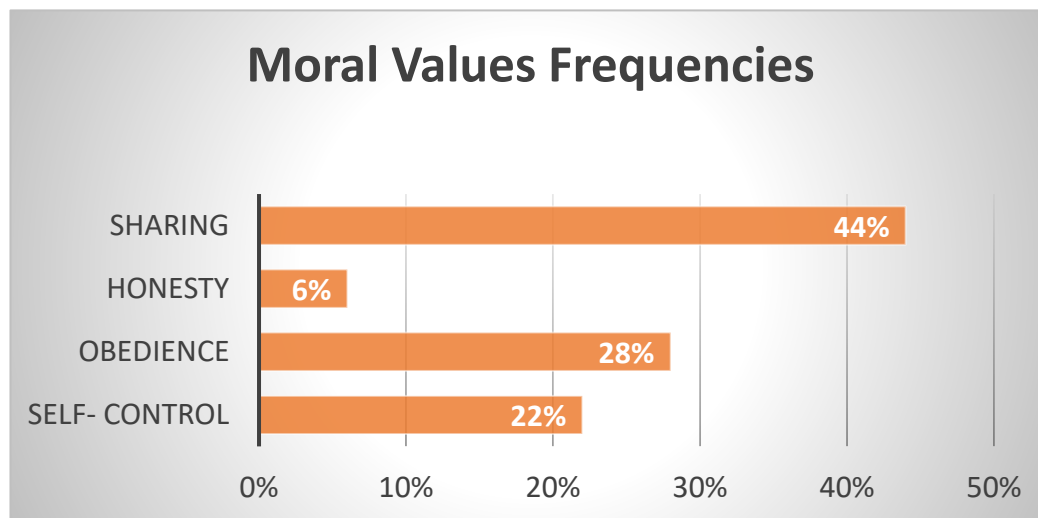


Figure 2: Moral Values Frequencies

Table 2: Responses from the Head Teachers on the Effects of Religious Education on Learners

Respect for	HEAD TEACHER – A/B	HEAD TEACHER- C/D	HEAD TEACHER- E
Administrators	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teachers	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prefects	Yes	No answer	Yes
Visitors	Yes	Yes	Yes
For each other	Yes	No answer	Yes
Other Behavior in School			
Drinking	Yes	No	No
Insulting	Yes	No	No
Stealing	No	No	No

Head teachers were asked if pupils, while at school, exhibited behavior that intimated moral underdevelopment in them. The table displayed behaviors that RE pupils were involved in while at school as mentioned by the five head teachers A, B, C, D and E. As for the interviewed Head teachers, the majority noted that RE was good because it offered useful information on developing respect for other people and prevented the learners from engaging themselves in bad vices such as stealing, drinking alcohol, and insulting. This was so because right from grade 8, there were topics taught about right and wrong conduct. They considered this element as one that could potentially change the mindset of learners with social disorders though this was also dependent on their openness to abide by what they were taught. Head teachers A/B further explained that RE helped children develop and reflect upon their values and capacity for moral judgment in the face of prevalent moral issues such as abortion, child abuse, defilement, drug abuse, prostitution, child labor, plastic surgery, racism, suicide, corruption, and murder. The school must be aware that physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual characteristics are important in the teaching-learning process of RE because a person develops as a functional whole. Henze (2020) rightly asserts that the most decisive reason for RE in Zambian schools is to meet the holistic needs of pupils: physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. If any of these areas are neglected, then RE is unbalanced and defective.

According to the educational policy (MoE 1996), the overarching aim of any school education is to promote the full and well-rounded development of the physical, intellectual, social, affective, moral, and spiritual qualities of all students so that each can develop into a complete person for his/her own personal fulfillment and the good of society. Mcphail (2012) affirms that proper RE is one that covers the above-mentioned dimensions. These need to be fostered so that pupils' growth is full and balanced. In this way, education will affect students thoroughly and not just academically at the surface layer of their brains. Physically pupils feel that they are no longer children, but they have not yet become adults. They are ready to learn but must be guided to make the right decisions and choices as long as these choices are not produced by manipulation (Sulayman 2012). Therefore, RE teachers

should understand and recognize the growth and internal changes taking place in pupils at this stage. Though, at times, pupils feel they are grown up physically, they may not yet be emotionally mature. As a result, they need guidance in learning how to control and take care of their bodies and may need to be encouraged to get proper rest, sleep, and exercise to prepare for better learning. As far as mental development is concerned, Weiner & Lakin (2012) assert that learners are individuals who have the right to think on their own and express themselves freely. They need to be challenged to think for themselves rather than to be indoctrinated with the teacher's religious views and values, which they are to accept unquestioningly. The Ministry of Education advocates that through RE, "Pupils must develop intellectual skills and qualities such as reflective reasoning, logical thinking, ability to concentrate, attention to detail, and objectivity in the appraisal of evidence".

3.2. Possible Ways of Improving the Behavior of Learners through the Teaching and Learning of RE

Table 3: Responses on Possible Ways of Improving the Behavior of Learners through the Teaching and Learning of RE

RE Teaching Methods	Frequency	Percentage (100%)
Proverbs and Folktales	2	33%
Story-telling	2	33%
Research Project	1	17%
Role Playing	1	17%
Other (Specify) _____	-	-
Total	6	100%

As outlined in Table 3, there are some teaching methods that can shape the behavior of a learner in a certain way these include; Proverbs and Folktales, story-telling, Research projects, and role playing. In African tradition, proverbs and folktales are very important methods used by older people to transmit or communicate knowledge, attitudes, values and beliefs to young people. A lesson was given about a special occasion or experience through a proverb or folktale. Any incident in life, for example, the encountering of a lion or some other fearsome animal during a walk in the bush was turned into a lesson and resulted in telling a proverb or a folktale. The learner did not easily forget the lesson given in this way. In multi-religious education, this method may be beneficial to some learners who come from an African traditional religious background (Njobvu, 2015). Therefore, using this kind of method enhances the effective learning of religious issues by Zambian pupils as it makes use of the pupils' known context.

Table 4: Learners' Assessment of Teachers Teaching R.E Using Various Teaching Methods

How does your teacher teach Religious Education?	Frequency	Percentage
Very well	70	46.7%
At times goes out of topic	4	2.7%
Using the Bible and other materials related to the subject	45	30%
Teaching using the textbook	25	16.7%
Lacks confidence	1	0.7%
No response	5	3.2%
Total	150	100%

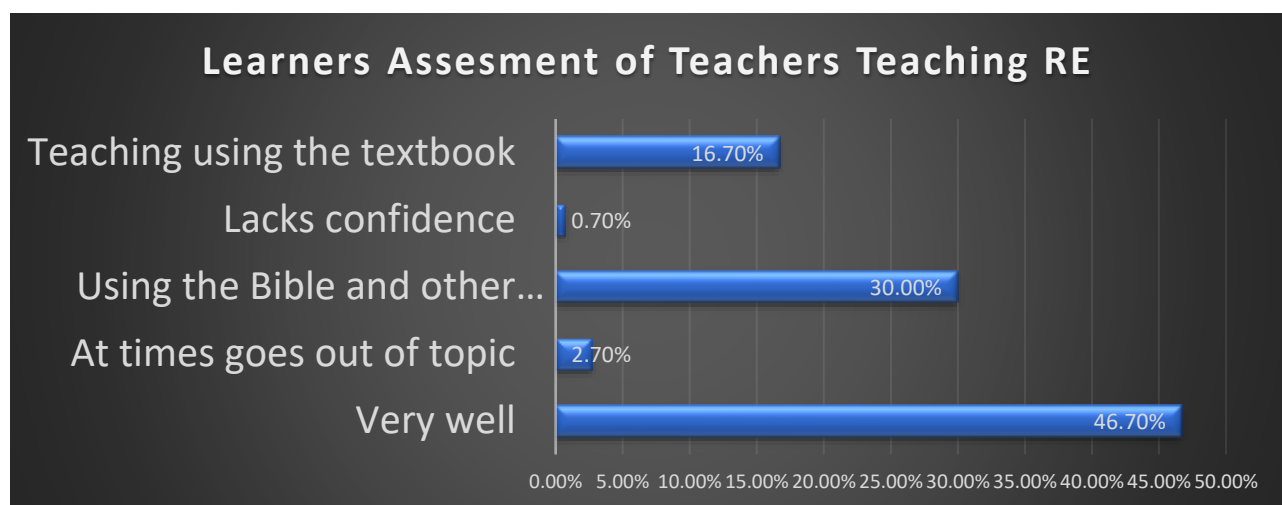


Figure 3: Learners' Assessment of Teachers Teaching RE

Mutisya (2013) says that RE should promote the personal and social development of learners. Therefore, RE teachers must help pupils develop openness to and respect for, the diversity of beliefs in the classroom. Learners must be encouraged to engage in *Insaka* (Bemba word for dialogue) with pupils from other religious groups in class. This dialogue will enable them to appreciate what pupils in other religions believe and practice. However, *Insaka* will only work if there is mutual openness and a desire for understanding among different religious groups. RE teachers need to understand this and operate in the light of the dynamics of today's Zambian multi-religious society. It is important for teachers to understand that RE should look beyond one particular religion and prepare pupils to think of themselves as part of a multireligious society. This will help learners to strive for dialogue with fellow pupils from other religious groups. RE helps to communicate religious information to pupils from diverse religious groups. Leslie (2011) states that the story-telling method is important because it influences a learner's attitude and values, outlook, beliefs, and conduct. Claims have frequently been made for the way literature sharpens a reader's critical intelligence and refines his/her sensibilities while Role-playing is the unrehearsed, dramatic enactment of a human conflict situation by two or more persons for the purpose of analysis by the group another method which can be used by the teacher to shape the behavior of learners.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the study came up with the following conclusion with regards to the effect of Religious Education on the learners. The findings indicated that the effect of Religious Education prepares learners to be morally upright and influences them to fear God and respect fellow human beings. Additionally, corruption, injustice, and unfair treatment of the poor in society give learners the practical ability to discriminate between right and wrong and to choose what is right in day-to-day life. Religious Education has the backbone of moral values. With this regard, schools need to stimulate moral growth and encourage moral development in the learners. This is as important as having learners develop in other aspects of learning. Furthermore, the findings showed that there is a significant difference in teachers' ratings on the frequency of disciplinary cases between schools that teach Religious Education and those that do not teach the subject, the rate being higher in schools where Religious Education is not taught.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are actions that should be taken on the basis of the findings of this study:

- The Ministry of Education and other relevant authorities should treat Religious Education like any other academic subject, considering it in selection for Higher Education and sensitizing secondary schools to include it in subject combinations.
- Religious Education should be taught in all secondary schools and Zambia at large due to its power to reduce the frequency of disciplinary cases in schools.
- The tertiary institutions such as Teacher Training Colleges/Universities offering RE training in Zambia revise their RE curriculum to make it more relevant to a Christian tradition.
- The Ministry of Education should recruit more RE teachers and make the syllabus friendly to learners.

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