

Possible Effects of Religious Education on Youth Character Formation: A Critique on the Integrated Revised Primary Religious Education Syllabi (1991)

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the text of this dissertation entitled: POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ON YOUTH CHARACTER FORMATION: A CRITIQUE ON THE INTEGRATED REVISED PRIMARY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SYLLABI (1991) is my original work and has not been presented for any other award.

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Certificate of Approval

We certify that we have read this dissertation by **Joseph Mwatsika** and find it satisfactory as a basis for the award of the Degree of Masters of Arts in Theology and Religious Studies.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to our beloved children, Makusa, Alinafe and my wife Batrete.

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Abstract

In the context that Government and Religions present conflicting view points in terms of what government, students, religions and parents want from Religious Education, a re-examination of the role of Religious Education in character formation of the youth is imperative. Although there are many individuals and some religious groups who understand the purpose of Religious Education in youth character formation, it is clear that the subject remains controversial.

The major aim of the thesis is to assess possible effects of Religious Education on the character of the youth who have studied the subject for eight years, from standard one to eight at two demonstration primary schools and two mission primary schools.

Indeed, the study sets out to find out how far pupils have imbibed virtues which constitute a person of character. In addition, it investigates the factors that influence character formation in Religious Education programmes. Lastly, it is to make suggestions on how to improve on the situation.

The study presents a critique on the Revised Integrated Primary Religious Education Syllabi (1991) which had been on the curriculum for ten years by the time the study began. The critique dwells on the development of the content based on different definitions. It has been observed that there are different definitions used, implying different approaches. However, the consequences of using many definitions in developing the syllabi are that, difficulties arise on how to choose an approach of teaching Religious Education which is related to the definitions. At the same time, if different approaches are combined, danger arises again where in-depth exploration of either content is not fully done. Other areas that

present deficiency in the 1991 Religious Education syllabus are the divergent lines of thought. There was great emphasis on diverse ideas among different religions, which created unrealistic belief that religions are very different from each other. Also, the moral values were not fully explored and the value of piety was not emphasized. Lastly, most of the lessons were theoretical and the use of participant observation in inculcating moral values and attitudes was not used.

The research confirmed that vital virtues such as justice, temperance, compassion, courage, wisdom and piety are not emphasized in the 1991 Religious Education syllabus hence the youth are not oriented to these virtues, making them liable to under performance in areas of behaviour. The study shows that the youth who participate in traditional rites of passage and those who go to religious primary schools have higher performance in their moral judgment compared with those who go to public schools

In this study, exploration has been made on how to use Religious Education to help the youth to develop positive attitudes to God, their own life and the people around them. The formation of positive attitudes precisely means formation of virtues which is synonymous with goodness. A person of virtue is a person of character or *uMunthu*.

Attention has also been given to methodologies. In recognition of the importance of forming the character of the youth, I strongly recommend that Religious Education programmes must explicitly include practical involvement of the youth. The Religious Education should not only be theoretical but also participatory. The youth must be involved in real life situations such as traditional rites of passage or charity works. Through this approach youth will be able to imbibe virtues of justice, wisdom, temperance, compassion, courage and piety that constitute a person of character.

The findings of this study conclude that Religious Education suffers problems which affect its success in forming the character of the youth. It shows that the youth lack convictions in life. Suggestions have been made in this study to curb the situation such as the use of an accompagnetor, the use of Malawian traditional means of forming the character of the youth, the use of participant observation in rites of passage and charity works and above all, the use of grace or piety. This approach will help the Religious Education to be both a theoretical and a participatory subject. It is through participation that virtues are imbibed, hence the formation of character.

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Abbreviations

AMECEA	Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa
ATR	African Traditional Religions
CT	Catechesis Tradendae
GCD	General Directory for Catechesis
GTZ	German Technical Corporation
MIE	Malawi Institute of Education
MTR	Malawian Traditional Religions
PCAR	Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform
PEA	Primary Education Advisor
RE	Religious Education

Chapter One:

Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Conflicting views surrounding Religious Education subject necessitate a re-examination of the role of the Religious Education syllabus. This re-examination pays special attention to the role of the Integrated Revised Primary Religious Education¹ on youth character formation. The assumption being made is that Religious Education contributes to youth character formation. But does the current RE syllabus really form the character of the youth? Throughout the history of education in Malawi, Religious Education has been featured prominently as a controversial subject. Currently it still remains a controversial subject. For instance, of late during PCAR (Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform), there has been a debate on whether the subject:

- should be taught as an extra-curricular activity, or
- should be taught by an outsider and not a class teacher, or
- should just be part of social and environmental studies or
- should just be removed from the primary school curriculum.

These developments clearly show that there is inadequate understanding about this subject in terms of what it contributes to the actual child's development. However, parents have a general belief that the character of the youth has gone down in the past ten years, and the same parents actually suggest that Religious Education should be used to inculcate moral virtues in the youth. It is these developments, which prompted the researcher to carry out this study.

1.2 Clarification of Basic Concepts: Religious Education, Catechesis, Religious Instruction

It is important that similarities and differences are clearly seen. Even the General Directory for Catechesis (GCD)² interchanges the meaning of these concepts, especially Religious Education and Catechesis, in the translations. It has been observed that failure to separate Religious Education from Catechesis is the base of controversy and suspicion. At the same time, it should be recognized that there are lines of convergence, which is indicative of some healthy development. Several other related concepts like Religious Studies, Kerygma, Religious Instruction, Bible Knowledge, are important and deserve equal attention. However, for the purpose of this study, only the three, namely Catechesis, Religious Education and Religious Instruction will be critically explored so as to establish the lines of convergence and difference. This knowledge will assist in the clarification of their similarities and differences in terms of their aims and objectives.

1.2.1 Religious Education

Religious Education has been described by Michael Grimmitt as a subject, "which seeks to create in pupils certain capacities to understand and think about religion as a unique mode of thought and awareness. It takes as its starting-point the child's own existential experiences and it attempts to help children to build conceptual bridges between these and what they recognize

¹ An Integrated Revised Primary Religious Education is a curriculum which has been in use in Malawi from 1991 to date. It is called integrated because it has incorporated the major religions in the country, namely Islam, Christianity and Malawian Traditional Religions.

² The General Catechetical Directory was approved by Pope John Paul VI on 18 March 1971 and promulgated on 11 April 1971. Since 1971, the General Catechetical Directory has oriented the particular churches in their renewal of catechesis and has acted as a point of reference for content and pedagogy as well as for methodology. www.Vatican.va/roman-curia/congregations/ccclergy/documents.

to be central concepts of religion—as presented in and through six inter-related and inter-dependent dimensions (i.e. experiential, mythological, ritual, social, ethical and doctrinal)."³

David Mphande made use of some of Grimmitt's items in the definition of Religious Education when he states that, "it is the steady continuous process of leading children to their progressive discovery of God, within and around them so that they can make out their own individual attitudes to God, to life, and people."⁴ Both scholars (Mphande and Grimmitt) emphasize the need of developing Religious Education in content and method related to anthropology. They both agree that a human being is born and lives among people of different social, religious and political backgrounds, which means that a human being of today is living in a pluralist society. Therefore, a child must respect God, and be able to live in harmony with himself/herself and other people. At the same time, Religious Education has been advocated as an educational activity. Those who hold this opinion have the view that the nature of the subject should be determined by its educational characteristics. That is, the subject must have its roots in the philosophy and sociology of education and in the theories of curriculum development. In addition, the subject must help form the character of the youth, because by definition, the term education means guiding or training. For instance, the English word comes from the Latin *ducare* (and its cognate *ducere*), meaning “to lead” and the prefix *e*, meaning “out.” At its root meaning, then education is an activity of “leading out.” This emphasizes that the function of education is to lead and train or rear the people being educated, therefore, a religious educator should take the role of a midwife in the service of truth. The truth in education is the forming of character.

³ Michael Grimmitt, *What Can I Do in Religious Education?* Great Wakering: Mayhew-McCrimmon, 1973, p. xiii.

⁴ David K. Mphande (author), Roy J.R Hauya (ed), *Themes in Religious Education. A Handbook for Teacher Trainers*, Domasi: Malawi Institute of Education, 1992, p. 1.

Religious Education is a rich term. By its adjective it points to its specificity, and by its noun it retains its commonality with all education, an important bond to maintain. So often religious educators are greatly concerned about what takes place within our own religious communities but seem to show little concern for the quality of education taking place in the broader community and in the many public agencies that educate (schools, television, radio, newspapers, advertising and so on). This understanding that education is much broader than schooling, that good education needs to have a holistic approach to the total person—cognitive, affective, and behavioural—then naming our activity as education provides us a rich tradition with an enormous body of literature and research.⁵

1.2.2 What is Catechesis?

Catechesis is an education in the faith of children, young people and adults, which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life.⁶ The apostolic exhortation, *Catechesis Tradendae*,⁷ gives more information. It emphasizes that “at the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son from the Father ... who suffered and died for us and who now, after rising, is living with us forever.”⁸ To catechize is to reveal in the Person of Christ the whole of God’s eternal design reaching fulfilment in that person. It is to seek to understand the meaning of Christ’s actions and words and of the signs worked by him.⁹ Catechesis aims at putting people in communion with Jesus Christ. The Catechism of the Catholic Church emphatically states that, “in catechesis, Christ, the Incarnate Word and Son of God, is taught and everything else is

⁵ Craig R. Dykstra, *Vision and Character: A Christian Educator’s Alternative to Kohlberg*, New York: Paulist Press, 1981, p. 23.

⁶ Ninian Smart and Donald Horder (eds), *New Movements in Religious Education*. London: Temple Smith, 1978, p. 39.

⁷ John Paul II, *Catechesis Tradendae*. Apostolic Exhortation, October 16, 1979.

taught with reference to him and it is Christ alone who teaches ... anyone else teaches to the extent that he is Christ's spokesperson enabling Christ to teach with his lips."¹⁰ Therefore every catechist should be able to apply to himself the mysterious words of Jesus: 'my teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.'¹¹ That is the truth of Christ alone should be taught not one's own teaching.

1.2.3 What is Religious Instruction?

Religious Instruction stresses knowledge in relation to religion or initiation into a faith tradition.¹² From the earliest Christian time the writings of the Fathers of the Church¹³ from the desert formed a core of instructive works. The homilies of these early fathers were part of the armoury of the missionaries who carried Christianity across Europe and formed the basis for the patristic literature. There were works on how the religious life should be conducted. For instance, the Rule of St Benedict, written in Italy in the 6th century, was copied and recopied as it became the basis for the many variants of western monasticism. The rule is brief and concise, and strange to say, it still makes fascinating reading today. It gives prescriptions on the arrangements for sleeping, eating and meeting together. In addition, it gives provisions for celebrating the divine office. Another example is the 5th century Rule of St Augustine which was revived in the 12th century and adapted for use by the monastic communities involved in service rather than the pure worship of God in enclosed communities. There have been reforms on these rules. The various reforms of Benedictine monasticism over the centuries were accompanied by their own literature of reform. This became part of the ever

⁸ CT 5-9 and 38 also see GCD 98.

⁹ CT 6.

¹⁰ John 13:13 in Alexander Jones (ed), *The Jerusalem Bible*, London: Longman and Todd, 1974.

¹¹ John 7:16 in Alexander Jones (ed) *The Jerusalem Bible*, see also CT5-9, GCD 98 and Mk 10:1 in Alexander Jones (ed), *The Jerusalem Bible*.

¹² M. Wigfield, *Religious Education in Schools*, London: Blackie and Son, 1958, p. 1. Maccloud Frank Salanjira, *An Assessment of the Introduction and Reception of Religious and Moral Education in Malawi Secondary Schools*, MA, University of Malawi, July 2003, p. 19.

increasing body of instructive material. The reforms of the Cistercians, as expounded in the writings of St Bernard of Clairvaux, imposed simplicity and conformity. This literature was in Latin. On the one hand, this allowed scholars all over western Christendom to communicate, interact and be overseen by the hierarchical authority of the church organization. On the other hand, ordinary lay people were totally excluded from any process of debate. They did not read this literature. It was absorbed and digested by the clergy, and the concepts fed to them orally through the preaching and the lessons of this clergy. People had to be told. While the teachings of the Church were based on an ever increasing written literature, the lay practitioners of the religion learnt their faith in an illiterate mode. Paradoxically, the written word could be used both to spread and confine learning. This became a tradition, so much that even today religious instructions are characterized by preaching, homilies and debates for those who can read.

In educational terms Religious Instruction is described as religious indoctrination and as such not acceptable as a form of education proper that aims at giving pupils objective knowledge and understanding of the world and society in which they live, and equip them with values, skills and attitudes that will make them valuable and acceptable members of their society. Religious Instruction involves teaching of dogmas of one religion as if they were facts not with the intention of fostering critical thinking in the learners but leading the learners to acceptance of dogmas and personal commitment to a particular faith tradition.¹⁴

¹³ <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/>.

¹⁴ Macloud Frank Salanjira, *An Assessment of the Introduction and Reception of Religious and Moral Education in Malawi Secondary Schools*, MA, University of Malawi, July 2003.

1.3 What is Catechesis in Relation to Religious Education and Religious Instruction?

Religious Education, theologically conceived, has a complex and intimate relationship with both catechesis and Religious Instruction. They are related, "for they are concerned with life and life's communication."¹⁵ Lawrence O. Richards emphasizes that "there is no intrinsic difference between how one educates and how one catechizes. The specific content of the message may differ, but the medium through which the transmission of the message is facilitated is the same."¹⁶ However, as much as we appreciate the relationship between Religious Education and other approaches, that is, catechesis or Religious Instruction, we don't deny the fact that Religious Education is neither catechesis nor Christian Education, for there is a difference in degree of some kind. The difference is more in the aims and settings than in attitude. This was confirmed by a practical survey I conducted with Religious Education teachers of Lilongwe Demonstration School and Kasungu Demonstration School. The following were their understanding of the differences and similarities of Religious Education and Sunday school. Basically, Sunday school aims at converting the children 'or deepening their commitment to the true faith,' whereas Religious Education in broad terms aims at arousing a sense of appreciation of the religious values and the behaviours that flow from them, many other considerations flow from the aims.

For instance, in response to the question what difference Religious Education teachers see between Religious Education and Sunday school or catechesis, the following aims were given:

"Sunday school content is based on the one revealed truth, whereas Religious Education has various interpretations."

This means that the former is exclusive and the latter is inclusive in terms of membership.

¹⁵ Lawrence O. Richards, *A Theology of Christian Education*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975, p. 55.

¹⁶ Ibid. p.56.

"Sunday school is Christian and denominational whereas Religious Education has multi-faith dimensional or non-denominational approaches."

"Sunday school is given by an official representative of the denomination, whereas Religious Education is given by a trained teacher."

It was also mentioned that, by acceptance of and obedience to church regulations, Sunday school/catechesis leads to conviction. Religious Education however, by critical comparison, leads to personal maturity which overcomes prejudice and shows tolerance.

And many teachers agreed that prejudice elimination and tolerance are some of the strong indicators of character development.

This classification clearly shows that Religious Education is not catechesis (Sunday school) and is not Religious Instruction and of course, it is not Bible Knowledge. However, we don't deny the fact that catechesis is education of faith or faith oriented . This is a concept developed in recent years by the French Catechetical Movement: *l'éducation de la foi*, which brings us to some understanding that despite the differences, there are lines of convergence between Religious Education and Catechesis in the modern approach. In French speaking countries in general *l'éducation religieuse* is simply another term for *la catéchèse*. Hermer. Ringgren puts it very well that the essential elements of religion are, intellectual, emotional and behavioural."¹⁷ Hence Religious Education and catechesis would fall within the sphere of the education of the emotions, intellect and behaviour and therefore of moral education or character formation.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

Religious Education is a behavioural subject offered at Primary Schools in Malawi, which is supposed to guide the youth to develop their virtues. These virtues help the youth to develop

¹⁷ Hermer Ringgren, *Religions of Mankind: Today and Yesterday*, London: Oliver and Boyd, 1967, p. xviii.

into persons of character. The major focus of this study is to measure some of these virtues, which were supposed to be in pupils who have undergone Religious Education lessons. In other words, to investigate if their character has developed after studying the Religious Education for eight years in primary schools.

1.5 Aim of the Research

The main aim of this research is to investigate and understand the effects of Religious Education on Youth Character Formation.

1.6 Specific Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To measure how much pupils have imbibed virtues of justice, wisdom, temperance, compassion, courage and piety, which constitute a person of character.
2. To investigate the factors that influence character formation in our Religious Education programmes.
3. To investigate the factors which hinder the youth from attaining high moral standards through the study of Religious Education.
4. To make suggestions on how to rectify and improve the situation.

1.7 Research Questions

The following research questions were used to investigate the effects of Religious Education on youth character formation:

1. What are the policies governing the teaching and learning of Religious Education?
2. What are the pedagogical factors which militate against the children's attainment of moral virtues?
3. Are teachers adequately trained for helping pupils in character formation?

4. What are the social-anthropological factors which could be used in Religious Education lessons to influence pupils' character development?
5. Is there any room for Traditional Informal Education in the syllabus?

1.8 Significance to the Study

The study is significant in a number of ways. For the past ten years, the question of having highly disciplined youth with high moral standards in Malawi has not been addressed due to the newly introduced human rights education which was understood as freedom of expression, which in some quarters meant freedom of behaviour. This, in actual sense, is understood as to leave the youth free from adult interference. It is hoped that the study will achieve the following goals:

1. Supplement the existing literature on the education of Malawian youth in character formation. This is of particular importance given the little attention accorded to character formation in the new dispensation.
2. Assist relevant authorities to review their policies regarding the use of Religious Education in character formation.
3. Stimulate further research in the area of youth character formation. At present the emphasis on character formation is very scanty and focus is on religious awareness.

1.9 Overview of the Thesis

Chapter one gives an introduction to the thesis. It looks at the problem statement. This contains the need for the research project, which is followed by more detailed set of objectives. The research objectives address the purpose of the project. The chapter creates a background, which acts as a justification for the thesis. This chapter helps us to establish the

real meaning of Religious Education, which separates itself from the other theological concepts such as Catechesis or Sunday school.

Chapter two gives the literature review. Exploration is made of the literature in Malawi on the concept. The aim is to present the fundamental elements of the concept of character formation. Here a look at what has been written on the subject is necessary, and the strengths and weaknesses, which have led me to do the study, will be explored. Also, the contribution of different scholars to the formulation of the Primary Religious Education curriculum will be discussed.

Chapter three discusses methodological issues. The following are discussed:

1. Sampling design: the researcher explicitly defines the target population being studied and the sampling methods used. Explanations of the sampling methods and uniqueness of the chosen parameters are covered briefly.
2. Research design, data collection and analysis are discussed. Also, coverage of the design is explained. In addition, a description of the specifics of gathering the data is given. Furthermore, the methods used to analyze the data are highlighted. The chapter also includes a discussion on the relevance of secondary data that guided these decisions.

Chapter four discusses the findings from the research. This is the main section of the thesis. The objective is to explain the data rather than draw interpretations or conclusions. The quantitative data is presented as simply as possible. Consideration was made to show findings not in favour of my hypothesis as well as those that support it. Here analysis of field research is demonstrated.

Chapter five discusses the two syllabi that is, the Common Primary Religious Education syllabus (1981) and the Revised Integrated Primary Religious Education syllabus (1991). It gives the challenges the 1981 syllabus had that necessitated the inception of the 1991 syllabus. The Chapter concludes with a question whether the curriculum assisted the youth to imbibe virtues which constitute a person of character which will be explored in chapter six.

Chapter six presents a critique on the Revised Integrated Primary Religious Education syllabus. A considerable amount of time is spent on the aims and objectives, content and value formation which would translate into character formation. The chapter tries to unveil some pedagogical and scope shortfalls which impinge on character formation of the children. Chapter six draws a new vision and mission for Religious Education in Malawian primary

schools. With a change in the understanding and interpretation of Religious Education, a new vision is required; this goes together with the question of being a man or youth of character in Malawi using Religious Education. In this Chapter some considerable time is spent on the impact of traditional customs and culture in relation to Malawian values and those of the revealed religions such as Christianity and Islam.

Chapter seven discusses the role of Religious Education in character formation of a child. It also discusses what it means for a person to be called a person of character. The role of a religious educator in character formation is highlighted. Since every society has a character, and the character of a society forms the character of its members, the chapter extensively and explicitly explores the moral values of Malawian society.

Chapter eight discusses some of the new developments in Religious Education Curriculum Development. It outlines the position of Religious Education in the Primary School Curriculum with special reference to the Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform (PCAR). Emphasis is on whether PCAR has tried to address the problem of character development in the youth using the Religious Education lessons. The thesis concludes in chapter eight with some critical remarks on the existing syllabuses of Religious Education. The critique dwells on the lack of emphasis on character formation in Religious Education lessons, which instead concentrate on religious awareness. This part highlights the importance of training the youth in character. Suggestions on a way forward are also made. The recommendations are further study suggestions that broaden the subject area. At the same time, the recommendations demand action by various stakeholders in the field of behavioural change. The researcher also offers several alternatives with justifications.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

There has been a rich and constant stream of work in the field of Religious Education. In addition, there has been, also a rich volume of work devoted to the field of character formation of children. However, the shortfall was to have an integrated discussion on the two fields. The writer consulted the works of both fields to achieve their integration.

Firstly, the Dictionary of Religious Education gives two conceptions of the nature of Religious Education. The two conceptions are Religious Education as a religious activity and Religious Education as an educational activity. Religious Education as a religious activity (1944-1960) means a process of teaching and learning by means of which religions have sought transmission of their values and self-perpetuation. This would always be specific to a particular religion,¹⁸ and we may speak of a Jewish Religious Education or a Christian Religious Education. This conception of Religious Education as essentially a religious activity has led to the exclusion of religion from the curriculum in the state or public educational systems of many countries (i.e. India, France and USA).¹⁹ Where it was maintained, i.e. Ireland, Western Germany or Australia, the whole education was conceived as a religious activity. Also, there was a popular arrangement whereby Religious Education was imparted by accredited representatives of the religion or religions in question to their adherents.²⁰ The change to an educational activity came in so that the subject was justified on educational grounds rather than on theological grounds.

Those who advocate Religious Education as an educational activity have a view that the nature of the subject should be determined by its educational characteristics. Under the

¹⁸ J.M. Sutcliffe, *Dictionary of Religious Education*, SCM Press, 1984, p. 286.

¹⁹ Ibid.

influence of writers such as Edwin Cox, J.W.D. Smith and Ninian Smart,²¹ the idea started achieving real prominence. It is worth to note that the Birmingham Agreed Syllabus (1975) was the first new official syllabus in which the religious nature of RE was explicitly replaced by a self-conscious and articulated educational understanding. That is, the subject has its roots in the philosophy and sociology of education and in the theories of curriculum development.

These conceptions influenced the Malawian religious education syllabi. During the period between the 1970s and early 1980s, many newly independent countries, including Malawi, started developing Religious Education as a religious activity and different expressions were used to indicate that Religious Education is a religious activity. Some of the expressions included catechesis, Christian nurture or religious upbringing and Bible knowledge. It is not surprising that during this period three syllabi came into use in Malawi namely, the Common Primary Religious Education syllabus (1981), the Junior Certificate Examination Bible Knowledge syllabus (1982) and the Malawi School Certificate Examination Bible Knowledge syllabus (1982). In this study I shall look at the common Religious Education syllabus and analyze its content and methodology. Secondly, Frank Macloud Salanjira has analyzed these syllabi and has made the following observations: First, the aims and objectives show that they are all based on the teaching of the scripture of one religion or faith, namely Christianity,²² so that the underlying motivation is promotion of knowledge and understanding of Christianity only.²³ He further indicates that such type of teaching is difficult to justify on educational grounds.²⁴ Salanjira has made a very true assessment. Malawi had to dance to the changing times of the 80s where Religious Education was developed and expressed as both a religious

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid. A subject is justified on educational grounds if it follows the philosophy, sociology and psychology of education. In addition the lesson pattern should not be different from any other subject on the curriculum.

and educational activity as this was more of a transitional period from understanding Religious Education as a religious activity to understanding it as an educational activity. In this study I will try to analyze the syllabi, to find out if they addressed issues of character development of the learner.

The approach to the teaching of the subject was different from any other in the school. First, the lesson pattern was different from any other subject in the curriculum. For instance, the Primary Common Religious Education syllabus (1981) lesson pattern had always the same main parts and it was different from the one used for other subjects. Instead of steps, the Religious Education lesson pattern used titles like message, attitude and response.²⁵ Furthermore, there were a lot of variations in approach. Thus, the teachers used a confessional or evangelical approach in teaching.²⁶ In other words, Catholics would teach it according to their faith and likewise the Protestants. As a result, teachers tended to preach to pupils instead of teaching them. The variations arose when it came to the use of the Bible to achieve the objective of evangelization. The prime objective of the evangelical Protestants was undoubtedly evangelization, teaching people the gospel of Christ and getting them to accept him as their saviour.

Thirdly, the works of Ninian Smart and Donald Holder Donald influenced the change from religious activity to educational activity by their contributions in different scholarly works in the late 1960s. So the emphasis changed from viewing Religious Education as a religious activity to viewing it as an educational activity, so that the nature of Religious Education was justified on educational grounds rather than on theological grounds. In order to advance the

²⁵ This explains why the Common Religious Education syllabus could not be justified as an educational activity but rather as religious activity.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 4.

argument, Ninian Smart developed the six inter-independent dimensions which constitute a religion.²⁷ These are:

Doctrinal Dimension: This means that a religion has a system of doctrines or beliefs by which its believers abide. These doctrines dictate the way of living of the believers.

Mythological Dimension: This means that religions have myths. These are stories about gods or religious heroes. Thus, a myth is a story set in the world of the gods for the purpose of expressing a profound truth about the world inhabited by human beings. Examples in Christianity are the stories about the Birth of Christ, Passion and Resurrection of Christ as a central myth, and the Ascension of Christ. Myths are very important in a child's moral education for they help form character.

Ethical Dimension: This dimension involves moral codes of conduct for believers. It involves beliefs and statements or views about what is good or bad.

Ritual Dimension: This dimension comprises Festivals and Celebrations connected with symbols. It involves methods and practices of worship which include: prayer; sacraments; sacrifices; rites of passage.

Social Dimension: This means that every religion with institutionalized churches or denominations can be run under an organization or sets of organization e.g. World Council of Churches, Christian Council of Malawi, Muslim Association in Malawi. These religious organizations meet at places of worship, they choose leaders to lead workshops or choose administrators of church organizations. Those chosen are expected to have good moral conduct, integrity and honesty. Also, members have been drawn together for a common

²⁷ Ninian Smart and Donald Horder (eds), *New Movements in Religious Education*, London: Temple Smith, 1978. p. 35.

purpose. What can be observed outside of any mosque or church is the sense of community and belonging. The congregation leave the service and then spend time talking, laughing together, chatting to the leader of the service. This again is part of the social and institutional aspect of nearly all faiths or religions. The benefits of being part of a close-knit community are well understood and measurable, in terms of rate of mental and physical illness.

Experiential Dimension: This dimension in religion involves unique experiences of the believers. Believers claim to have religious encounters at one time or another with a religious feeling. Later on Smart reached at eight dimensions including: political and economical dimension and Artistical/artefacts dimension.

Another contribution made by Smart is that the mixing up of the world through globalization has meant that people from different backgrounds are living together in what is called the global village. The aim of multi-faith Religious Education in such a global and pluralistic society should be to prepare pupils to understand the nature of religion, what it means to be a member of a religious tradition, and how religion affects the world and society in which we live.²⁸ David Mphande in his book *Themes in Religious Education*, observes that the contributions made by Smart and Donald can be related to the world of the primary school child in Malawi.²⁹ Thus during the period of the 1980s-90s, Malawi started reflecting on the integral formation of a human being through Religious Education.³⁰ A good example here is the sixth inter-church consultation on primary school Religious Education which took place at Grace Bandawe Conference Centre in Blantyre from 17 to 22 April 1989.³¹ It was at such

²⁸ Ninian Smart, *The World's Religions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 28.

²⁹ David Mphande, *Themes in Religious Education. A Handbook for Teacher Trainers*, p. 4.

³⁰ Integral formation of a human being means helping the child to develop as a whole, that is, cognitively, physically and affectively.

³¹ J.C. Chakanza, 'Sixth Inter-Church Consultation on Primary School Religious Education', *Religion in Malawi*, no. 2, . 1988, p.35. (I attended one of the conferences as a part-time post graduate student, at Malawi Institute of Education in 1995. It was a very rich and edifying consultative workshop. The organizer of this consultation was AMECEA whose secretariat is based in Nairobi, Kenya. The hosts in Malawi were jointly the

conferences that Malawi started adopting a multi-faith concept of Religious Education , which later found its expression in the Revised Integrated Religious Education Syllabus.

Jessica Olausson³² in 1997 analyzed the reasons that led to the inception of the integrated syllabus. As already discussed, the old Common Religious Education syllabus was implemented in 1982. According to Olausson, the dissatisfaction expressed with this syllabus was that: first, it was Bible-centred and the teachers used an evangelical or confessional approach in their teaching. Second, it did not include other major religions found in Malawi. Third, it did not include Malawian moral values. Finally, there was a lack of issues concerning everyday life, as it did not include all the aspects of the Malawian cultural heritage.³³ In this study I shall critically analyze the syllabus to find out if the learners' character formation was the center of the syllabus.

Fourthly Olausson analyzed the Revised Integrated Religious Education Syllabus which has been in use since 1991. To begin with, the syllabus includes Christianity, Islam and Malawian Traditional Religions (MTR).³⁴ This integrated syllabus was intended to promote

Episcopal Conference of Malawi, the Christian Council of Malawi, and the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, Chancellor College. According to D.K. Mphande, the pro-multi-faith movement of the 1980s finally led to the change of Religious Education starting from teacher training colleges where in 1987 a multi-faith Religious Education curriculum for the teacher training programme was launched. In 1991, primary school RE curriculum changed from single faith to multi-faith RE to be in line with the multi-faith RE curriculum in the teacher training colleges. Mphande also says that it was felt that Malawi was becoming a pluralistic society and as such other main religions represented in Malawi had to be incorporated. Contemporary moral issues had to form a good part of the curriculum. See Maccloud Frank Salanjira, *An Assessment of the Introduction and Reception of Religious and Moral Education in Malawi Secondary Schools*, MA, University of Malawi, July 2003, p. 48, who interviewed David Mphande, one of the senior curriculum specialists at Malawi Institute of Education, Domasi.

³² Jessica Olausson, *New Concepts of Religious Education in Malawi Primary Schools. A Look from Sweden*. MA, University of Linköping, 1997, p. 17.

³³ David Mphande; *Themes in Religious Education. A Handbook for Teacher Trainers*, Domasi: MIE, 1992. See also Jessica Olausson, *New Concepts of Religious Education in Malawi Primary Schools. A Look from Sweden*. MA, University of Linköping, 1997, p. 17.

³⁴ One of the problems of the common syllabus is that, since neither a Muslim nor Malawian Traditional Religionists were involved in the preparation of the syllabus, Muslim and Malawian Traditional Religious interests and ideas were not seriously tackled. Therefore, although the common syllabus was put in place to solve the problem of Confessional Religious Education, it failed to meet the objective in the schools. This necessitated the need for a revised Religious Education syllabus, which could include an informed and open-minded study of Malawian major religions, i.e. Christianity, Islam and Malawian Traditional Religion.

mutual respect, tolerance and harmony amongst the different religions. Such a syllabus has to have a contextualized approach, which would include Malawian moral values as well as the moral values of the other religions found in Malawi, not of Christianity alone.

This new approach to the teaching of Religious Education makes a special reference to the cognitive developmental stages of a child, which makes Religious Education to be relevant to any child at any stage of development. In this way the child is led to the progressive discovery of God, within and around him/her. The programme includes an informed and open-minded study of Malawi's major religions, i.e. Christianity, Islam and the Traditional Religions of Malawi. This makes the syllabus to be integrated. It assumes that a true understanding and knowledge of other beliefs and practices will promote mutual respect, tolerance and harmony amongst religious groups. It is also generally believed that through this integrated syllabus Religious Education is put into a wider educational context so that Religious Education can contribute, along with other subjects, to a better insight of knowledge which the children may need in order to understand what life is all about. This new approach assumes that Religious Education can play a special role in nation building by enabling people to overcome the barriers of religious prejudice and avoid bigotry and fanaticism. This implies that character formation for unity in any community comes with understanding of oneself, one another, accepting and respecting each other despite differences in views of religion and the world.

Of the aims in the current primary school curriculum (1991)³⁵ three major aims are specifically referred to in the Revised Religious Education Syllabus:

1. The aim is to assist pupils in the personal growth and development, mentally, spiritually and physically. A study of the religions of Malawi, i.e. how people have

found meaning and value in life, will assist pupils to come to a more mature answer to these questions for themselves.

2. The second major aim is to develop, in the pupil, a knowledge of the society in which he lives and an appreciation of and desire to transmit what is valuable in the Malawi cultural heritage. Religion is a living force in Malawi today which has a strong influence on people's way of life. Therefore, an understanding of the Malawi society should include an informed and open minded study of its major religions.
3. A third curriculum aim is to impart skills, values and attitudes which will enable the pupil to become a full valuable member of his society. Religious beliefs are some of the strongest motivating forces towards moral behaviour. It is recognized that ignorance and intolerance often go together. But a true understanding and knowledge of other people's beliefs and practices promotes mutual respect, tolerance and harmony between religious groups.

It is a general understanding that all the religions will be approached descriptively and with understanding and empathy such as will bring out the inner meaning of the faith. At the same time, the religious experiences will be presented in such a way that pupils can enter, to some extent, into an awareness of what it means to be a committed Christian or Muslim or Traditionalist.

The subject has Specific Objectives, which were agreed by the syllabus committee. These include that the pupils by the end of standard 8 should be able to:

1. develop an awareness of the Supreme Being
2. recognize their own religion and tradition;
3. develop their own belief system by searching and discovery;

³⁵ *Malawi Primary School Teaching Syllabus, The Revised Integrated Religious Education, Standard 1-8,*

4. distinguish the major religions found in Malawi;
5. demonstrate respect for people whose beliefs differ from theirs;
6. develop a spirit of tolerance and co-operation with the various religious groups;
7. apply religious and moral principles into positive actions which will help them build a harmonious nation.

The syllabus includes a great deal of interesting aspects. It is obvious that there are great expectations on the syllabus in Religious Education regarding the unity among the people of different faiths in Malawi. At the same time as the children are supposed to develop their own system of belief they should be able to recognize their own religion and traditions. In addition, the pupils are expected to demonstrate their personal character development by applying religious and moral principles into positive actions which will help them build a harmonious nation. As a conclusion, it may be stated that the main objective of offering Religious Education as a subject became religious awareness; to avoid prejudice, bigotry and fanaticism.³⁶ However, since the emphasis is very much on religious awareness, the fundamental characteristics of any educational activity, that is character development, was neglected. The wind of multi-partism in politics brought in the Human Rights ideology which was wrongly understood as meaning to let the youth behave according to their conscience or according to their choice, under the guise of freedom of expression. This is one of the main purpose of this study, to find out how much the Integrated Syllabus has helped the youth develop their character despite the introduction of Human Rights ideologies.

Then, various scholars have made their contributions to the pedagogical approach of the Religious education subject. The notable scholars are: David Mphande (1991), Michael Grimmitt (1973) and Ronald Goldman (1974).

Domasi: Malawi Institute of Education, 1991, p. xv.

³⁶ Ibid.

It is worth noting that the Religious Education syllabus (1991) follows a scope and sequence chart that is developed in a thematic approach. A theme is an idea that is developed in a series of lessons in order to give a deeper knowledge. Through this thematic approach, the real life experiences of the children are explored. As Goldman puts it, “Life themes relate religion to life by emphasizing the total unity of experience.”³⁷ This understanding agrees well with Mphande who states that “Life theme approach is the organization of learning content centered around the direct experiences of the child’s own life.”³⁸ Life experience then in the new programme is used “with an aim of trying to avoid a danger of separating life and religion.”³⁹ Chonzi, a lecturer and member of a religious education committee expressed the view that the new syllabus (Integrated Religious Education syllabus) is likely to be better on emphasizing the special relationship between religion and society than the old one. He regarded the syllabus as the servant of society. Both the society and the religions want better members and he thinks that Religious Education has the capacity to make better persons through stressing fairness, helping, and so forth.⁴⁰ Furthermore, in dealing with religious education the emphasis is not placed on instructing children in a particular faith or ideology with a view to securing their commitment, but on educating children for an understanding of all faiths and ideologies so that they develop a positive attitude towards religion. Thus, Mphande sees Religious Education, which comprises the three religions, not so much as indoctrinating a child with adult religious ideas but as helping the child to grow with religious awareness.⁴¹ Through this thematic approach the child understands religion as having six dimensions. These are Doctrinal, Mythological, Ethical, Ritual, Social and Experiential.⁴² For

³⁷ R. Goldman, *Readiness for Religion*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964, p. 110.

³⁸ David Mphande, *Themes in Religious Education, A Handbook for Teacher Trainers*, 1992, p.4.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Jessica Olausson, *New Concepts of Religious Education in Malawian Primary Schools; A Look from Sweden*, 1997. p. 18.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² See Jessica Olausson who expands Ninian Smart’s inter-independent dimensions.

instance, with themes like moral values, children learn about stories told in every religion that have something to do with ethical values such as, justice, temperance, wisdom, piety, kindness, love, and courage. This understanding makes us appreciate the inclusion of the three religions in the syllabus because children are able to acquire knowledge from many religions. And this inclusion of local religions (religions found in the child's locality) makes the approach community based that is; skills and learning experiences are likely to be useful to the child. This is character formation, because the child is going to understand the people he/she lives with and will be able to make informed choices when it comes to dealing with others.

Michael Grimmitt in his book *What can I do in Religious Education* contributed on the pedagogical use of the Themes.⁴³ He introduced "Depth Themes." These themes have the purpose of providing the child with a special skill to help them to explore, reflect and examine at a deeper level their own experiences or their own existence. Examples of these themes are:

⁴³ Michael Grimmitt, *What Can I Do in Religious Education?* 1973. Grimmitt with other scholars like Jean Holm and William Kay is among the leading scholars on Religious Education in England and Wales who supported the teaching of Religious Education in schools. They have documented the changes in the aims and scope of Religious Education from a confessional to a liberal approach in British schools starting from 1944, when the 1944 Education Act brought into being free secondary education for all children. According to this Act and as reaffirmed by the 1988 Education Reform Act, Religious Education is taught in state or public schools based on an agreed Religious Education syllabus. These are Religious Education syllabuses whose aims and scope are developed based on the agreement of the various faith communities found in an area within which a public school is located. This means there is no uniform Religious Education syllabus for all public schools in Britain. The Act requires that any agreed syllabus must reflect the fact that the religious traditions of Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teachings and practices of the other principal religious traditions represented in Britain. Grimmitt's argument is that there was something paradoxical about the position of Religious Education in the English educational system following the 1944 Educational Act. He noticed that RE was the only subject, which appeared in the curriculum by law, yet it was the worst taught subject. In addition, it was not accorded parity of esteem or status with other subjects. Rather, it was seen by pupils and teachers alike as an unfortunate but obligatory subject and as such was given the barest minimum time allocation. The main cause of this situation was the evangelical or confessional approach to the subject. Despite its attempt to include from other faith traditions in its study, the teaching still tended to take the form of indoctrination into the Christian faith. It was therefore a bid to free Religious Education from indoctrination that led to the movement supporting the teaching of religion on educational but not confessional grounds. Grimmitt has argued that the impetus for change in the teaching of religion in schools stems not simply from people's awareness of the failure of confessional Religious Education, but also from three aspects of change unique to the mid twentieth century. These are: theological change, educational change and social change. Together they have created a strong force, which has led to a remarkable shift in the field of Religious Education. See Mcloud Frank Salanjira: *An Assessment of the Introduction and Reception of Religious and Moral Education in Malawi Secondary Schools*, pp. 20-23; William Kay, "Presentation and Problem Inventory: Religious Education in Great Britain" in

“Love” or “Friendship.” According to Grimmitt, ‘Depth Themes’ promote disclosure of self, and disclosure of others, e.g. “Who am I?” “Why do I differ from other people?” The curriculum developers used some of these ideas by developing a religious education syllabus (1991) that follows a scope and sequence chart that is developed in a thematic approach.

Grimmitt also observes that another recent development in education closely connected with the concept of justification on educational grounds is curriculum development. This is best regarded as a set of techniques or principles that are used in planning situations in terms of their educational worth. The influence of curriculum development specialists led to the demand that prior to teaching anything, we must decide on a number of educational objectives to be achieved through our teaching. This should be done on the basis of our knowledge of the subject and of the learners in our class. The rationale behind these principles of curriculum development is the view that they ensure that what we teach is educationally worthwhile and that at the end of each teaching situation we are able to evaluate the success of our teaching by observing what the learners are able to do. Teaching and learning become far more systematic and progressive. The curriculum develops in accordance with what are seen by the teachers to be the needs and interests of their class. Learning becomes a more purposeful and successful activity.⁴⁴ In this study I shall explore the methodologies the teachers use in teaching religious education and find out whether they actually involve the learners’ behaviour. Also I shall explore whether the learners’ behaviours are observed by the teachers, so as to justify the effectiveness of the approach.

Edgar Almén and H.C. Øster (eds), *Religious Education in Great Britain, Sweden and Russia*, Linköping University Electronic Press, 2000. Also Michael Grimmitt, *What Can I Do in Religious Education?*

⁴⁴ Michael Grimmitt, *What Can I Do in Religious Education?*

Ronald Goldman in his book *Readiness for Religion*⁴⁵ contributed the Life Themes approach. As a prominent religious educator, he has this to say:

"Life is not used to illustrate Bible truths, but the Bible is used to illustrate life's experiences. We should follow and extend children's interests so that they can come to see their experiences in depth. In such a setting, religious truth as an interpretation of all experiences is known not artificially but at a truly personal level. In this way religion and life are experienced as inseparable. Through its thematic approach, the real life experiences of the children are explored." He concludes by saying that "Life themes relate religion to life by emphasizing the total unity of experience."⁴⁶

The question is: has the revised religious education syllabus used the life experiences of the learners? This study will try to explore whether the syllabus has paid attention to the life experiences of the child.

This understanding gives us some critique of the Religious Education syllabus (1991). Although the definition of religion suggested in the syllabus—*how people have found meaning and value in life*—suggests a teaching that deals with the questions the children have and how these questions can find their answers, the Religious Education syllabus' approach of using themes does not follow this line with questions about life, but is rather concerned with the phenomenology of religion.⁴⁷ This diversion indicates that Goldman was not fully utilized in the implementation of the syllabus. If Goldman's views were fully adopted, an explicit study of children's life experiences would have been highlighted. In addition, children would have been given opportunity to practically participate in different life situations which have something to do with their character development.

⁴⁵ R. Goldman, *Readiness for Religion*, London: ROUTLEDGE AND KEGAN PAUL 1964, p. 110.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Jessica Olausson, *New Concepts of Religious Education in Malawian Primary Schools; A Look from Sweden*, p. 19.

David Mphande in "On the Use of Tonga Myths, Folktales and Proverbs in Moral Education",⁴⁸ has indicated that Tonga myths, folktales and proverbs can be used in schools. He acknowledges that many individuals and some groups of people look to religion for moral guidance. However, he laments that the forces of secularism have greatly diminished the influence of religion on both social and personal moral decision-making and behaviour. He asks whether religion will recapture at least some of its lost authority in the sphere of morality. He views the Tonga culture and how oral literature is used for moral instructions. His findings indicate that morality is in a fundamental crisis. The Tonga oral literature is no longer used in schools.

David Mphande has actually made a correct assessment of our Religious Education system. The only book used is the Bible, though, even in the Bible, the wisdom literature is not explored. In his conclusion, he proposes that Tonga myths, folktales and proverbs be used in schools.

Joseph Chakanza in the book *Wisdom of the People*⁴⁹ found sense in David Mphande's appeal, he provided a source book of wisdom literature⁵⁰ in the form of Nyanja/Chewa proverbs. Chakanza suggests proverbs which work as a vehicle of inculcating traditional wisdom in our children. It is noticeable that this book of proverbs is authoritative to the Christian, Islamic and Malawi Traditional Religion. The intention of the book is to teach the young, to give wisdom to the simple, and deal with issues and relationships facing young and old alike.

⁴⁸ David Mphande, *On the Use of Tonga Myths, Folktales and Proverbs in Moral Education*. PhD, University of Malawi 1998.(Un published Doctoral Thesis)

⁴⁹ Joseph Chakanza, *Wisdom of the People: 2000 Chinyanja Proverbs*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2000.

⁵⁰ Wisdom literature are Biblical works dealing primarily with practical and ethical behaviour and ultimate religious questions, such as the problem of evil. The books include Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Ecclesiasticus and the wisdom of Solomon. Habakkuk, 2 Esdras, and the New Testament Book of James also have characteristics of wisdom writing. See Stephen L Harris, *Understanding the Bible*, New York: McGraw Hill, 2003.

Both scholars, Mphande and Chakanza, recognize that there is an abundance of traditional proverbs, stories and parables, which have been the means of passing on from generation to generation, the fundamental issues of life and death.

It is my contention that we have the basic stage of Religious Education and that in an early age children should be exposed to the wide range of epithets, fables, sayings, with songs, poems and jokes from both oral and written sources designed to introduce the variety of issues to be encountered. There would be several immediate benefits of such an approach. Children would learn wisdom from an early age. These are not normally taught in current curricula, religious or otherwise.

Finally, Augustine C. Musopole,⁵¹ Craig R. Dykstra and Alex Chima during the period between 1991- 2006 contributed on character development or *uMunthu* formation in religious education. After 1991 different scholars started reflecting deeply and explicitly on the child's character formation. The main reason is that there is a strong moral degradation on the value of respect for life in our society. As one would just observe, there are a lot of reported armed robberies reported in the media; suicides and even abortions are common in our Malawian societies. For instance, between 17th July and 18th September 1998, well over 8 reported armed robberies took place in our society and in each case there was loss of life.⁵² This evidence shows that the degradation of this moral value has its root cause from the national level, to village level and school level. In addition, violence against women and children is on the rampage. Such developments and many more are reasons enough to think about the quality

⁵¹ Augustine Musopole, "Theology Cooked in an African Pot. Umunthu, Theology and Gospel" in Klaus Fiedler and Hilary Mijoga (eds), 1998, *Theology Cooked in an African Pot*, Zomba: Kachere, 1998, pp. 34-47. Also see, Augustine Musopole, "A Theological Vision for Malawi," *Religion in Malawi*, vol. 6, 1996, pp. 3-9 who gives a passionate call for the development of a truly Malawian theology. Emphasis is put on such concepts as bondedness, *umoyo*, *uMunthu* (character) and community-in-communion. Also, see Augustine Musopole, *Being Human in Africa: Towards an African Christian Anthropology*, Frankfurt: Lang, 1994.

⁵² *Tikambe Supplement to Malawi News*, November 14-20, 1998. In addition, I have also observed in the past four years that suspected thieves are being tortured to death.

of education given to our society. So many scholars have endeavored to expound the most important elements our education system has to put more emphasis on. All of them hinge on a deliberate effort of developing a curriculum which helps to form our children into men and women of character. In other words, *anthu a uMunthu*. The following writers have some prominent literature on character (*uMunthu*) formation, which, if studied properly, would help in the revision of our curriculum, and Religious Education can win back its lost glory of forming the character of the youth.

Augustine Musopole, in *Theology Cooked in an African Pot* analyses humanity in the Malawian setting, singling out five related aspects that are significant in understanding the one reality of *uMunthu*. These are: form (*thupi*), spirit (*mzimu*), community (*mudzi*), integrity (*chilungamo* or *kukhala owona ntima*), and economic productivity (*ntchito*).⁵³ He indicates that all these aspects or dimensions of our being were mandated at creation.⁵⁴ He further states that, while form, spirit-ness and community are naturally given or innate, integrity and productivity are capacities that are meant to develop with *maleledwe* (social nurture). He emphasizes that *uMunthu* is the essence of human character manifested in and through these relational and survival dimensions of our existence.⁵⁵

The point is that our society needs a deliberate policy of training the youth and the whole humanity on character (*uMunthu*). His assessment is that, traditionally, Malawians have put a high premium on the cultivation of *uMunthu* as a way of being in the world, and this outlook has informed the liberation struggle against domination, racism and exploitation.⁵⁶ Therefore, time has come for Malawian religious education to incorporate character (*uMunthu*) formation

⁵³ Augustine Musopole, "Theology Cooked in an African Pot. Umunthu, Theology and Gospel" in Klaus Fiedler and Hilary Mijoga (eds), 1998, *Theology Cooked in an African Pot*, Zomba: Kachere, 1998, pp. 34-47.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

rather than concentrating on the phenomenology of religion alone.⁵⁷ However, Augustine Musopole has put little emphasis on the power of grace in the formation of a good person, which Craig Dykstra has added.

Craig Dykstra, in his book *Vision and Character: A Christian Educator's Alternative to Kohlberg*, discusses the term “character” in detail in relation to Plato’s understanding. He holds the view that a man or woman of virtue is a person of character. Character according to Plato is a name given to the unity of virtues in a good person. In addition, it is the style he/she has of living as a unified being.⁵⁸

In other words "the unity of the virtues in Plato is a reference to the unity of character in the good person."⁵⁹ This means that whoever is of character has all the following virtues: justice, wisdom, temperance, compassion, courage and piety. Dykstra adds that, "a person cannot be both cowardly and just."⁶⁰ So far, this is one side of Plato's definition of character. The second part of his definition deals with the style a person has of living as a unified being. This is an operational understanding of how the unity comes about in a person of character. Dykstra observes that, apart from having the knowledge of the ideal of justice, one also needs to care for justice, with such depth that our lives can be lived justly even when it costs us dearly, and that takes courage. Furthermore, the justice that we live must be a justice that is attentive to the real needs of the people we live with, and that takes qualities of wisdom and compassion. Finally, justice also requires a kind of piety—a sense that there is an order to the universe, and

⁵⁷ Jessica Olausson, *New Concepts of Religious Education in Malawian Primary Schools; A Look from Sweden*. p. 18.

⁵⁸ Craig R. Dykstra, *Vision and Character: A Christian Educator's Alternative to Kohlberg*, 1981, p. 10; see also p.50.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 10.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 10.

that the ontological order of the Universe must be respected—a sense of gratitude for the given-ness of it, and a sense of wonder toward and honour to the giver (God).⁶¹

Dykstra strongly believes that people are unitary beings and the name we give to this unity and the style we have of living as unified beings is character. He raises a very interesting relationship between character and vision. For him, character is very much connected with vision, as it is a fact of life that what we see depends not only on what is in front of our eyes, but also on what lies within our hearts and minds. In other words, who we are determines what we see. In addition, the quality of our lives is, in turn, shaped by what we see.

Therefore, the main contribution Dykstra has made is the thought that religious educators should help the children to form their character by providing an environment, which will give the pupils an opportunity to be changed by what they see.

Does our education system provide such an environment? How about our RE curriculum, does it offer such an environment? These and many more questions surround our education system and give a judgment about the quality of education we offer to our children.

Alex Chima's article,⁶² "Both Catholic and African: Inculturation" in the book *Christianity in Malawi: a Source Book* gives a Malawian understanding of a person of character. He states that a person of character is one with Malawian virtues such as justice, respect for life, respect for authority, community consciousness, and prayerfulness. If a person has these virtues he/she is *munthu wa uMunthu*. He emphasizes that the Gospel of Christ with its message of Salvation and eternal life becomes meaningful in as much as it permeates the African culture. He adds, "people of a given society must bring to God the best of their humanity *uMunthu*,

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 11.

⁶² Alexander Chima, "Both Catholic and African: Inculturation," in Kenneth R. Ross. (ed.), *Christianity in Malawi: a Source Book*, Gweru: Mambo-Kachere, 1996, p. 120.

their way of living, their way of relating and accept the challenge of the Gospel in their culture. He recognizes that each nation or society has its own values, hopes and fears. Its own sense of sacredness, respect of life, sense of community even its own symbols in worship.⁶³ At this juncture, Alex Chima concurs with Dykstra who claims that every community has a character and that the character of the community shapes the character of its members.⁶⁴

All these scholars, Musopole, Dykstra, and Chima agree that a person of character is a person with the moral virtues at heart. Therefore, an RE lesson must achieve the objective of forming the character of the youth, through, among other things, the instilling of moral values in them.

As a conclusion, for the Religious Education programme to achieve the educational aims and objectives, which mostly pivot on character development of the children, there is a need to move towards formulating some kind of structure or framework within which this approach may be presented. It is such a framework this study attempts to suggest. The framework is not a syllabus, unlike a syllabus a framework does not dictate actual subject-matter, but rather serves to indicate when and where certain types of content may appropriately be introduced, depending on the teacher's knowledge, expertise and objectives. This will make Religious Education to be experiential and contextual. This study makes suggestions on the use of Malawian traditional means, namely the use of Malawian moral values through rites of passage to form children's character. The aim of teaching Religious Education is undoubtedly preparing a character with religious life. Such religious life, which is truly Malawian is what is advocated in this study. Alex Chima cites The Holy Father's words to Zimbabweans which could help us to reflect on the subject. He states that, "all Africans, when allowed to take

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Craig R. Dykstra, *Vision and Character: A Christian Educator's Alternative to Kohlberg*, 1981, p. 10. see also p.50.

charge of their own affairs without being subjected to interference and pressure from any outside powers or groups will not only astound the world by its achievements but will be able to share its wisdom, its sense of life, its reverence of God, with other continents, thus establishing that exchange and partnership in the mutual respect that is needed for the progress of our humanity.”⁶⁵

But how can Religious Education really show that it is developing the character of Malawians? The answer is in the use of rituals, rites of passage and oral literature. It is in the area of rituals that we can assess the degree of *chibadwidwe* because we can see visible signs that it is taking place. If the rites of passage appear foreign, then, the character itself will appear foreign. There is generally an understanding that there are traditional values that must be upheld and can be appealed to as a sanction for moral behaviour. The main vehicle in transmission of these values according to Mphande is through Malawian oral literature such as folktales, proverbs and riddles.⁶⁶ The tales and proverbs which end with a moral message tend to encourage sound moral attitudes advocating respect for leaders, elders and women, patience, helpfulness, justice, diligence and generosity. Thus, for Mphande the oral tradition had a lot to offer to the youth character formation.⁶⁷ He stresses that the youth need to be instructed on the norms of conduct, customs, beliefs and practices of the society. They must be taught how to do things properly. This is a way of forming youth character. According to Dykstra values like justice, temperance, wisdom, courage and piety are acquired through practice,⁶⁸ we are not born with them. Yet they constitute our character. For according to Plato, character is a name given to the unity of virtues in a good person. The aim of religious

⁶⁵ Alexander Chima, “Both Catholic and African: Inculturation” in Kenneth R. Ross. (ed) *Christianity in Malawi: a Source Book*, 1996 p. 122.

⁶⁶ David Mphande, *On the Use of Tonga Myths, Folktales and Proverbs in Moral Education*, PhD, University of Malawi, 1998.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

education is to form a good person therefore it is right and proper to guide our children so that they acquire these virtues through Religious Education lessons. Interestingly, the virtues are also in our Malawian tradition as observed by Chima.⁶⁹ This encourages religious educators to look to Malawian virtues and inculcate them in our youth. The problem might be the methodology. David Mphande,⁷⁰ as already observed, suggests the use of oral literature, while Dykstra⁷¹ suggests the use of life-story telling, which is accompanied by reflection on the story and conviction. He indicates that to be of good character is to have conviction. In this study, suggestions are made to use rites of passage and rituals. Children should learn these virtues through participant observation. By actually participating in the rituals children learn practically the values of life. Probably that is where the missionaries missed a point. As Kelvin Banda observed, schools offered little in the form of social amenities reflecting some tribal culture of the children.⁷² In addition, Brendan Carmody made the same observation that Africans were rarely consulted with the result that religiously and morally neutral customs were often condemned as pagan.⁷³ Furthermore Goldman emphasizes that life experiences (traditional cultural experiences) then, in a programme of Religious Education, are used with the aim of trying to avoid the danger of separating life and religion.⁷⁴

In order to achieve a balanced understanding of Religious Education in Malawi, a look at different versions of the syllabuses used in Malawi is important, observing the critiques these syllabuses have received and assessing the reasons why a new approach was favoured. When one looks at the Integrated Revised Religious Education syllabus, which is currently in use in

⁶⁸ Craig R. Dykstra, *Vision and Character: A Christian Educator's Alternative to Kohlberg*, 1981, p. 10; see also p.50.

⁶⁹ Alexander Chima, "Both Catholic and African: Inculturation," in Kenneth R. Ross. (ed.) *Christianity in Malawi: a Source Book*, 1996, p. 122.

⁷⁰ David Mphande, *On the Use of Tonga Myths, Folktales and Proverbs in Moral Education*, 1998.

⁷¹ Craig R. Dykstra, *Vision and character: A Christian Educator's Alternative to Kohlberg*, 1981 p. 10. see also p.50.

⁷² Kelvin N. Banda, *A Brief History of Education in Malawi*, Blantyre: Dzuka, 1982.

⁷³ Brendan Carmody, *Education in Zambia. Catholic Perspectives*, p. 15.

Malawi, one discovers that there is a strong leaning towards prejudice elimination through religious awareness. This approach, however, succumbs because, among other things, it is silent on pupil character or behavioural formation hence fails to shed any light on the possibilities of actual behavioural change which many parents, pupils and even religious leaders expect from Religious Education. This study intends to move away from this approach, in favour of a character formation approach, which has hitherto received less prominence in Malawi Religious Education during the multi-party era.

⁷⁴ R. Goldman, *Readiness for Religion*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964, p. 10.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Sampling Design

The study population consisted of standard eight pupils, their teachers and PTA members in Malawi. Both non-probability sampling and probability sampling approaches were used in selecting the survey sample. Table 1 below shows the sampling frame of the study population.

Table 1

Respondents Group	Total number of Respondents	Sex		Age	Methods of data Collection
		M	F		
Government Primary Schools Urban pupils.	50 8 8 5	25 8 3	25 8 2	14-18 16-18 16-18 16-18	Questionnaire Focus Group Discussion Focus Group Discussion In-depth Interviews
Government Primary Schools Semi-Urban/Rural pupils	50 8 8 5	25 8 3	25 8 2	14-18 16-18 16-18 16-18	Questionnaire Focus Group Discussion Focus Group Discussion In-depth Interviews
Christian School pupils	50 8	30 8	20	14-18 14-18	Questionnaire Focus Group Discussion
	8 5	 3	8 2	14-18 14-18	Focus Group Discussion In-depth Interviews
Islamic School pupils	50 8 8 5	30 8 3	20 8 2	14-18 14-18 14-18 14-18	Questionnaire Focus Group Discussion Focus Group Discussion In-depth Interviews
Teachers	20	10	10	25-45	In-depth Interviews
PTA members	8	5	3	55-65	In-depth Interviews

The cluster sampling technique was used in this study. This method was favoured because it deals with groups. These are intact groups with similar characteristics such as classrooms. Cluster sampling was convenient especially because the population was very large or spread

over a wide area, in fact the whole of Malawi. Under the available conditions in Malawi at the time, this was more feasible than other types of sampling like random, stratified, and systematic sampling. When the procedure was chosen, it was known that it had its own weaknesses, such as the possibility of the sample being unrepresentative. However, to compensate for this weakness it was decided to have a large number of elements drawn from an appropriate number of randomly selected schools.

After the topic was chosen, a decision had to be made about which out of the 5159 Government primary schools and over 300 Religious Primary Schools should be involved. Since it had already been decided that the study would target pupils who undergo Religious Education instructions, only schools which strictly teach Religious Education were included. However, it was considered convenient to take one Government Lilongwe Demonstration School in the urban, one Government Kasungu Demonstration School in the rural/semi urban, one Christian primary school and one Islamic primary school. The decision was based on the following factors, first, Demonstration schools are monitored by the Principal of Teachers Training College, as such, all subjects on the curriculum are supposed to be taught as per the timetable. This means that Religious Education is taught without substituting it with other subjects as is the case in other government schools. Furthermore, at the time, I was an employee of the Teacher Training College as a tutor. For this reason, it was convenient to choose the two schools I was working with. In addition, school settings were considered, for instance, urban setting for Lilongwe Demonstration School and semi-urban/rural school for Kasungu Demonstration School.

The other reason was that one objective of the research was to compare the effects of government Religious Education curriculum and the effects of religious schools Religious

Education Curriculum on youth character formation. As such, it was considered important to do the same study in a Christian and an Islamic school.

3.2 Research Design

The research design suitable for this research problem is a *case study*. Different research methods can be used in case study design.⁷⁵ In my study, the research methods include *qualitative* and *quantitative* forms of inquiry, because I view the two methods as not opposing each other but complementing the efforts to understand the case setting.

3.3 Data Collection Procedures and Methods

Yin views *case study* as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.”⁷⁶ There are many types of case studies, but they all focus on particular situations and events. Most importantly, all the types of case study require the researcher to study a phenomenon in great depth.

Case study methods may be incorporated into education research to focus on particular settings. In my case study on the effects of Religious Education on youth character formation I needed to sample pupils who would give me the most needed and diversified data. Cohen, Louis, Lawrence Manion and Yin highlight the shortcomings of *case study* and how they impact on the *validity* of the case study.⁷⁷ In my research, from broad exploratory beginnings, I move to more direct data collection and analysis.

⁷⁵ R.K. Yin, *Case Study Research, Design and Methods*, London: Sage Publications 1994, p. 14; also see John Shaughnessy, *Research Methods in Psychology*, New York: McGraw Hill, 2003, pp. 290-291.

⁷⁶ R.K. Yin, *Case Study Research, Design and Methods*, p. 13.

⁷⁷ Louis Cohen and Lawrence Manion, *Research Methods in Education*, Camden: T. Nelson, 1996, p. 102. also see R.K. Yin, *Case Study Research, Design and Methods*, p. 10.

In the qualitative approach, I used focus groups discussions. Exploring pupils' attitudes and perceptions demands provoking them to articulate their feelings. Focus group discussion is where a group of pupils discussed their feelings about the effects of Religious Education they received on their character formation. *Focus group discussion* has an advantage in that pupils justified their feelings on the spot, giving me the refined perception from the groups. However, as I have argued already, most of the perceptions and social constructions are reserved to the individual. It is therefore essential that I held a second type of interview, in-depth individual interviews, to probe further some of the hidden feelings.

In this study, I used quantitative methods to verify some of the insights that emerged using the qualitative methodologies. The nature of some of the questionnaire responses required quantification to verify the frequency of occurrences. I want to emphasize that a quantitative approach emerged from what was initially a qualitative approach.

The data collected through qualitative inquiry in this study were mostly pupils' words and actions, which required methods that allow the researcher to capture language and behaviour.⁷⁸ To collect this data, I used focus group discussions. Each time I identified pupils to work with, I briefed them on the study. Their role and my expectations were defined; the use of data and the confidentiality of the findings were explained without jeopardizing the study.⁷⁹ Pupils were also informed of the aim of my frequent visits to the schools, especially their classrooms; that is to learn how children learn Religious Education. Permission was sought from the management to ensure that the pupils were not disturbed.

The methods used in collecting data relevant to the research questions were basically two: focus groups discussions and questionnaires. I now discuss each of them in detail.

⁷⁸ R.K. Yin, *Case Study Research, Design and Methods*, p. 79.

⁷⁹ John Shaughnessy, *Research Methods in Psychology*, New York: McGraw Hill, 2003, p. 57-58.

3.4 Qualitative Studies

3.4.1 Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions were used to explore the prospects and challenges met by pupils in learning Religious Education. I used focus group discussions because focus group discussions have “often provided a researcher with a chance to observe reactions to their research questions in an open-ended group setting.”⁸⁰ The purpose of using focus group discussions was “to quickly and inexpensively grasp the core issues of a topic.”⁸¹ Focus groups best enable the exploration of surprise information and new ideas.⁸² Focus groups are critical for obtaining insights, perceptions and attitudes used alone as part of a research study.⁸³ Nevertheless, “because they are qualitative devices, with limited sampling accuracy, results from focus groups were not considered a replacement for quantitative analyses.”⁸⁴ In this study, focus group discussions used group dynamics principles to focus or guide the group in an exchange of ideas, feelings and experiences on a specific topic.⁸⁵ Researchers seem not to agree on the size of group suitable for interview. However, Cooper and Schindler suggest a focus group panel should have 6 to 10 participants.⁸⁶ In this study I used 8 participants.

Focus groups, however, are used differently by different groups of people. These are commonly used in evaluation and academic research or as a method of exploring. The use of focus group discussions gave me an opportunity to listen to selected groups of pupils discussing the topics that I was most interested in: pupils also had a chance to listen to each other’s contributions which sometimes sparked new insights or helped them develop their

⁸⁰ Donald R. Cooper, *Business Research Methods*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003, p. 157.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid. p. 155.

⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 157.

⁸⁵ Ibid. p. 156.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

ideas more clearly. Thus I was able to explore a topic that was new to me and on which I had scanty information.

3.4.2 In-depth Interviews

My instrument was merely an exploratory question to find out how pupils, teachers and parents felt about the Religious Education lessons. There were also follow up questions, especially asking the respondents to justify their views. These interviews were also designed to cross-check some of the things observed during the focus group discussion. For instance, a respondent who gave a unique answer during the focus group discussion would be cross examined during the in-depth interview.

3.5 Quantitative Studies

3.5.1 Administering Questionnaires

The outcome from a focus group was then followed up, using a quantitative approach to determine conviction and generalisability. The nature of the phenomena under study necessitated that a number of instruments be used. I prepared formal instruments such as questionnaires to guide me to collect the selected data, which helped me to become more focused in my exploration of the issues. The development of the formal instruments involved mapping out areas of concern, drafting, evaluating and pilot testing the instruments at Kabwabwe Government Primary School in Lilongwe.

3.5.2 Developing Questionnaires

Developing the instruments was carefully planned and conducted. The steps followed when developing the instruments for my study included the following:

1. Writing out my focus of inquiry.

2. Identifying words, phrases, concepts, questions and topics that were related to my focus of inquiry.
3. Classifying and grouping the similar words, phrases, concepts, topics questions together to form the potential categories of inquiry.
4. Deciding which categories of inquiry to be included in the instrument, the form and format of the instrument, the form and format of the items including sequencing the items in the instruments.
5. Preparing an instrument that included at the beginning a personal introduction, purpose statement, statement of confidentiality and instructions on how to respond to the questions.
6. Giving the instrument to two other experts to vet and make necessary amendments.⁸⁷
7. Plotting the instrument and making all the necessary amendments.
8. Producing final instruments.⁸⁸

The focus group discussions followed the same questionnaire except that probing questions were formulated as the discussions progressed.

When developing the questionnaires, I mapped out areas of focus within the research's interest as follows:

- Question 1—8 would give me the background of the respondents. Thus their families, the religion of each of the parents, the number of children in the household and whether the respondents live with one or both parents. I presumed that this information would help me determine if they were factors in influencing the religious beliefs and attitudes and practices of the respondents.

⁸⁷ This was done by late Dr. Hilary Mijoga, formerly of the University of Malawi, Chancellor College and later by Professor Branden Carmody, Professor of Religious Education at the University of Zambia, School of Education.

- Questions 9-10 assessed pupils' perception of Religious Education lessons.
- Questions A-F measured such elements of character as (according to Plato): Justice, temperance, wisdom, courage, compassion, piety and, according to Alex Chima; respect for life, respect for authority, community consciousness and prayerfulness.
- Questions G-H measured the religious practices of the respondents.

3.5.2 Pilot Study

There was a need to pilot test the instruments and techniques in an environment similar to the intended one. In this case the pilot study was conducted with pupils at Kabwabwa Government Primary School. The research design was modified as a result of the pilot study and in some cases it was completely overhauled.

In this study, I was concerned with whether two researchers independently studying the same setting or subjects and using the same procedures and instruments would come up with the same findings. There was need for all the instruments and techniques used for this study to be valid and reliable. To guarantee reliability and validity, there was a need to pilot test the instruments and all the techniques. During the pilot testing, I looked for the reliability of the instruments and techniques to assess whether they were dependable as measuring instruments through the study. Reliability has to do with the accuracy and precision of a measurement procedure.⁸⁹ In other words, a measure is reliable to the degree that it supplies consistent results.⁹⁰

Apart from reliability, the instrument needs to be valid. Validity deals with the question of whether or not the instruments and techniques measure what they are supposed to measure; it is the quality of data gathering instruments or procedure. That is, "it is the extent to which

⁸⁸ See appendix A.

⁸⁹ Donald R. Cooper, *Business Research Methods*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003, p. 236.

differences found with a measuring tool reflect true differences among participants being tested.”⁹¹

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data consisted of questionnaire ratings. Simple statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data where simple comparisons of frequencies and means were required.

3.6.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis was applied where the respondents were asked to write their feelings. Data analysis was done using a framework of analysis, which was developed using objectives and issues identified in the initial problem analysis. The framework of analysis was revised when additional themes and sub issues emerged from the data. Data was sorted into different categories and then summarized.

3.6.3 Data Validation: Triangulation

The major concern in my research undertaking was to produce reliable data that would lead to discovery and verification of knowledge. From the description of the research methods, it is clear that I used a number of strategies to obtain information. To achieve this triangulation, a combined strategy for data collection was used on the same variable. “Triangulation refers to the use of more than one method of data collection and analysis within a single study.”⁹² Triangulation is as important as “is across-checking of data using multiple data sources or multiple data collection procedures.”⁹³ Triangulation was useful in this study because it

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² R.K. Yin, *Case Study Research, Design and Methods*, p. 91.

⁹³ Ibid. p. 92.

helped me to collect reliable data which when analyzed led to valid conclusions. In this study I preferred to use convergence of multiple sources of evidence as opposed to non-convergence. All sources of evidence were reviewed and analyzed together, so that the findings were based on the convergence of information from different sources, not quantitative data alone. Therefore, the study was based on several different sources of information, following a corroboratory mode.

Chapter Four

Research Findings and Discussion

The main focus of inquiry was the relationship between religious knowledge and character formation. To address the research problem I needed to formulate a questionnaire so that I could determine whether the religious knowledge the youth receive in the schools influences their character. It should also be noted that the questionnaire has questions with categories derived from six virtues which form a person of character, as discussed in Chapter Five. Much of the data consists of percentages of answers which fall into various categories, but in order to “put flesh” on the statistics, I have included some anecdotal evidence, drawing on the comments recorded during the focus group discussions. It must be conceded at the outset that character formation in Religious Education is not a field which lends itself very readily to empirical research. The categorization being employed may often seem too crude and clumsy to make sense of the profound realities being addressed. The study would certainly be over-reaching itself if it pretended to offer a complete picture of effects of Religious Education in character formation in Primary schools. What is intended, however, is simply a profile, which may highlight some broad trends and thus suggest areas, which merit further investigation.

4.1 Justice and Temperance

Question A, which aimed to reveal some basic orientation in virtues of justice and of temperance was: Many people working for the government have been accused of using government money for personal use. Would you say that to use government money for personal use,

- a. is always wrong,
- b. most of the times it is wrong,
- c. sometimes it is wrong,

d. it is all right to use government money for personal use.
Only 10% thought that it is always wrong. 50% thought that sometimes it is wrong, 10% indicated that most of times it is wrong, 30% thought that it is all right to use government money for personal use.

Another question (B) which demanded a display of moral justice was: Cheating takes place during examinations. Do you think that cheating is

- a) always wrong?
- b) sometimes it is wrong?
- c) acceptable?
- d) alright as long as you don't get caught?

Three quarters indicated that sometimes it is wrong. It is very clear that the great majority is not sure of the meaning of justice. This agrees with Kenneth Ross's observation that "injustice in our society is the least commonly chosen evil."⁹⁴ When people are asked to list evils in our society, often enough injustice is not mentioned or it is mentioned at the bottom of the list.

4.2 Compassion and Respect for Human Life

Question C, which aimed to reveal some basic orientation on the value of compassion and respect for life was: Thievery is becoming a problem in Malawi. Often when a thief is caught, people beat, kick, and sometimes even kill the thief. Do you agree with this practice?

Strongly	80%
Somewhat	20%
Disagree	0%

The percentage of Christian respondents who opted for 'strongly agree' is slightly lower, 60% compared with 88% of Muslim respondents - but this was still the most frequently chosen option among the Christian respondents and the government school respondents.

⁹⁴ Kenneth R. Ross, *Here Comes Your King! Christ, Church and Nation in Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1998, p. 39.

Other fundamental questions (D and E), which were asked were: Do you think that abortion is

- a) always wrong?
- b) wrong most the of time?
- c) sometimes it is wrong?
- d) morally acceptable?

15% opted for sometimes it is wrong, 20% for wrong most of the time, 65% left it blank, unanswered. It was noted that most girls left it blank. During interviews, it transpired that most of them have been initiated or have received some sort of initiation into puberty life. Of course it would be proper to explore more on what is actually taught at the initiation ceremonies about the value of life. And Question E was, If one of your friends told you that he or she had AIDS, describe what your attitude and behaviour would be toward her/him. 50% indicated that they would be friends but not to the same degree, 20% indicated that they would terminate the friendship, whereas 30% indicated that they would maintain the same level of friendship. The percentage of Christian respondents who opted for that 'they would be friends but not to the same degree' is slightly higher - 40% compared with 20% of Muslims. About 80% of girls were of the opinion that they would be friends but not to the same degree, while 40% of boys indicated that they would terminate the friendship.

The responses to both questions C to E reveal to me that there is a strong moral degradation on the value of respect for life. No wonder there are a lot of reported armed robberies on the News Media and suicides and even abortion practices in our societies. No wonder there are a lot of robberies where life is lost, dumped babies, abortion practices, violence against women, stigmatization against people living with HIV/ AIDS and many more evils against survival. This shows that the degradation of this moral value is deep-rooted in our society. It is also interesting to note that, despite all the information children get about HIV/AIDS, still, they are left at a dilemma, when it comes to make decisions on how to

handle the real situation. A related question was: Do you think that sexual intercourse outside of marriage is,

- a) always wrong...?
- b) sometimes wrong...?
- c) is acceptable if the boy and girl have a strong personal relationship...?
- d) completely acceptable as long as both the boy and girl agree...?

20% indicated that it is always wrong., 60% left it blank and 20% indicated it is acceptable if the boy and girl have a strong personal relationship. The majority from Christian schools, about 80%, left it blank. However, most boys, 60%, indicated that it is acceptable if the boy and girl have a strong personal relationship. During interviews it was clear that most boys, 40%, who indicated that it is acceptable if the boy and girl have a strong personal relationship, were above 17 years of age. In addition, it also transpired that most of them indulged in sexual intercourse due to pressure from friends; of course they indicated regret.

Another question (F) on which interviewees were divided was: Do you think that euthanasia is

- a) always wrong?
- b) wrong most of the time?
- c) sometimes wrong?
- d) morally acceptable?

Interestingly, 60% suggested that it is always wrong, and only 40% suggested that it is morally acceptable. The result shows me that there is an element of valuing life in some Malawians. It may be worth noting that there is a marginally greater inclination towards euthanasia among boys respondents from government schools, 30% compared with 15% of Christian and Muslim schools.

Here it may be noted, firstly, that there is a remarked division among the interviewees. Those emphasizing the need to conserve life form a slender majority. The minority which is prepared to support mercy killing is much stronger among boys than girls. Again, this shows

me that life has become debatable, and death has become so obvious an issue that many are not afraid of taking away life. However, scrutinizing the respondents who said that it is always wrong to practice mercy killing, it was discovered that 75% of them regularly participate in many rites of passage (i.e. childbirth, naming ceremonies, puberty initiation ceremonies and death rites) in the villages, at their churches or mosques. This suggests to me that participation in rites of passage helps the youth to appreciate the value of life.

4.3 Religious Practices

A straightforward question (G) was: How often do you pray?

- a) Every day?
- b) several times a week?
- c) only on Sundays?
- d) seldom?
- e) never?

The majority 60%, answered several times a week. 20% of the respondents answered every day. Another 20% of the respondents indicated seldom. It is worth noting that those who indicated several times a week were especially Muslim respondents. 86% compared with 50% for Christian respondents. Those who answered seldom commented that their good works are part of prayer. However, this is a small fraction and really shows that there are very few people who still cherish the traditional belief of prayer. That is, many youth don't use life situations as "sites" of encounter with God. Most children don't approach God in the realities of life such as childbirth, sickness, death, planting, harvest, daily chores, work, or songs. Therefore, a conclusion can be made here that in most young people, prayer is not related to life, hence does not touch life.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ According to Alex Chima, an African is supposed to be at home with life-situations as "sites" of encounter with God. See Alexander Chima, "Both Catholic and African: Inculturation," in Kenneth R. Ross (ed.), *Christianity in Malawi: a Source Book*, 1996, p. 122.

A related question (H) was: List any charitable work you do and indicate how many times a week you do that work (for example, I visit sick people in their homes once a week). This question proved to be a very difficult one. The majority, during focus group discussion, indicated that charity is reciprocal. If somebody does not show hospitality, I follow suite; meaning that hospitality is conditional.

4.4 Assessing Pupils Perception of Religious Education Lessons

In response to the following question: In your daily life and the problems you face, do you find that the religious education in this school has been

- a) very helpful...?
- b) helpful...?
- c) not helpful...?

80% of the respondents indicated very helpful and 20% of the respondents indicated not helpful. The majority of Christian and Muslim respondents, 90%, indicated very helpful compared to the 15% of the respondents from the government school. During the interview, it transpired that, apart from the class religious education, Muslim respondents have other religious instruction classes. It was a slightly similar thing with the Christian school respondents. Some of the respondents belong to youth groups like Tiritonse, but these are conducted at their church and after school hours

A similar question was: Would you say that the religious instruction you receive in this school influences your religious behaviour,

- a) very strongly...,
- b) strongly...,
- c) a little bit...,
- d) very little...,
- e) not at all...

80% of the respondents indicated very little and 20% of the respondents indicated not at all. The majority of Christian and Muslim respondents, 40%, indicated very strongly compared to the 20% of the respondents from the government school. During the interviews, it transpired that, apart from the class religious education, Muslim respondents have other religious instruction classes. It was a slightly similar thing with the Christian school. The type of teachers also helped to bring about these variations. In Christian and Muslim schools, the RE teacher is a well selected teacher, who himself or herself has a clear religious commitment, unlike in the government school, where the teachers were just allocated to teach this subject without special preparation. As such they would approach the subject like any other subject on the curriculum.

Chapter Five:

The Common Primary Religious Education Syllabus (!981) and the Inception of the Revised Integrated Primary Religious Education Syllabus

The Common Primary Religious Education syllabus was introduced to solve many problems which the missionary education had. Among the many problems only one will be singled out. This was that there was a great diversity in their teachings, that is, each mission group had its own teaching depending on their interests, charisma and doctrines, which raised a lot of confusion in the pupils. In order to bring uniformity there was a need for a common syllabus.

A Common Primary Religious Education syllabus was agreed upon by the churches in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and approved in 1981. The common syllabus was intended to show a difference from the former system of Religious Education, where each group had its own curriculum. However, this objective was not fully achieved because the gap between the communities and the schools in attitude of values and expectation was not solved. The common syllabus demanded dialogue between the teacher and the pupils (not preaching). The teacher was supposed to help the pupils to pray and go to God in their own way, using their own words. In order to do so, he/she had to use the Bible in a discreet way. During Religious Education lessons, the teacher had to help the pupils to discover the message God sent them that day through his words from the Bible. The pattern of each lesson had always the same main parts and it was different from the one used for other subjects. Instead of steps, the Religious Education pattern used titles like *message*, *attitude* and *response*.

5.1 Weaknesses in the Common Primary School Religious Education Syllabus (1981)

The Common Primary School Religious Education Syllabus (1981) had some problems. In the first place, the Common syllabus was too Christo-centric. That is, the aim was to show the children that God had prepared his people through the religious tradition and heritage of Malawi and the traditional customs for himself so that they may receive their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Besides, it aimed at converting the pupils to believe that Christ was their ancestor,⁹⁶ which was found to be an abomination for an African, let alone a Malawian, to consider a foreigner as an ancestor. Another problem is that the term Religious Education was not used in its true sense. Muslims in Malawi feared Christianity as western education that had come to destroy their religion. In addition, in this common syllabus, Malawian religious beliefs were condemned as pagan practices.⁹⁷ Furthermore, there were a lot of variations in approach. Thus, the teachers used the confessional or evangelical approach in teaching.⁹⁸ In other words, Catholics would teach it according to their faith and likewise the Protestants. As a result, teachers tended to preach to pupils instead of teaching them. The variations arose when it came to the use of the Bible to achieve the objective of evangelization. The prime objective of the evangelical Protestants was undoubtedly evangelization, teaching people the gospel of Christ and getting them to accept him as their saviour. Hence, it was a great tradition of Protestant Christianity that every man/woman could learn more of God's will for himself if they could read the Bible, therefore the first objective in making people literate was to enable them to read the Bible, especially the Gospels. This form of literacy among the converts was important because it was felt that those who could read the Bible could be used to expound

⁹⁶ *Common Syllabus, Religious Education, Standard 5 Manual*, 1981, p. 4.

⁹⁷ David Mphande, *Themes in Religious Education. A Handbook for Teacher Trainers*, p. 1.

the scriptures to others. On the other hand, the Catholic mission did not share this view because they felt that the Bible needed to be interpreted by a priest to ordinary people.⁹⁹ These variations in approach brought in some suspicions. Catholics could not trust the Protestant teacher and vice versa. Accordingly, it might be useful to mention that this variation in approach to the common syllabus was one of the reasons why some denominational representatives were permitted to give Religious Instructions to children of their denominations once a week or so, at various primary schools belonging to another missionary group.

Probably the question is: Did the Common Syllabus emphasize youth character formation? The answer to this question is found in the objectives and the content of the syllabus. The religion lesson was to help to form a positive and creative attitude. This means that the children must receive such an “understanding of life that in everything they say and do they try to make this world a little bit better; they build a happier world and fight against everything that is wrong.”¹⁰⁰ This clearly shows that the syllabus aimed at forming the youth’s affective domain, hence youth character formation.

However, because stress was so much on changing pupils' attitude, Religious Education started suffering from narration sickness. Then, banking education type started to take place. Most Religious Education teachers began to become bank clerks, just making deposits of knowledge into the pupils. Paulo Freire criticizes this type of education as characterized by the sonority of words, not by their transforming power.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 49.

⁹⁹ Kelvin Banda, *A Brief History of Education in Malawi*, p. 49.

¹⁰⁰ *Common Syllabus, Religious Education, Standard 5 Manual*, 1981. p. 3.

¹⁰¹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Lanham: Sheed and Ward, 1972, p. 57.

Another problem is that the term 'common syllabus' was simply a lip - service. In the real sense it was not common because it lacked good representation of major religious groups in the country during its curriculum development stages, for instance, the Seventh Day Adventists, Muslims and the African Traditional Religionists were not represented.

5.2 The Inception of the Revised Integrated Primary Religious Education Syllabus

As a solution to this problem, the Revised Integrated Primary Religious Education syllabus was proposed and came in use in 1991. This integrated syllabus was intended to promote mutual respect, tolerance and harmony amongst groups. Such a syllabus has to have a contextualized approach, which would include Malawian moral values as well as values found in other religions in Malawi rather than Christianity alone. This new approach assumes that Religious Education can play a special role in nation building by enabling people to overcome the barriers of religious prejudice and avoid bigotry and fanaticism. It was assumed that this would help people to live peacefully with each other. However, the question is, has it really achieved its objective of promoting mutual respect, tolerance, justice and harmony among people who have studied this curriculum? In other words, has the curriculum assisted Malawian youth to imbibe virtues of justice, wisdom, temperance, courage, compassion and piety which promote mutual respect, tolerance and harmony in the society?

Chapter Six:

The Revised Integrated Primary Religious Education Syllabi: A Critique

6.0 Introduction

The research findings have shown us that to a certain extent, the current Religious Education syllabus has gone through a lot of challenges, from its formulation stages to its implementation stage. It is important therefore that we unveil these challenges so as to help the curriculum evaluators in their efforts of bringing back quality Religious Education. It is assumed that the shortfalls this chapter will expose will improve the quality of Religious Education in our schools.

6.1 The Content: Danger of Using Several Working Definitions of Religious Education

The content of Religious Education is developed based on three understanding of “religion.” First, in different books for teacher training,¹⁰² the term religion is defined according to Ninian Smart’s six inter-independent dimensions briefly presented in chapter two. These are: Doctrinal dimension - a system of beliefs or doctrines; Mythological dimension - stories about the life and deeds of founders of religions; Ethical dimension - moral values taught by the religions like teachings portraying love, kindness, patience, courage, temperance, wisdom, compassion and justice; Ritual dimension - festivals and celebrations performed by believers (Christmas, Idd-el-Fitr, initiation rites and other rites of passage.); Social dimension - church

¹⁰² See David Mphande, *Themes in Religious Education. A Handbook for Teacher Trainers*, p. 35. Also see Ninian Smart, *New Movements in Religious Education*, London: Temple Smith, 1978, p. 35 and Michael Grimmitt, *What Can I Do in Religious Education*.

organizations, synods, diocese, associations like the Muslim Associations; Experiential dimension - convictions and unique experiences of believers, visions and dreams.¹⁰³

Another definition of religion, which has been used to develop the content' is how people have found meaning and value in life.¹⁰⁴ Finally, in another document, which was used to produce the content, religion has been defined as a belief in a Supreme Being and that it deals with fundamental questions about life and living.¹⁰⁵

These definitions of religion supposedly formed the basis for the Integrated Revised Religious Education syllabus. Olausson discovered that there are different definitions used, implying different approaches. For instance, Smart's six inter-independent dimensions, as described above, suggest a teaching that deals with different aspects of religion regardless of one's own standpoint. The second definition seems to be oriented towards a teaching that provides the children with answers to questions of universal human concern,¹⁰⁶ such as, *Who am I? Why was I born? Why can't I live forever? Why do bad things happen to good people? Is there life after death? Why do people have to get sick and die? Have I got a soul or spirit? Is there really a God? Why do I feel so happy?* It is supposed that, in considering these questions, pupils will consider the responses of the religions they are studying. However, the consequence of using many definitions in developing the syllabi is that, firstly, difficulties arise on how to choose an approach of teaching religious education, which is related to the definitions. Secondly, if different approaches are combined, danger arises again where in depth exploration of either content is not fully done, leaving the learners with little of everything, which eventually does not achieve any of the stated objectives. A good example is

¹⁰³ See Jessica Olausson, *New Concepts of Religious Education in Malawian Primary Schools. A Look from Sweden*, p. 20.

¹⁰⁴ *Malawi Primary School Teaching Syllabus: Religious Education*, p. xv.

¹⁰⁵ David Mphande, *Themes in Religious Education. A Handbook for Teacher Trainers*, p. 35.

¹⁰⁶ *Student Teacher's Handbook 1*. Teacher Development Unit, Domasi: Malawi Institute of Education, p. 341. Also see David Mphande, *Themes in Religious Education. A Handbook for Teacher Trainers*, p. 35.

how issues of virtue or values have been handled. Only one theme: 'Moral Values' seems to handle issues of ethics, as demanded by objective number three which states that the curriculum aim is to impart skills, values and attitudes which will enable the pupil to become a full valuable member of his society. Religious beliefs are some of the strongest motivating forces towards moral behaviour. It is recognized that ignorance and intolerance often go together. But a true understanding and knowledge of other people's beliefs and practices promotes mutual respect, tolerance and harmony between religious groups.¹⁰⁷

Although the syllabus objectives are quite clear about the need for teaching virtues to our pupils, it does not seem to have recognized that comparative study, which has commonly accepted values of life by the major religious groups, has not been emphasized. A clear definition of values has not been done. In addition, values in any of the religions under study have not been clearly described so as to show similarities. It is important that in future curriculum development, in depth studies should be conducted so as to unveil fundamental values adhered to by different major religions in Malawi which show a common objective. These should be treated concurrently in a lesson.

6.2 Moral Values

Although there is a theme on 'Moral values,' the discussions on the values have been coalesced into human psychological structures following Kohlberg's juridical ethics approach and Jean Piaget's research.¹⁰⁸ They no longer have as their real referent a reality that transcends, differs from and has power independent from human consciousness. For instance, morality has been defined as a study of conduct, rules of behaviour, values and beliefs based

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ See David Mphande, *Themes in Religious Education. A Handbook for Teacher Trainers*, p. 34.

on them—determining what is right and good, and what is wrong and bad.¹⁰⁹ It gives a list of virtues and vices so that the pupils should know them. This approach moves away from a Christian view. It is a generally accepted Christian concept that there are transcendent realities, ultimately mysterious, by which the moral life is to be guided. The Christian view adds that transcendent centres of value are not only somehow there to be contemplated; they are unified in one Person, an active Power.¹¹⁰ God is not only a value but a force, and not just a force, but the ultimate power over all others.¹¹¹ There is grace that works in us. This notion is missing in the syllabus. What the syllabus has done is to present moral values which could be admired and contemplated on, but it does not put strategies to allow grace to work in the pupils so that their lives get transformed. If anything, the syllabus presents the ordinary world, which is seen with ordinary vision. There are no principalities and overarching powers for good and for evil that work in us and in the world and with which we have to deal as moral beings. According to this theme, what is good is a result of human will, intelligence and effort. Moral evil is the result of human error. It does show that there is no evil that in any real sense grips us, and from which we must be saved. There is need in this syllabus to include this notion of salvation.

6.3 Convergent Lines versus Divergent Lines of Thought

There is much basic commonality between different religions and this is not surprising if the concept of religion has any objective reality. It is expected that among major religions both common and diverse ideas exist. This suggests that if a spirit of tolerance and co-operation with the various religious groups is to be achieved, convergent lines of thought must be explicitly exposed in each lesson, implying that in each lesson references from all the major

¹⁰⁹ *Student Teachers' Handbook*, Teacher Development Unit, Domasi: Malawi Institute of Education, p. 1124.

¹¹⁰ Craig Dykstra, *Vision and Character: A Christian Educator's Alternative to Kohlberg*, p.54.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

religions should be included to support an idea. In the current Religious Education programme, where biblical references dominate the whole syllabus, Quranic verses and MTR traditional thoughts, which are in agreement with the biblical verses, are not acknowledged. Olausson discovered that the examples are drawn from Christianity more often than from the other two religions. For instance, in Standard 3 the topic “religious feasts” refers to Christianity in 15 of the 21 objectives and only 3 to MTR and 2 to Islam while one objective could be stated as “objective” as it asks for general information.¹¹²

This tendency of emphasizing Christianity more and MTR and Islam less creates the unrealistic conclusion that divergent lines of thought among religions are wider than people think. It is therefore important that curriculum developers discover more convergent lines of thought when developing the syllabus and the teachers’ guide. This will make pupils and teachers concentrate on what is common among Malawians. In the process, pupils will learn co-existence, which the syllabi objective is looking forward to achieve.

6.4 Assessment: Value/Attitude Assessment

Although the teachers' guide has a review exercise at the end of each lesson, this exercise is more on testing the cognitive domain than the affective domain.¹¹³ This indicates that the value/attitude assessment is rarely done, since emphasis is on knowledge assessment.

Besides, the review exercise is given at the end of the lesson only. This means that as one teaches, assessment is not done until at the end. The danger of this practice is that the learners do not make sense of the new knowledge in the context of their existing knowledge and in this way they don’t develop new understandings as learning takes place. This means that the

¹¹² Jessica Olausson, *New Concepts of Religious Education in Malawian Primary Schools. A Look from Sweden*, p. 20.

¹¹³ *Malawi Primary Education: Religious Education Teacher’s Guide for Standard 4*; Domasi: Malawi Institute of Education, 1995.

process of learning in this type is given less importance than the final products. It is important that, as we teach, assessment is done. This final product is what is known as outcomes.¹¹⁴

6.5 The Teaching Strategies

6.5.1 The Use of Participant Observation

There are a number of suggested teaching and learning activities in each lesson, which makes the teaching and learning child-centred. However, the real life situations are not utilized. Alexander Chima has observed, “in prayer the African is at home with life-situation as “sites” of encounter with God. He/she approaches God in the realities of life: childbirth, wedding, sickness, death, planting, harvest ... These life situations are the source of sorrows, joys, conflicts and fears.¹¹⁵ Therefore, a religious activity is related to life and touches life. This study has revealed that the children no longer find meaning in life situations. They no longer find God in them. As such they don’t consider encountering God in their life situations. This Religious Education is found to be lifeless because the lessons are not related to the present situations which are being lived; let alone are learners given an opportunity to experience these life situations. Suggestions are made in this study that Religious Education learners should be given the chance to participate in real situations such as funerals, weddings, visiting sick people. In the process the emotions will be developed, which will result in the formation of the virtue of compassion.¹¹⁶ It is important to involve the emotions.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ PCAR presentation by PCAR Coordinator, Liwonde Hippo View Lodge 2006.

¹¹⁵ Alexander Chima, “Both Catholic and African: Inculturation,” in Kenneth R. Ross (ed.), *Christianity in Malawi: a Source Book*, 1996, p. 122.

¹¹⁶ Compassion is one of the virtues which constitute a man or woman of character. See Craig R. Dykstra, *Vision and Character: A Christian Educator’s Alternative to Kohlberg*, p.52.

¹¹⁷ See Hermer Ringgren, *Religions of Mankind. Today and Yesterday*, London: Oliver and Boyd, 1967, p. xviii. Ringgren puts it very well that the essential elements of religion are intellectual, emotional and behaviour. This means that emotions must be involved in any religious activity and so are intellect and behaviour. This type of education does not take place in a vacuum. It will be ineffective unless it takes into account the pattern of growth through which human beings move towards maturity and the social-cultural changes and traditional roots in which a human being is born and dies. Religious education, being part of education of humanity, needs to

6.6 Use of Emotions and Feelings

Emotions and feelings determine the depth, sincerity and worth of the Religious Education lesson. Often RE lessons have been forced into an emotionless activity; the lessons have become intellectual and discursive.

6.7 Lesson Structure in the Teachers Guides

Values and attitudes, which the children are supposed to develop, are not stated in each lesson. This poses a big challenge to the teachers. As such, the lessons are not focused on the values and attitudes to be developed. Most teachers are unable to come up with their own. As a result only religious knowledge is given to the pupils.

consider issues like: psychological development of the child, social-political context, theological context, home and family, school, peer groups, and mass media as they bear on the content of Religious Education and the children.

Chapter Seven

Character Formation in Religious Education

7.1 Who is a Person of Character?

Religious Education is a subject that helps a human being to develop positive attitudes to God, his/her own life and the people around him/her. In addition, formation of positive attitudes precisely means formation of virtues, which is synonymous to goodness. And a man or woman of virtue is a person of character. Character, according to Plato, "is a name given to the unity of virtues in a good person. In addition, it is the style he/she has of living as a unified being."¹¹⁸

In other words "the unity of the virtues in Plato is a reference to the unity of character in the good person."¹¹⁹ This means that whoever is of character, has all the following virtues, namely, justice, wisdom, temperance, compassion, courage and piety. Dykstra adds that, "a person cannot be both cowardly and just."¹²⁰ So far, this is one side of Plato's definition of character. The second part of his definition deals with "the style a person has of living as a unified being." This is an operational understanding of how the unity comes about in a person of character. Dykstra observes that, apart from having the knowledge of the ideal of justice, one also needs to care for justice, with such depth that our lives can be lived justly even when it costs us dearly and that takes courage. Furthermore, the justice that we live must be a justice that is attentive to the real needs of the people we live with, and that takes the qualities of wisdom and compassion. Finally, justice also requires a kind of piety - a sense that there is an order to the universe, an ontological order of the universe that must be respected - a sense of

¹¹⁸ Craig R. Dykstra, *Vision and Character: A Christian Educator's Alternative to Kohlberg*, 1981, p. 10; see also p. 50.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. p. 10.

gratitude for the givenness of it, and a sense of wonder toward and honour to the giver (God).¹²¹ In addition, ‘character’, according to Alex Chima, means a person of Malawian virtues such as justice, respect for life, respect for authority, community consciousness, and prayerfulness. If a person has these virtues, it is said that he/she is *munthu wa uMunthu*. So both Dykstra and Chima agree that a person of character is a person with moral virtues at heart.

Has our Religious Education syllabus (1991) managed to include the knowledge of these virtues? This work will explore whether it has done or not done enough on helping the learners to be attentive to the real needs of the people with whom they live in the pluralistic society. In addition, it will try to find out if it has done enough to prepare the child to develop positive attitudes to God and his/her own life, while at the same time trying to give an answer to the question of the controversy surrounding the Religious Education subject.

Most of our youth lack conviction in life. According to Dykstra, “To be of good character is to have convictions.”¹²² Convictions are beliefs. They are our beliefs about what the world is like, about who we are, about what is most important. Dykstra goes further by saying that convictions “are those tenacious beliefs which, when held, give definiteness to the character of a person or of a community so that if they were surrendered the person or community would be significantly changed. And others who know us well know what is significant and persistent in us.”¹²³ In other words, it is our life story,¹²⁴ which picks up many of the details of life history and places them in relation to one another. Such a story becomes more complete when more items are added. What we are saying is that to form character, reflection is vital. A

¹²⁰ Ibid. p. 10.

¹²¹ Ibid. p. 11.

¹²² Dykstra, *Vision and Character: A Christian Educator's Alternative to Kohlberg*, p.52.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid. p. 51.

reflection of the past gives some sense and meaning that can be understood in the light of the present and intended future. An ideal person (a person of good character) needs to have convictions and at the same time a reflection. One of the government officials listening to my presentation on character commented that some of these economic problems, which are affecting the country now, could be avoided, if not prevented, if people were trained to be of good character.¹²⁵ This comment agrees well with Dykstra, who says, “life stories change, they are not rigid. Our convictions change.”¹²⁶ In other words, the character of a person can be formed or developed. “The change is caused by many factors. For instance, something new happens that makes a crucial difference in our lives: illness, a new friend, a new idea, etc. The whole environment (setting), everybody, everything is involved in bringing this change.”¹²⁷ Probably, that is where Religious Education could play its vital role in bringing about this change. Take, for example, new ideas would represent the content of Religious Education; a new friend represents the Religious Education teacher or a classmate or a member of staff in the school; and setting represents a good class/school environment. To what degree the Malawian Religious Education curriculum has served, as instrument of character change or character liberation in the sense in which the highly influential contemporary educator Paulo Freire uses these terms, is difficult to say. In order tentatively to answer this question, let me outline some of the salient features of Freire’s work. For him, pedagogy of liberation or character change pivots on dialogue whereby the teacher no longer simply teaches but is himself/herself taught. Such dialogue exists where there is a profound love for others.¹²⁸ Martin Ott hints at the same point as he says, “every Religious Education teacher should make

¹²⁵ Interview with Dr. Ben Dzowela, Ambassador At Large, Ministry of External Affairs 1999-2004.

¹²⁶ Craig R. Dykstra, *Vision and Character: A Christian Educator’s Alternative to Kohlberg*, p.54.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Lanham: Sheed and Ward, 1972, p. 57.

sure that whatever he/she does in class is accompanied by love,”¹²⁹ if fruitful results are to be expected. To promote this liberation (character change), Freire designed ‘problem solving’ learning.¹³⁰ This method agrees well with Dykstra’s for it entails critical reflection on present reality where people are empowered to act as a result of reflection on their historical experience. This is what is known as accompaniment. It is only through accompaniment that we can effectively assist character formation to take place in our pupils. Accompaniment is organized in such a way that every student is given an *accompagnator*. Periodically, the *accompagnator* meets each of them for twenty to thirty minutes to discuss the student’s life experiences. As the student shares his/her life story, he/she gets liberated because he/she begins to see the world with a different perspective. In the process the individual starts to discover a philosophy in which he/she has significance.

There is a clear relationship between liberation and character change (good character or norm character). When one reaches the level of norm character or good character, he/she has been liberated. In other words, he/she moves from domestication and pretence or the person jumps from a large-scale control to much freedom and peace. Thus, the overprotection in our children may need to be reviewed. Farrant states that, “the task of education, at the individual level, must be to help each individual discover a philosophy in which he/she has significance.”¹³¹ He adds, “the task of education is to fit the young for coping with society.”¹³² Actually, what Farrant is trying to say is that the young people ought to be exposed to the society values. Later, they are supposed to discover the ways they will be going to live by them. This explains why we say that a person of character is the one who jumps from a large

¹²⁹ Martin Ott, Postgraduate Colloquium May 2000, Department of Theology and Religious Studies. At Chilema Lay Training Centre.

¹³⁰ Brendan Carmody, *Education in Zambia. Catholic Perspectives*, Lusaka: Bookworld Publishers, 1999.

¹³¹ J.S. Farrant, *Principles and Practice of Education*, London: Longman, 1980, p. 85.

¹³² *Ibid.*

scale control to much freedom and peace because he/she has been helped to discover a philosophy in which he/she has significance.

So a religious educator has the duty to make clear these traditional values. In other words, to help a student to discover what character he/she will be or what human person he/she is going to be, the real *uMunthu* the Malawian traditional society is looking for. When I mention *uMunthu*, it means I am now talking about behaviour. Once I mention behaviour, I am discussing morality. Belief is dead or meaningless if it does not set a standard of behaviour for the believers. What is morality then? “Morality is a study of conduct, rules of behaviour, values and beliefs based on them.”¹³³ “When our actions are in accordance to the dictates of the natural law or moral law they are said to be good morals. Bad actions that violate natural law, are vices.”¹³⁴ At this point, it is good to discuss some of the moral values, which are generally adhered to by the local Malawians, so much that if violated, the ontological order of the universe gets disturbed, which is therefore protected by taboos. Traditional Malawian morality emphasizes social rather than individual moral responsibility, with the supernatural taking precedence over both the social and personal dimensions of morality. This is because the overriding concern in the African system of belief is the maintenance of harmony in the ontological order, in which man is the vital force. All offences are disruptions of the harmonious relationship in the ontological order. That is why almost all paramount laws of the Malawian society are religious and categorized as taboos. A taboo is a general prohibition, the infringement of which is deemed to affect the whole community and the whole person. On the other hand, if adhered to, they are expected to produce the accepted citizen, one of good character, *munthu wa uMunthu*. The moral values are: Respect for life, sense of community, sense of justice, respect for authority and prayerfulness.

¹³³ David Mphande, “Moral Values,” Teacher Development Unit,” MIE. Domasi, Zomba. p. 1119.

In conclusion, it must be said that dialogue, as suggested by Paulo Freire, is very important when conducting religious education classes. The teacher must be able to listen to his/her pupils telling their life stories. For it is only when one is able to reflect about one's life story that he is able to solve the problems of the present and to plan for the future. We have also seen that religious education must help the pupils to form convictions. That is, the pupils should be able to tell what is good for them and what is not. So dialogue, reflection and conviction form the character of the pupils. The supportive agents, which we have seen so far, are the religious education lessons that have moral values as part of the content. Also the religious educator takes the role of an accompanetor and accompanies his/her pupils through the journey of ideal life discovering. Edward Robinson points out, "any system of moral education that ignores this inner, and often quite secret, process of self discovery ... will be superficial in its appeal and limited in its effectiveness. In the last resort, it will not work. In times of personal crisis the appeal to decency will not be enough."¹³⁵

7.2 Traditional Malawians' Moral Values

The essence of morality in Malawi is not what you are but what you do to God, to the neighbour and to yourself. This has had such a firm grip on the African that it was expected to produce the acceptable citizen. Children were able to imbibe these through informal education. This means that a Malawian has special moral values, and exploration of each one of them will help us appreciate how they agree with Plato's moral virtues of justice, wisdom, temperance, courage and piety, discussed in chapter two. It is worth to note that Plato's moral values are the cardinal virtues adhered to by Christianity and Islam. Whereas in Malawian

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Edward Robinson, "Experience and Authority in Religious Education," *Religious Education* 71 (1976): 458 in Dykstra, *Vision and Character: A Christian Educator's Alternative to Kohlberg* p. 152.

tradition these moral values are related to: respect for life, sense of community, sense of justice, respect for authority and prayerfulness (piety).

7.2.1 *Respect for Life*

Life is considered as a supreme gift hence man's concern for protecting it, preserving it, transmitting it so that it lives on. It is conceived as vital participation in the source of life—God; while man is receiver, participant, with a vocation as co-creator with God through his cooperation in begetting. This explains the strong sense of physical generation, with fatherhood and motherhood as big values ensuring continuation of life (lineage). Life starts to be protected even before the birth of a child.¹³⁶ Abortion is one of the most serious sins in the Malawian's conscience, either because he/she is afraid of God or because it lessens the *mbumba* or because it is simply frightening. Therefore, an ideal Malawian (a man/woman of good character) is expected to respect, protect, and guard his/her life and the life of his/her neighbour.

Life is precious and must be protected in all possible ways. This is shown more practically than theoretically.¹³⁷ It is taken for granted that to take care of life is a must. “*Moyo wanga ndi mbiya*,” (My life is like a clay pot, I take care of it myself), meaning my own life's welfare is my responsibility. Take care of your own life¹³⁸ is one of the expressions, which is used often. When we study closely we discover that even this care is not only for this life (physical life) but also for the next life “In some cases, when one dies, the living bury the dead with tools, weapons, even his best clothes to be used in the next world.”¹³⁹ Many African societies view death as a continuation of life. After death person is said to have gone home, to have slept or

¹³⁶ Archibald J. Makumbi, *Maliro ndi Miyambo ya Achewa*, Blantyre: Longman, 1970, p. 19.

¹³⁷ Interviews with elder women indicate that before childbirth, a woman is trained to take care of life.

¹³⁸ Joseph Chakanza, *Wisdom of the People: 2000 Chinyanja Proverbs*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2000, p. 206.

¹³⁹ Interview with Mrs Kachitsa, village headperson of Kachitsa village, May 30, 2000.

to have departed. These words indicate that one has gone to another world. The spirit of the dead person joins the company of the “living dead” while the body decays. The final stage of the human soul is entering into the world of spirits.

7.2.2 *Sense of Community*

Life is participation – a sharing. My personality is a shared and corporate personality. This depicts community conscious value. The value derives from a people’s sense of commitment to giving and sharing of life.¹⁴⁰ An individual is trained to adapt to his social role and get along with others, rather than develop a personality that will inevitably produce tension in the group; hence, virtue of respect, love, generosity, hospitality, sharing, liberality.¹⁴¹ These virtues are considered to be community-binding tools. As such each and every member of the community is supposed to imbibe them. A true Malawian is expected to be community conscious.

Communities are organic bodies of people who are inter-subjectively related to one another as mysteries, and who hold convictions, stories, and visions in common. Communities can have character, too. The character of a community shapes the character of its people.¹⁴² It does this in several ways. First, communities have historical dramas of their own that, as one becomes a member of that community, he/she comes to adopt as part of his/her own drama. Secondly, communities have convictions and ways of seeing that also become my own. Indeed one cannot really be a member of a particular community unless he/she shares the community’s most fundamental convictions. Despite our unwillingness to assimilate the community convictions they shape us, they shape our character. Lastly, communities have languages and rituals of their own that both show forth and shape their visions. Particularly

¹⁴⁰ E.W. Chafulumira, *Mbiri ya Amang’anja*, Blantyre: Dzuka, 1987, p. 19.

¹⁴¹ Archibald J. Makumbi, *Maliro ndi Miyambo ya Achewa*, Blantyre: Longman, 1970, p. 33.

¹⁴² Craig R. Dykstra, *Vision and Character: A Christian Educator’s Alternative to Kohlberg*, pp. 55-56.

important here are the key images and metaphors and symbolic actions that give a community's language and rituals their particular distinctiveness. All communities have a language system that reflects and shapes their character and the character of their members.¹⁴³

So we have seen that communities can be a source of character formation of the youth.

The incorporation of this vocabulary and these rituals, stories, metaphors, and images into our own ways of thinking, understanding, feeling, intending, and perceiving will shape our character in such a way that we will be able more accurately to pay attention to reality, and be less likely to flee into our own social and personal dream worlds.¹⁴⁴

7.2.3 Sense of Justice

This is based on the value of "respect for life" and "sense of community." God is believed to be the guardian of justice, which implies conformity to established order and community norms. It is aimed at harmony and solidarity, the criterion being human need. Thus, if you take a tabooed thing from someone, you will be hurt if you just take it to steal. But if you take it out of need, the magic won't harm you. Hence, other virtues are respect for relationships, human rights (giving a person's due rights), honesty, reciprocity and truthfulness.¹⁴⁵

It is this sense of justice that had put John Chilembwe at pains and consequently led him to revolt against the whites. Justice is the virtue of being honest, fair or impartial, giving a person due right, privilege, respect, giving what one is entitled to, giving what one deserves, lawfully and legally. Love and respect are the basis for justice. Love and respect for others should lead us to give them their due respect and what they are entitled to. Many social problems are caused by lack of social justice. The opposite of justice is injustice, which includes acts like being unfair, partial, wanting more of everything, forgetting my neighbor and her/his needs,

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 58.

grabbing the best of everything. The causes are selfishness, laziness and not being mindful of others and their needs. Some social problems such as the gap between the rich and the poor, disappearance of some medicines from the government hospitals, lack of books in some schools and many other problems may be caused by lack of sensitivity to the needs of others. Being just helps us to be mindful of others and to share whatever we have with them. This is what was going on in the traditional Malawi.

In conclusion, justice is one of the virtues that constitute a man and woman of character. This means that, if Religious Education is aimed at forming the character of the person, it is imperative that the pupils are guided to study this virtue. But of course, the study should be mindful of the community. It should explore the elements of the Malawian society, which have demonstrated justice. At the same time, the pupils should explore their own lives on how they can institute justice in their lives and in the community in which they live. There are several ways of doing this; for instance, the teacher and the pupils can list a number of incidences where injustice has taken place, and together, while using the Bible or the Qur'an, try to find ways of curbing it. At the same time, it will be good to list also some positive areas where justice took place and find what made it to happen that way and the contribution to human development.

7.2.4 Respect for Authority

It is a virtue that helps us to treat others with consideration, compassion, to give honour, give reverence, to take others into account, to esteem, have a high opinion, to pay attention and admire. According to Muthoni, if we are respectful to ourselves, to God and to others, we shall find ourselves performing some of the above acts. The opposite of respect is disrespect seen in acts like contempt, disregard, lack of consideration, being scornful, never minding,

¹⁴⁵ E.W. Chafulumira, *Mbiri ya Amang'anja*, Blantyre: Dzuka, 1987, p. 15.

regarding others as unimportant, looking down upon others, taking no account of others, despise others or sneer at them.¹⁴⁶

This value is based much on the sense of community. While God is the Supreme Authority, the ancestors are the guardians. The aim of this value is to ensure harmony, mediation, and coordination of community life and activities. This has been there in Malawian society. Malawian families do not use the *bwana* (boss) idea, they value dialogue and listening. The Malawians by nature are polite people, and call each other *Mfumu*, *Achimwene*, *Achemwali* (chief, brother, sister). The same titles are given to their superiors. This signifies that a person of high ideals (good character) shows the highest sense of duty towards God and superiors.

In conclusion, a person of good character in Malawi is the one who has imbibed these values stated above. Such a person has high ideals of conduct, strength of will, friendliness, and dignity. This is what we call *uMunthu*. Likewise in the revealed religions such as Islam and Christianity these moral values are also adhered to. For instance in Islam moral order demands an ethical system which requires the Muslim to meet and fulfill the responsibility and obligation of the divine trust at the individual level. It also demands that this task be fulfilled with the assistance and co-operation of other human beings. This involvement with other humans is what is meant by community.¹⁴⁷ This notion requires the Muslim to involve others in doing good, and in struggling for justice.

¹⁴⁶ Prisca Muthoni, A.S.N. *Youth Today and Tomorrow*, Guide to Family Life Education; Nairobi: K.E.C. 1987, p. 26.

¹⁴⁷ Morgan, P. (ed), *Ethical Issues in Six Religious Traditions*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994, p. 251.

7.3 Moral Teachings of some Revealed Religions (Islam and Christianity)

On the moral value of respect for authority, Islam is emphatic that final obedience should be to God alone and the teaching of the Prophet. However, all members of a community have a duty to support and serve those whom they have elected to lead.¹⁴⁸

On the moral value of respect for life, Islam values human life and is concerned with its preservation, therefore it does not allow abortion, euthanasia and suicide.¹⁴⁹ In addition Islam has special teaching on justice. In Islam all humans are equal before God. They are all created in the divine image and this constitutes their essential humanity.¹⁵⁰

Christianity's teachings on moral values are straightforward. They all hinge on dependence upon God. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."¹⁵¹ According to the teaching of Jesus, man/woman is a dependent creature. It is the reason why Jesus said, "unless you become as children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."¹⁵² Children are not innocent but they are dependent, they have a great capacity of trusting others. With this understanding a Christian strives to live up to the attitudes of a truly un-aggressive person, which are set out in the beatitudes.¹⁵³ The beatitudes teach all the moral values which are upheld by most traditional Malawians. For instance the community consciousness value demands that one is humble and prudent in whatever he/she does to other member of the community. The humility and prudence is being poor in the spirit as demanded by the beatitudes.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 252 also see Surah 4: 29 in Abdullah Yusuf Ali (trans and commentary) *The Holy Qur'an*, Amana Corporation Brentwood, Maryland, USA, 1989.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, also see Surah 4: 29 in Abdullah Yusuf Ali (Translation and Commentary), *The Holy Qur'an*, 1989.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, also see. Surah 5:2 and 4:58 in Abdullah Yusuf Ali (trans and commentary) *The Holy Qur'an*, Amana Corporation Brentwood, Maryland, USA, 1989.

¹⁵¹ Matt. 5:3 in Alexander Jones (ed), *The Jerusalem Bible*, London, Longman and Todd, 1974.

¹⁵² Matt. 18:3 in Alexander Jones (ed), *The Jerusalem Bible*, 1974.

¹⁵³ Matt. 5:13 in Alexander Jones (ed), *The Jerusalem Bible*, 1974.

In addition, the only norm of Christianity is to act in order to maximize love in the situation at hand. Past situations, rules and traditions may be helpful guides, but ultimately the context of the situation must guide one in determining, what is the loving thing to do at that time and with the particular persons involved.¹⁵⁴ In conclusion these teachings encompass all the Malawian traditional values listed above, namely sense of authority, community consciousness, and value of life.

7.4 Transmission of Values in Traditional Malawi

The sources of informal Religious Education in traditional Malawi are stories, rites of passage, myths, songs, dances, prayers, proverbs, peer groups and other practices. Let us discuss some of these and see how they help a Malawian youth to respect the sacredness of life, laws and superiors.

7.4.1 Rites of Passage

According to the *World Book Encyclopedia*, “Rites of passage, is a ceremony held by nearly all societies to observe a person’s entry into a new stage of life. Rites of passage note such occasions as birth, graduation, or marriage.”¹⁵⁵ Through these, children get the teaching through participant observation and imitation. They come to learn that life is of greatest value so that nobody can take it for granted. For instance, when one falls ill there is much concern from the relatives. If the illness continues, the elders do their best to help the member in trouble. In some cases even the spirits of their ancestors are approached and asked to intercede for the sick member. Physicians or doctors, *asing’anga*, are consulted too, until all the possible means or ways are exhausted. If all this proves a failure, the relatives and neighbours come every morning or later during the day to visit and comfort the sick person. If the person

¹⁵⁴ R. LittleJohn (ed) *Exploring Christian Theology*, Boston: University Press of America, 1985, p. 444.

becomes worse and shows signs of deterioration and of nearing death, prudently the elders change their attitude and whisper in the ears of the sick person, “do not be afraid you are going to meet our ancestors. They are waiting for you, please do greet them for us. Mr. so and so *auje*, *agogo*, *amalume* (grandparents, uncle), even ourselves we are going there, we shall find you there.”¹⁵⁶

The relatives try to hold the mouth of the sick so as to let the mouth be natural and die peacefully in a tender hand and great consideration. It will be only after a special notice that the death will be announced. Only then the people will start to mourn. In many cases, before taking the dead body to the grave, the relatives will ask the people if he /she borrowed a little something and did not pay. “Please come for the payment or just say it now. We do not want our deceased relative to be in debt but let him/her reach home without obstacle. Let him /her cross the river of death safely.”¹⁵⁷ This is a strong belief that there is life after death and that the spirits of the ancestors are living with the Great Spirit. So we have seen that children and people get the teaching through participant observation and imitation. They come to learn that life is of greatest value and nobody can take it for granted. Here the children learn unconsciously that life is sacred and highly valuable.

Another evidence is the birth of a child. To show that Malawians have a great desire for abundant life, they start early to protect human life even before a person is born. The mother and father practise many taboos before and after the birth of their new baby. There is much rejoicing at the birth of the child. This rejoicing shows that life is really precious. For this reason the parents and the society continue together to guide and protect the life. It is taken for granted that to take care of life is a must. There is a proverb which supports this idea and it is

¹⁵⁵ *World Book Encyclopedia*, World Book, Inc. p. 350.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Mrs Kachitsa, village headperson of Kachitsa village, T/A. Pemba, Salima, on 12th June 1996.

used often *Moyo saika pa chiswe* (Do not put your life on termites). Meaning life is worth caring for. One should not endanger one's life through unbecoming behaviour.¹⁵⁸

I am suggesting that the youth should actually be involved in the rites of passage. This will lead them to acknowledge the value of life. The interviews I conducted during this study revealed that a good number of the respondents showed little respect for life. Looking into the respondents closely, you discover that most of those who respect life did participate in many traditional rites of passage. This suggests to me that it is this involvement in the rites of passage that gave them the conscience to respect life. Whereas those whose responses showed lack of respect for life, are young people who spend most of their time out of their homes begging or doing casual labour for their living, which, suggests that they pay little attention to the traditional rites of passage, consequently, they have lost this value of life, which is transmitted through these rites. This shows me that rituals in traditional rites of passage contribute to character formation. For the good of the youth, they ought to participate in these rites. "Most rites help people understand and accept their new roles in society, and help others learn to treat them in new ways. Generally, the most complicated rites are those for a new role that demands a great change in behaviour."¹⁵⁹

7.4.2 Rituals

"Ritual is a bridge between ideas and real life; between faith and action."¹⁶⁰ It is the high point of beliefs and ideas expressed symbolically. In Malawi, verbal symbols are often accompanied by symbolic action. Ritual caters for the human need to dramatize experience, to emphasize aspects of experience. The traditional Malawian is a ritual loving person. For instance, after

¹⁵⁷ I observed this happening at a Chewa funeral ceremony at Kachitsa village, T/A Pemba, Salima, on 12th June 1997.

¹⁵⁸ Joseph Chakanza, *Wisdom of the People: 2000 Chinyanja Proverbs*, 2000, p. 205.

¹⁵⁹ *World Book Encyclopedia*, World Book, Inc. p. 350.

harvest, acknowledging that God cared for the crops and the people too, there is a dance, which is performed, which has something to do with belief and value transmission.¹⁶¹

So a ritual is a practical way of expressing belief in God and in the traditional religious values. And children learn better if they are actually involved in the practical activities. As such, through rituals, informal religious education takes place effectively.

So we have seen that rituals are ceremonies and practices that reflect people's beliefs in practical terms. Examples of rituals are baptism, washing of the body (a funeral rite) and *wade* in Islam. Rituals renew and strengthen our sense of linkage with a tradition or belief. They also help preserve what is valuable and discard what is not acceptable in society. This is probably the element of ritual that helps to form the character of the youth. As such for youth character formation to take place, the youth ought to participate in these rituals. As they practice, they come to learn what life is all about in the community. Therefore, Religious Education should include some practical activities in real life situations.

7.4.3 Proverbs

According to Ernest Gray, "proverbs are pedagogical tools, for community entertainment, legal wisdom and greeting formulas. Their messages solve conflicts, reconciles antagonisms, discourage defections and contribute to the preservation of the instituted social order."¹⁶² Mphande emphasized that proverbs play a great role in society as moral devices. They can be used as themes including various strategies used for social and family organization, for example, *Mako ndi mako, usamuone kuchepa mwendo* (Your mother is your mother even if one leg is short), meaning "take jealous care of people of your origin" (parents), so that your

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ A Chintala dance is always performed among the Chewa. The Malipenga dance is performed among the Tonga, all to thank God for the good harvest..

mother will always be yours no matter what disability she has.¹⁶³ The role of the individual in a family: *Kalikokha ndi kanyama tiri tiwiri ndi tianthu* or *Mutu umodzi susenza denga*. (What is by itself is a little animal, those that are two are human beings or two heads are better than one. Everyone needs a shoulder to lean on in times of trouble. Solidarity encourages social well-being.)¹⁶⁴ Families and friendship ties: *Ukayenda siya phazi ukasiya mlomo ukutsatira*. (If you leave a place, leave your foot-print; if you leave your lip, it will find you, meaning that civility assures freedom or friendship.)¹⁶⁵ Children learn informally the acceptable norms of living in a community through proverbs.

For real education to take place, children are supposed to be very close to the parents or elders. In other words, the home is a vital force in inculcating traditional religious values. We are immediately forced to look to the home when we consider traditional religious values of children. Of course, this does not mean that they are (or should be) the sole socializing agents. Other adults can be significant in a child's life. At the same time, the role of parents is primary. In the Old Testament God said to the parents 'you' shall teach 'your children'.¹⁶⁶ During my interviews many parents acknowledged and confessed that, due to *time* problems, many youth have lost their traditional values. That is, parents of today spend very little time with their children; as such they don't take a chance to dialogue with their children, using proverbs to communicate the sacredness of life. The success of the proposed educational system also depends on the willingness of parents to accept responsibility for the nurture of their own children. There is increasing evidence of awareness that the formal religious education in Malawi is unable to effectively nurture children and youth in traditional religious values, and that the home must accept a greater share of the responsibility.

¹⁶² Ernest Gray, "Some Proverbs of the Nyanja People" *African Studies*, vol.3/3 (1944) in David Mphande, "The Use of Malawian Proverbs in Moral Instruction," *Religion in Malawi*, no. 6, (1996), p. 10.

¹⁶³ Joseph Chakanza, *Wisdom of the People: 2000 Chinyanja Proverbs*, 2000, p. 168.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 99, also see p. 222.

7.4.4 Stories

Parents use a story to communicate messages to their children. Through stories, children can be led into religious awareness and responses. Furthermore, through stories children internalize the messages given to them as they express their personal experiences, feelings of love, fear, courage, honesty or wonder. The stories are well chosen and well narrated and, mostly, created by the parents themselves. Usually the stories begin with real or imagined experiences the children may identify with. Sometimes the narrators (parents) pretend as if they participated in the events. Furthermore, the message in the story is clear and simple. The stories were meant to be entertaining and also to contain some element of moral teaching.¹⁶⁷ The major characters of stories told were usually small animals of which the squirrel and hare were prominent, and of the bigger animals, dragons were favored. Another character common in the folk tales was a young girl and her moral obligations. Such stories were usually concerned with young girls and boys who had led adventurous lives morally. Sometimes stories were about domestic life, with married women and their husbands as the major characters. The stories were meant to teach the young ones how to behave in community.

In this study, the telling of stories takes a different style. Children are encouraged not only to narrate imaginary stories but also their own life stories. By remembering their own life experiences, the child is led into reflection, which would eventually demand emotional feelings of joy for his/her good experiences or sorrow for bad experiences. This reflecting will by and large lead a child into making a conviction, which in turn becomes her/his character.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 316.

¹⁶⁶ Deuteronomy 6:6-7 in Alexander Jones (ed), *The Jerusalem Bible*, 1974.

¹⁶⁷ For a recent reprint of such moral stories see: Filemon Kamukhwara Chirwa, *Nthanu za Chitonga*, Zomba: Kachere, 2007.

7.4.5 Aural Prayer

It is life situations that occasion prayer. Examples of life situations as occasions for prayer are childbirth, wedding, sickness and epidemics, death, old age, planting, hunting, harvesting, first-fruits, famine, drought, disputes, reconciliation.¹⁶⁸ The main purposes that motivated the worshipper are petition, intercession, thanksgiving, praise, confession, purification, blessing, lament, and covenant. In summary, the Malawian is comfortable with these life situations and they help him to encounter God. A traditional Malawian encounters God in the reality of his life, e.g. joys, sorrows, conflicts or fears.¹⁶⁹ These are usually informal occasions. And the Malawian child hasn't got any choice but to hear with his/her ears the parents or elders publicly praying to God for these life situations. In the process the child learns the belief in God or the belief of turning to God in time of need.

7.4.6 Charms

This is a small-sewed parcel containing medicine bound round the neck of a baby to cause the fontanelles to close, or bound round the waist of the child to prevent illness. Sometimes they use *mphinjiri* (wood cut up into very small pieces, bored and strung on a string of beads or strings only) bound round the child's neck or waist to keep the wearer free from sickness. All these are attempts to preserve life and the children learn the value of life through observation.

¹⁶⁸ Alexander Chima, "Both Catholic and African", p. 122.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

Chapter Eight

New Developments in the Religious Education Curriculum

The Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Malawi Institute of Education has embarked upon a reform of the current primary school curriculum and its assessment procedures. This reform aims at improving the quality of primary education in schools. The current Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reforms (PCAR) started in 2001.

8.1 Purpose of Primary Education as Presented in the New Curriculum

The purpose includes key points or outcomes which every primary school child should achieve at the end of the primary school cycle. It will be necessary to teach all learning areas for each class from Standard 1 to Standard 8. This consideration suggests that all learning areas including Religious Education are important for the overall development of all learners as it reads:

The purpose of primary education shall be to promote the overall development of all learners so that each becomes literate, numerate, and has a basic understanding of science and technology, is responsible, morally sound and a productive citizen in a democratic society, who is also equipped with skills, values and attitudes to live a healthy life, survive socially and economically and has a desire for life-long learning.¹⁷⁰

It is expected that this purpose of primary education will be realized through all learning areas including Religious Education. Malawi, through PCAR, has decided to adopt Outcome Based Education (OBE) in primary schools. It is hoped and expected that OBE will help Malawi to address problems experienced in the primary school system where learners are achieving very little at the end of the teaching and learning process. Outcome Based Education is aimed at achievement of expected levels of knowledge, skills and desired values and attitudes. The lesson pattern is designed in such a way that a teacher prepares in advance the desirable concepts the learner is to learn by the end of the lesson. In addition, the desirable skills that

the learner is to practice and master at the end of the lesson, is shown. Furthermore, the desired values and attitudes are also planned in advance. It is based on the belief that each learner has the full potential to learn and become a productive citizen. It also depends on the caring and competent teachers who are dedicated to helping all children to learn. It is a learner-centred and activity based approach to learning and teaching. Finally, it is oriented to local conditions, relevant and responsive to the needs of all children.

8.2 Necessary School Conditions

OBE recognizes as necessary a good learning environment for children as buildings, grounds, teaching and learning resources, but above all it emphasizes the teacher's attitude towards the learner and learner's attitude and behaviour towards the teacher and other learners. Religious Education has topics which attempt to form pupils' attitudes in the schools. These topics are explored from all the religions found in Malawi. Through this approach Religious Education is attempting to inculcate traditional values in the children by looking at the values in African Traditional Religion (ATR).

8.3 Emotional and Behavioural Training

The new curriculum has put more emphasis on specific learning disabilities. Religious Education contributes to this endeavour by providing means of dealing with children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Most of the lessons dwell on human virtues, in Standard 6 these are 10 out of 17 Units. This means that children who show inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers are assisted.

¹⁷⁰ *Journeys through PCAR*, (5), Domasi: Malawi Institute of Education, March 2007, p. 11.

8.4 Assessment Methodologies

This is a process of collecting and interpreting information on learners which shows whether there have been changes in the learners' behaviours after instruction. Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process. As far as promoting effective learning is concerned, continuous assessment is one of the forms of assessment. Continuous assessment is the on-going process of teacher's diagnosis of the effects of teaching and learning activities. The teacher observes learners' behaviour and checks the progress made by the learners. The teacher is supposed to continuously keep records of each learner's performance. The recording of a learner's performance, progress and achievement during the learning and teaching process should be completed systematically. If properly implemented the new curriculum is supposed to bring necessary solutions to the problems raised in chapter five.

8.5 Continuing Professional Development Programmes

In support of the implementation of the new curriculum, it is proposed that the Primary Education Advisors (PEAs) meet every two weeks throughout the term with all the teachers, on a fixed schedule. At each of these meetings, it is intended that they will be looking forward to the coming two weeks' teaching. The purpose is to address the continual quest to improve the education we make available to our children by helping the teachers to develop their skills.

As a conclusion, it should be acknowledged beyond doubt that African traditional means of educating the youth are far superior to the modern examination oriented methods. For instance, as observed during the research, 75% of the respondents who said that it is always wrong to practice mercy killing, regularly participate in many rites of passage e.g. Birth, naming ceremonies, funerals and initiation ceremonies. With that in view, it is very important to accept that striking a balance will do us more good than harm in terms of the character of

our youth. As much as we include some African Traditional Religious ideas in the curriculum, it will be of great help if the practical part of the traditions is given equal if not higher attention in our curriculum. This seems to suggest that some African traditional rituals, which help to inculcate some of the African traditional moral values, should be considered seriously. In addition to that, the Religious Education curriculum of our primary schools should include guidance and counselling sessions, which look seriously at our cultural values and marry them properly with our Christian values.

To succeed in such endeavor, there is a need to carefully prepare our Religious Education teachers. Apart from the normal Teacher Training Programmes they accomplish, there is a need to organize the teachers into associations with the aim of promoting the character of the youth.

A critical look at the early missionaries' way of training pupils in character helps us to understand that the youth should not be given too much choice in terms of what they should do with any of the moral problems they come across. They need guidance and counselling conducted by competent personnel. This is not indoctrination because as educationalists we know that at every developmental stage a child has certain needs, which he/she should satisfy. Because of this knowledge it will be very easy to formulate programmes for each age level. Besides, the rituals we are suggesting here should also be considered as one way of helping our children to graduate from one transitional stage to another.

The character we are trying to advocate here is a character, which Craig Dykstra is suggesting. Thus preparing a child, who has the necessary virtues, which make him/her to be a true person. That is a man/woman of justice. If justice is drilled, demanded and practiced by

every child, the next generation will be a generation with human rights in mind when performing any responsibility assigned.

In short, this is what this thesis has tried to come up with. Let us not forget the historical purpose of giving Religious Education, which was to eradicate evil and to bring peace and stability among people of Africa. We are still people of Africa and the evils are still with us. Let us not pretend that we are fully civilized. We still need to advocate change of behaviour, which most people now complain that it is lost.

As such it is recommended in this thesis that Religious Education lessons should include practical activities in the community. For instance, Religious Education pupils must be given an opportunity to do some charitable work in the community. This would help them to internalize the religious teaching of assisting those in need. In addition, the activities would help them to form positive attitudes to life. It is also important that religious education lessons should include moments of sharing personal religious experiences. As we have seen, one way of forming character is through story telling. The more children are able to share their life stories the more their character is going to be formed. Finally, it has been observed that participant observation in rites of passage helps children to learn the values of life. Therefore, a Religious Education lesson should provide moments of participating in real life situations such as funerals, wedding or celebrations of the birth of a child.

The new curriculum (PCAR) which is being developed in Malawi must keep this in mind. Fortunately the researcher is greatly involved in the development of the Teachers' Guides and Learners' Books. There is no doubt that this work will have an impact on the books.

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Appendix A:

Questionnaire to the Pupils

Introduction

Dear child, part of your studies in this school concern Religious Education. We want to improve the quality of Religious Instruction in your school. Before designing new programs for the school we want to consult you. The schools are operated for you. Your views are very important. To assist us in planning religious programs, please fill out the following questionnaire. You should not give your name or sign the questionnaire. This will give you the freedom to answer the questions in a very honest and open manner. Thank you for your cooperation. In some of the questions you're given a choice, please place x in the blank next to your choice. In other questions please write your answer in the blank space provided.

QUESTION 1-10 ASK FOR GENERAL ANSWERS.

1. Your present age.....
2. Your sex. Male..... Female.....
3. Your class, standard.....
4. Your denomination.....
5. Your mother's denomination.....
6. Your father's denomination.....
7. Do you live with, a. your father?....., b. your mother?....., c. neither father nor mother....., d. a relative....., none of the above.....
8. What is the total of years you have spent in this school?
9. In your daily life and the problems you face do you find that the religious instruction in this school has been a. very helpful....., b. helpful....., c. not helpful.....

10. Would you say that the religious instruction you receive in this school influences your religious behavior, a. very strongly....., b. strongly....., c. a little bit....., d. very little....., e. not at all.....

QUESTION A.

Many people working for the government have been accused of using government money for personal uses. Would you say that to use government money for personal use

- a. is always wrong....., b. most of the times it is wrong..... c. sometimes it is wrong....., d. It is alright to use government money for personal use.....

QUESTION B.

Cheating takes place during examinations. Do you think that cheating is a. always wrong....., b. sometimes wrong....., c. acceptable....., alright as long as you don't get caught.....

QUESTION C

Thievery is becoming a problem in Malawi. Often when a thief is caught, people beat, kick, and sometimes even kill the thief. Do you agree with this practice?

- a. strongly..... b. somewhat....., c. disagree..... d. strongly disagree.....

QUESTION D

Do you think that abortion is

- a. always wrong.....,b. wrong most of the time....., c. sometimes wrong....., d. morally acceptable.....

QUESTION E

If one of your friends told you that he or she had AIDS, describe what your attitude and behaviour would be towards her/him.....

- a. I would maintain the same level of friendship.....
b. I would still be friends but not the same degree.....
c. I would terminate my friendship.....

QUESTION F

Do you think that euthanasia is

- a. always wrong....., b. wrong most of the time....., c. sometimes wrong....., d.
morally acceptable.....

QUESTION G

How often do you pray?

- a. every day?
b. several times a week?
c. only on Sundays?
d. seldom?
e. never.

QUESTION H

List any charitable work you do and indicate how many times a week you do that work (For example,
I visit sick people in the hospital once a week)

.....

Appendix B: The Common Religious Education Syllabus (1981)

COMMON SYLLABUS. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION. STANDARD FIVE. FIRST TERM

THEME: GOD PREPARES THE PEOPLE OF MALAWI

WEEK I: TRADITION, VARIOUS FORMS.

a). ORAL TRADITION:

NOTE TO TEACHERS: Tradition means handing down from generation to generation, opinions, beliefs, customs, arts and crafts, etc. The ancestors wanted their children to do the same as they had done themselves, so that they might avoid trouble and live peacefully and be useful members of the tribe without harming their community.

- The prayer placed at the end of the lesson could be integrated into the material.

TALK: Do you have a grandfather who makes mats or carves mortars? ... Do you have a grandmother who makes pots? ... Do they tell you stories of long ago while they are so working? ... What do they tell you? ...

- Were you ever there when the chief judged cases in the villages? ...
- How do you know that you have to receive a gift in both hands? ... kneel down?.. say: zikomo? ...
- Were the people of long ago Christians? ... Yet they taught their children very good and useful things. They had a special way of teaching, not at all like your teachers do in school today.
- If they wanted to show them it is dangerous to start bad habits, because it is difficult to stop them, they would say: “TEKA NTALAWA, ADATHA PHIKA”. We should help our friends when they are in trouble: “MNZAKO AKAPSYA NDEBVU, NZIMIRE”.
“KUKANA NDI KUKAZINGA, KOMA KUPATSA NKUBZALA”.

Sometimes a child can ask a service from a grown up person: “KALULU ADATUMA NJOBVU”.

MESSAGE: Our ancestors could not know the Christian religion, but God helped them to teach their children real wisdom.

When Jesus came on earth, He spoke in the same way: e.g. instead of saying: “You are the neighbour of every person you meet, - He told them the parable of the Good Samaritan. (Luke 10, 25).

When He wanted to say that everyone who humbles himself, will be made great, if he works for God and not for his own glory, He gave them the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. (Luke 18:9)

PRAYER: Lord, we thank you for giving our ancestors such a wisdom that they could teach their children to do what you want, even before they knew Jesus and had heard His Words. (silence).

ACTIVITIES: The pupils can be put into small groups and asked to try and find proverbs or other saying and discuss the meaning. They can find in the Bible some stories that Jesus told and try to find the meaning, e.g. Luke 15.

VISUAL AIDS: Objects made by village people.

Photo's that may be used as illustration of the known parables.

STANDARD FIVE

Term One GOD PREPARES THE PEOPLE

- 1 Traditions: Various forms
 - a) Oral traditions
 - b) Written tradition
 - c) Traditional culture
2. Value of Tradition
 - a) Who receives tradition
 - b) Who receives tradition
 - c) How we receive tradition
 - d) Our own tradition
3. The Gift of Life
 - a) Life in nature
 - b) Human life
 - c) Life in the family
4. Growth
 - a) Growth in nature
 - b) Growth in man
 - c) Growth in the spirit
5. Fullness of life
 - a) God, the reaper of life
 - b) Different ways of life
 - c) Family life
6. Life after death
 - a) God, the reaper of life
 - b) After life
 - c) Fear and hope
7. Our Ancestors
 - a) The ancestors know God
 - b) The ancestors prayed God
 - c) God loves our ancestors
8. Traditional Concept of Sin
 - a) Sin against brothers
 - b) Effects of sin on the community
 - c) Reconciliation
9. Traditional Concept of God
 - a) Giver of life
 - b) Protector
 - c) The All-Powerful (the strongest Spirit)
10. “He who is present with us”

- a) Giver of real wealth
- b) The One who alone can answer life's problems
- c) The One to whom the unjustly accused may go

11 "He who is disappeared"

- a) Man cuts himself off
- b) Disorder in nature
- c) Disorder in human life (Need for a Saviour)

12. Reconciliation: Christmas

- a) Promise of restoration of unity

Term Two THE COMING OF CHRIST

1. Revelation of Christ
 - a) Christ reveals Himself to the Gentiles
 - b) Christ is for all men
 - c) Christ reveals Himself to Malawians
2. How did Christ reveal Himself
 - a) Through the first missionaries
 - b) Their love of God and people
 - c) The strong faith of the first Christians
3. How the people received Christ
 - a) Expectation of the people
 - b) Response to their desire
 - c) We respond to Christ today
4. A “new” way
 - a) The Giver of Life
 - b) Christ the Saviour
 - c) He who is present”
5. Christ continues to reveal Himself
 - a) Through the Church
 - b) Through others
 - c) Through ourselves
6. Through the Church
 - a) Worship
 - b) Preaching
 - c) Pastoral work
7. Through the Church
 - a) Helping one another
 - b) Caring for one another
 - c) Forgiving one another
8. Through us
 - a) Witness of our life
 - b) At home
 - c) In the community
9. The New Commandment
 - a) Freedom to love
 - b) Freedom to help
 - c) Freedom to forgive
10. The New Commandment
 - a) Freedom from hatred

- b) Freedom from fear
- c) Freedom from jealousy

11. Christ's Supreme Love

- a) "Greater love than this no man has" John 15 verse 13
- b) Forgiveness: "Father, forgive them" Luke 23 verse 34
- c) "Father, into thy hands..." Luke 23 verse 46

12. Christ's Victory

- a) His return to the father: The Father gives Him new life.

Term 3

CHRIST OUR GREATEST ANCESTOR

1. Jesus sends us His Spirit
 - a) Jesus wants to share His new life with us.
 - b) Jesus sends His Spirit so that we can live the New Way
 - c) We receive the Spirit of Jesus
2. How Jesus reacted to temptation
 - a) Jesus tempted in the desert
 - b) We are tempted in daily life
 - c) The Spirit of Jesus helps us in temptation
3. The Spirit of Jesus helps us to overcome fear
 - a) Jesus tempted in the desert
 - b) We are tempted in daily life
 - c) The first Christians and missionaries overcame fear
4. How Jesus reacted to ingratitude
 - a) Jesus was hurt when only one leaper returned to give thanks
 - b) Women show gratitude to Jesus
 - c) Jesus is the great Ancestor worthy of all gratitude
5. How Jesus reacted to hatred
 - a) What Jesus taught us
 - b) What did Jesus do?
 - c) His last words on the Cross: "Father, forgive them"
6. Jesus and the poor in heart
 - a) The poor in heart inherit the New Way
 - b) The Pharisee and the Publican
 - c) The poor in heart have joy and peace
7. Jesus and the sick
 - a) "I have come for those who are sick".
 - b) Jesus does not judge, but He loves and cures
 - c) The woman surprised in sin
8. Jesus and the Gentiles
 - a) Jesus and the woman that was a stranger
 - b) Jesus and the Samaritans
 - c) We are all one family in Christ, the great Ancestor
9. The love of Christ for all men
 - a) Jesus became one of us
 - b) He loved and accepted us to the end
 - c) He gives His life of His own free will
10. Jesus' love for the Father
 - a) Jesus is about His father's business
 - b) Jesus expresses praise and thanks to the father

c) “I always do the things that please Him”

11. Jesus’ desire to bring all men to the Father

a) Jesus promised the Spirit to help us

b) Jesus’ desire that all may be one

c) “As I was sent by the Father”

SAMPLE LESSON

WEEK I: REVELATION OF CHRIST

LESSON C CHRIST REVEALS HIMSELF TO THE MALAWIANS

TEACHER'S NOTES: When teaching about the beliefs of the ancestors, you can always refer to what the children learned during the first term.

BIBLE REFERENCES: Matthew 11:27

MESSAGE: Jesus loves the people of Malawi and wants them to know Him and through Him the Father.

ATTITUDE: Thankfulness to Jesus

EQUIPMENT: Map of the world.

TALK: A) Introduction: Already long ago our ancestors knew something about God... He is the one who made everything... He gives rain... He hears us when we pray to Him...

b) Story: One day Jesus said: Matthew 11:27

“MY FATHER HAS GIVEN ME ALL THINGS. NO ONE KNOWS THE SON EXCEPT THE FATHER, AND NO ONE KNOWS THE FATHER EXCEPT THE SON, AND THOSE TO WHOM THE SON WANTS TO REVEAL HIM”.

Jesus came to tell us more about God. People knew that there was a God, but they had no possibility to find out more about Him. God for them was far away... He did not know much of what was going on earth... People knew that God is good... but they did not know that He is a loving Father, who is interested in everything we do...and who wants us to love with Him for eternity... People did not know that they were destined to be God's children. They could not know this without Jesus... Christianity is a revealed religion. No one can find it by himself. Faith comes by hearing. We cannot discover it for ourselves. We hear it through the Church who sends people to us in the name of God.

From Juda the Good News went to Rome with the apostles Peter and Paul. The slave trade was practiced all over the world. Young English men were sold on the market in Rome. The great Pope Gregory saw them there and decided to send apostles to preach the Gospel to them.

From Britain the message of Christ came to the Germanic countries and spread gradually all over Europe.

In the times of the discovery of America Christianity too crossed the Atlantic and reached the New World. At about the same time it reached the Far East.

In the last Century many explorers came to Africa and brought missionaries who spread the Faith in the mist of great difficulties.

The Gospel is a Message which is completely new. It constantly forces us to revise our thinking and our ways of acting. It turns us into something new. This is what we mean by conversion. Those who accept it will learn to know Jesus and through Him the Father.

Many of us have learned our religion from our parents. Parents always want to give their children the best they have. Their religion is usually very dear to them. If the parents love God, they cannot but speak to their children about Him and teach them how to pray. This is what our ancestors did long ago and this is what Christian parents do to day. That is why you are Christians today. You follow the example of your parents and copy their ways. When you grow up, you will have your moment of

conversion. You will decide for yourself if you are on the right way and you will choose what you believe is the best.

c) Conclusion: Jesus wants us to know about Him. He has sent people to bring His Message to us. We can already learn it from our parents. It is for us to open our hearts to the Message and be ready to learn and to live it.

PRAYER: Father, thank you for sending Jesus to let us know about you.
Thank you that we may be your children.
Thank you for Jesus who is our Brother.

ACTIVITIES: Discussion in groups:

- Why is the Gospel a new Message?
- How does it differ from the old religion of our ancestors?

Appendix C: The Integrated Religious Education Syllabus (1991) (Extracts)

EDUCATION TEACHING SYLLABUS

PRIMARY RELIGIOUS STANDARD 5

THEME: IDEAS ABOUT GOD

TERM 1 TOPIC 1

TOPIC	OBJECTIVES	CONTENT	SUGGESTED TEACHING LEARNING EXPERIENCES	SUGGESTED TEACHING/LEARNING MATERIALS	SUGGESTED PUPIL ASSESSMENT
NAMES FOR GOD	Pupils will be able to: 1. explain their names and why they were given names 2. list nicknames given to people and explain why those names have been given; 3. List ways in which names are used; 4. explain why names are important in society; 5. illustrate how names are used to show respect of people;	▪ Personal names ▪ Nicknames	▪ In groups, talking about why they were given their names and what their names mean. ▪ Pupils reporting to class. ▪ In groups, listing nicknames they know and using and saying why these nicknames have been given. ▪ Reporting to class. ▪ Discussing how nicknames can become family names. ▪ Listing where and when names are used. ▪ Talking about the importance of names in society. ▪ In groups, discussing how names can be used in a respectful way.	▪ A chart of names, meaning languages and nicknames with their meanings.	Are pupils able to: 1. Explain their names and why they were given these names? 2. list nicknames given to people and explain why those names have been given? 3. list ways in which names are used? 4. explain why names are important in society? 5. illustrate how names are used to show respect for people?

TOPIC	OBJECTIVES	CONTENT	SUGGESTED TEACHING/ LEARNING EXPERIENCES	SUGGESTED TEACHING/LEARNING MATERIALS	SUGGESTED PUPIL ASSESSMENT
NAMES FOR GOD	Pupils will be able to: 10. show how receiving Christian baptism means changing a way of life; 11. give examples of a person's name being spoilt by the other people or another person; 12. explain the commandment in Exodus 20:16; 13. suggest how a person's good name could be restored, given a situation in which that person's name has been spoilt;	▪ Meaning of baptism. ▪ Spoiling a person's name ▪ Exodus 20:16 ▪ Restoring a good name	▪ Role-playing a boy who after baptism and acquisition of a new name becomes a responsible Christian ▪ Given a short story showing how a person's name was spoilt in the story. ▪ Listing ways in which a person's name can be spoilt. ▪ Given a situation in which someone's good name is spoilt, in groups, discussing how that person's good name can be restored	▪ A picture or a cartoon of a person being accused falsely. ▪ Bible story from Exodus 20:16.	Are pupils able to: 10. Show how receiving Christian baptism means changing way of life? 11. give examples of a person's name being spoilt by the other person? 12. Explain the commandments in Exodus 20:16? 13. Suggest how a person's good name could be restored, given a situation in which that person's name has been spoilt?

TOPIC	OBJECTIVES	CONTENT	SUGGESTED TEACHING/ LEARNING EXPERIENCES	SUGGESTED TEACHING/LEARNING MATERIALS	SUGGESTED PUPIL ASSESSMENT
NAMES FOR GOD	Pupils will be able to: 14. Explain the meaning of some names of places in Malawi; 15. Explain the meaning of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Bethsaida; 16. Explain the meaning of the following names and titles used in the Gospels: Jesus, Christ, Immanuel, Son of God;	▪ Place names ▪ Names of Jesus	▪ Pupils discussing names of some places and why they were given those names. ▪ Discussing some names of places in the Bible and their meanings; ▪ Singing a hymn or a song in which one of the Bible places is mentioned. ▪ Discussing names of Jesus in Malawian languages ▪ Given passages from the Bible, in groups, giving meanings of the names of Jesus. ▪ Groups reporting to class. ▪ Discussing how Christians respond to the names of Jesus. ▪ Making a chart of: - names of Jesus; - meaning of the name of Jesus; ▪ the response of Christians.	▪ A picture of roads with name posts. ▪ Hymns. ▪ A picture of Christians honouring Jesus	Are pupils able to: 14. explain the meaning of some names of places in Malawi? 15. explain the meaning of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Bethsaida? 16. explain the meaning of the following names and titles used in the Gospels: Jesus, Christ, Immanuel, Son of God?

TOPIC	OBJECTIVES	CONTENT	SUGGESTED TEACHING/ LEARNING EXPERIENCES	SUGGESTED TEACHING/LEARNING MATERIALS	SUGGESTED PUPIL ASSESSMENT
NAMES FOR GOD	Pupils will be able to: 17. explain the meaning of names of God in Malawian languages; 18. list some titles given to God in the Quran. 19. explain the meanings of names of God in the Old Testament; 20. state their favourite names or titles of God.	- Names for God - Our response to God	- Finding our from their homes names of God and their meanings. - In groups, listing the names of God they found out. - Discussing the names of God and their meanings. - Given passages, from the Quran listing names for God in Islam. - Discussing the meanings of names of God in the Old Testament. - Composing a prayer praising God with different names and titles. - Listing on the chalkboard names and the titles of God which they like. - In groups, choosing four names for God which the group likes most. - Each pupil to compose a prayer using the names or titles which he/she likes most.	- A picture of Muslim honouring Allah. - A picture of children worshipping God.	Are pupils able to: 17. Explain the meaning of names of God in Malawian languages? 18. list some titles given to God in the Quran? 19. explain the meanings of names of God in the Old Testament? 20. state their favourite names or titles of God?

PRIMARY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHING SYLLABUS
STANDARD 5
THEME: SIN AND SALVATION

TERM 1

TOPIC 2

TOPIC	OBJECTIVES	CONTENT	SUGGESTED TEACHING/ LEARNING EXPERIENCES	SUGGESTED TEACHING/LEARNING MATERIALS	SUGGESTED PUPIL ASSESSMENT
HAPPINESS	Pupils will be able to: - list various people, events and things which make people happy; - show that people need other people and things in order to be happy all the time; - draw pictures showing happy people; - show how people soothe a baby who is crying and make the baby happy;	- Happiness - Soothing a baby	- Listing various people, events and things that make people happy. - In groups, using stick puppets to tell the story of Mr. Happy. - Listing things and people who make other people happy. - Suggesting signs of happiness in a person. - Drawing pictures of happy people. - In groups, discussing and listing ways in which they can make a baby cry. - Miming ways in which they can make a baby stop crying and sing songs that people sing when comforting a crying baby for a short time	- Food, gift, money, clothes, etc. - Drawing materials - Pictures of people comforting babies	Are pupils able to: - list things, events, activities, etc. which makes people happy? - show that people need other people and things in order to be happy all the time? - draw pictures of happy people? - show how people soothe a baby who is crying and make the baby happy?

TOPIC	OBJECTIVES	CONTENT	SUGGESTED TEACHING/ LEARNING EXPERIENCES	SUGGESTED TEACHING/LEARNING MATERIALS	SUGGESTED PUPIL ASSESSMENT
HAPPINESS	Pupils will be able to: 5. arrange in order of importance five things which makes them happy; 6. list the things without which people cannot live; 7. compose prayers of thanks for things which gives them life and happiness; 8. describe the different foods they usually eat; 9. describe how they feel when they have eaten;	▪ Vital human needs. ▪ Food ▪ Hunger	▪ Listing in order of importance five things that make them happy. ▪ In groups, using work card, listing things without which people cannot live; ▪ All the groups combine their findings and listing in order of importance five things that people cannot live without. ▪ In groups, composing prayers of thanks for things which give them life and happiness. ▪ Listing the different kinds of food they eat and saying where and how they get this food. ▪ Describing writing how they feel when they are very hungry. ▪ In pairs, listing natural catastrophies that cause famine	▪ Pictures of things that make people happy. ▪ Different kinds of food	Are pupils able to: 5. arrange in order of importance five things which makes them happy? 6. list the things without which people cannot live? 7. compose prayers of thanks for things which give them life and happiness 8. describe the different foods they usually eat? 9. describe how they feel when they have not eaten?

TOPIC	OBJECTIVES	CONTENT	SUGGESTED TEACHING/ LEARNING EXPERIENCES	SUGGESTED TEACHING/LEARNING MATERIALS	SUGGESTED PUPIL ASSESSMENT
HAPPINESS	Pupils will be able to: 10. compose a prayer for people who do not have enough food; 11. list qualities of a good wife and a good husband in a happy family; 12. state promises people make to each other at weddings; 13. sing a happy wedding song; 14. describe different work done by the adults in areas where the pupils live; 15. describe a day in the life of working adults;	▪ A happy family ▪ Marriage vows ▪ Wedding songs	▪ In groups, composing prayers for people who do not have enough food. ▪ In groups, listing qualities of a good wife and a good husband. ▪ Writing their findings on the chalkboard. ▪ In groups, listing promises made at weddings and showing that wedding promises must be kept if a family is to be happy. ▪ Role-playing a wedding ceremony in which a couple makes promises and happy wedding songs are sung. ▪ In groups, listing either jobs done in urban areas or in rural areas. ▪ Groups writing their findings on the chalkboard. ▪ Describing how a person who works spend his normal working day from the time he gets up to the time he goes to bed.	▪ Pictures of weddings ▪ Wedding songs ▪ Picture of different jobs or activities that make a person happy.	Are pupils able to: 10. compose a prayer for people who have not enough food? 11. list qualities of a good husband and a good wife in a happy family? 12. state promises people make to each other at weddings? 13. sing a happy wedding song? 14. Describe different work done by the adults in areas where the pupils live? 15. describe a day in the life of a working adult?

TOPIC	OBJECTIVES	CONTENT	SUGGESTED TEACHING/ LEARNING EXPERIENCES	SUGGESTED TEACHING/LEARNING MATERIAL	SUGGESTED PUPIL ASSESSMENT
HAPPINESS	Pupils will be able to: 16. describe how work makes a person happy; 17. give examples of people achieving happiness by overcoming pain; 18. explain how people overcome pain and look happy even when they are in pain;	- Happiness from work - Overcoming pain	- Thinking and choosing the job they would like to do. - Miming the jobs they would like to do and showing how doing this job can make them happy. - Describe ways in which their job can help them make other people happy. - In groups, talking about how a baby falls many times before it learns to walk and suggesting others examples of people overcoming pain to achieve happiness. - Reporting their findings to class. - Given part of a story on work cards, in groups, completing and role-playing the story. - Role-playing that their friend is hurt and they are helping him.	- Pictures of a baby playing. - Pictures of accident victims who have continued to live normal lives. - Pictures of First Aid people helping someone hurt.	Are pupils able to: 16. describe how work makes a person happy? 17. give examples of people achieving happiness by overcoming pain? 18. explain how people overcome pain and look happy even when they are in pain?

TOPIC	OBJECTIVES	CONTENT	SUGGESTED TEACHING/ LEARNING EXPERIENCES	SUGGESTED TEACHING/LEARNING MATERIAL	SUGGESTED PUPIL ASSESSMENT
HAPPINESS	Pupils will be able to: 19. list signs which show that the rains are coming; 20. list ways in which the coming of the rain is important; 21. list names of God in Malawian languages which show that God is the sender of rain.	- First rains - God and rain	- Discussing practical ways in which people overcome pain - In groups, discussing the signs which show that the rains are coming. - Groups reporting their findings to the class - In groups, discussing the importance of the coming of rain; - Groups discussing how people prepare for the coming of rains. - In language groups, listing names of God in their languages which mean that God is the sender of rain. - Groups reporting the list to class. - Discussing the reports	- Pictures of signs of the rain, e.g.: trees being blown by wind, rain, clouds migrating birds, etc - Pictures or cartoons of people preparing for the coming of rain. - Chart of names of God in various names	Are pupils able to: 19. list signs which show that the rains are coming? 20. list ways in which the coming of rain is important? 21. list names of God in Malawian languages which show that God is the sender of rain?

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HAPPINESS	Pupils will be able to: 22. cite traditional prayers for rain in Malawian languages; 23. describe how people express their happiness when the rains come; 24. prepare and perform a class celebration for the beginning of rains. 25. list the five pillars of Islam;	▪ Rain prayers ▪ Expressing happiness for the coming of rains. ▪ Celebration for the beginning of rains. ▪ Five pillars of Islam	▪ In language groups, recalling traditional prayers for rain. ▪ In language groups, reciting traditional prayers for rain to class. ▪ In groups, discussing how people show happiness when rains comes. ▪ Dramatizing how people show happiness when rain comes. ▪ Listing the story of a happy Muslim and noting the five duties that he must perform. ▪ Using workcards, in groups, answering questions on the workcards. ▪ Reporting their answers to class	▪ Traditional rain prayers ▪ Prayers, songs. ▪ Workcards	Are pupils able to: 22. recite traditional prayers for rain in Malawian languages? 23. describe how people express their happiness when rains come? 24. prepare and perform a class celebration for the beginning of rains? 25. list the five pillars of Islam?

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HAPPINESS	Pupils will be able to: 26. compare the religious activities of Christians and Muslims; 27. tell the story of the Rich Fool in Luke 12:16-21; 28. show how a person who refuses to give anything to anyone is sad, and those who give to other people are happy;	▪ Muslim and Christian religious activities ▪ The story of the Rich Fool ▪ Giving and receiving gifts	▪ Listing on the blackboard, similarities and differences between the religious activities of Muslims and Christians. ▪ In groups, talking about and writing down ways in which Christians and Muslims could learn from each other based on the similarities. ▪ Telling the story of the Rich Fool. ▪ In groups, discussing the story of the Rich Fool and showing how this story would be different if the fool was willing to give things to other people ▪ In groups, telling stories about greedy, misery and selfish people who were sad, and other stories about people who share things with other people and are happy. ▪ Groups reporting their findings to class.	▪ Bible story from Luke 12:16-21	Are pupils able to: 26. compare the religious activities of Christians and Muslims? 27. tell the story of the Rich Fool in Luke 12:16-21? 28. show how a person who refuses to give anything to anyone is sad, and those who give to other people are happy?

TOPIC	OBJECTIVES	CONTENT	SUGGESTED TEACHING/ LEARNING EXPERIENCES	SUGGESTED TEACHING/LEARNING MATERIAL	SUGGESTED PUPIL ASSESSMENT
HAPPINESS	Pupils will be able to: 29. list ways by which people show that they are said; 30. tell the story of Jesus and Zacchaeus from Luke 19:1-10; 31. explain how Jesus changed Zacchaeus from a sad to a happy man; 32. suggest ways of making a sad, sick or lonely person happy;	▪ Signs of sadness ▪ Jesus and Zacchaeus ▪ From a sad to a happy man ▪ Making a sad, long or sick person happy	▪ In groups, listing ways in which they themselves and other people show that they are sad. ▪ Telling the story of Zacchaeus from Luke 19:1-10 ▪ In groups, reading the story of Jesus and Zacchaeus and showing how Jesus made Zacchaeus happy. ▪ Groups reporting to class. ▪ In groups, discussing and planning a visit to a sick or a sad person. ▪ Groups reporting to class their findings.	▪ Pictures of Jesus and Zacchaeus. ▪ Bible story from Luke 19:1-10	Are pupils able to: 29. list ways by which people show that they are sad? 30. tell the story of Jesus and Zacchaeus from Luke 19:1-10? 31. explain how Jesus changed Zacchaeus from a sad to a happy man? 32. suggest ways of making a sad, sick or lonely person happy?

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HAPPINESS	Pupils will be able to: 33. list ways by which people ` about a newly born baby; 34. tell the story of the birth of Jesus from Luke 2:1-7; 35. show from Luke 2:1-7 that Jesus was born from a poor family; 36. show from the story in Luke 2:1-12 how news of Jesus' birth spread and made people happy;	Celebrating a newly born baby The birth of Jesus Jesus' family	▪ In groups, discussing and listing ways in which people show that they are happy about a newly born baby. ▪ In groups, listing the gifts that are given when a baby is born. ▪ Reporting their findings to the whole class. ▪ Telling the story of Jesus form Luke 2:1-7. ▪ In groups, discussing Luke 2:1-7 and showing that Jesus was born from a poor family; ▪ Groups presenting their findings to class. ▪ In groups, reading and discussing Luke 2:1-12 how the news of the birth of Jesus spread and made people happy	▪ Pictures of gifts given when a baby is born ▪ Bible story from Luke 2:1-7. ▪ Cartoon of Mary holding Jesus in a; place for cattle where he was born ▪ Cartoons of the three wisemen and a star leading them to Jerusalem. ▪ Bible story from Luke 2:1-12.	Are pupils able to: 33. list ways by which people show that they are happy about a newly born baby? 34. tell the story of the birth of Jesus from Luke 2:1-7? 35. show from Luke 2:1-7 that Jesus was born fro a poor family? 36. show from the story in Luke 2:1-12 how news of Jesus' birth spread and made people happy?

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HAPPINESS	Pupils will be able to: 37. explain why people today are happy that Jesus was born; 38. sing a Christmas song	- Reasons for celebrating Jesus' birthday - Christmas song	- In groups, discussing how Jesus makes people happy today. - Groups reporting to class. - Recalling some names or titles of Jesus which show that he makes people happy. - Singing a well-known Christmas song	- Chart of titles and names of Jesus. - Christmas carols	Are pupils able to: 37. Explain why people today are happy that Jesus was born? 38.Sing a Christmas song?