

**TESTING RONALD GOLDMAN'S THEORY OF  
CHILDREN'S RELIGIOUS THINKING AND LEARNING AT  
THREE PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN LUSAKA DISTRICT**

**BY**

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my beloved daughter *Mary Ngoma* for the encouragement spiritually and emotionally during this study. When she was seeing me low in spirit, she would always say: “*Mum, everything will be alright. God will help you. Things are a matter of time.*” With such, I felt so encouraged.

To my father, Mr Jofter Njobvu and my Mother Mrs. Dailess Zulu Njobvu, I will always endeavour to uphold your wise counsel. And to the entire family, thank you for believing in me and for your continued support and encouragement.

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**DECLARATION**

**I, Njobvu Maligelita Jofter, hereby declare that the work herein is my own, and that all the works of other persons used have been duly acknowledged, and that the work has not been presented at this University or indeed another institution other than that for which I am now a candidate.**

**Signature:.....**

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**APPROVAL**

**This dissertation of Njobvu Maligelita Jofter has been approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Education in Religious Studies**

**(M.Ed. RS) by the University of Zambia.**

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## **Abstract**

The study sought to test Ronald Goldman's theory of children's' religious thinking in Zambian context with particular attention to the methods of teaching, materials used and content for Primary school Religious Education. Goldmans' theory is a "no Bible teaching" to children under the age of 13 because concrete operational stage children struggle to comprehend Biblical concepts. Therefore, the objectives of the study were: to test Ronald Goldman's theory on children's' religious thinking in Zambia, to explore the methods used in teaching and learning of primary school Religious Education, to examine the relevance of content for primary school Religious Education children, to assess the appropriateness of materials used to teach primary school Religious Education

The study was underpinned by Piagets' (1979) cognitive development and Fowlers'(1981) faith development theories which state that children between the age of 7and13 are in the concrete operational stage, hence abstract teaching cannot be used to solve concrete events or objects. The study used the case study design which employed the qualitative strategy. The methods of data collection included semi-structured interviews, lesson observations, focus group discussion guide, and document analysis checklist, respectively. The target population included all teachers and pupils of RE in the selected primary schools and the RE Curriculum Specialist from CDC. Typical purposive sampling procedure was used to select 1 Religious Education curriculum specialist, 3 headteachers, 6 teachers and 30 pupils as respondents. Data was analysed according to emerging themes which generally answered the research objectives.

Major findings indicate that Primary school children struggle to comprehend biblical issues. The teacher-centered methods of teaching the subject are inappropriate. The content is advanced with abstract Biblical quotations. The study also revealed that the materials used to teach the subject are abstract and are inappropriate for children. Such findings have not support Goldman's theory of children's' religious thinking which advocated for learner-centered methods of teaching, purely life-themed approach to the content and of course concrete materials for teaching young children. Therefore, the study recommends that MESVTEE should further revise the curriculum so that it should meet the needs of young children as recommended by Goldman's' theory of children's' religious thinking. If that is done, then holistic learning of the subject will be achieved.

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## **List of abbreviations and acronyms**

CDC	Curriculum Development Centre
CRE	Christian Religious Education
GRACE	Grade Reading at the Resource Centre
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
MESVTEE	Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education
MoE	Ministry of Education
SAQ	Students' Attitude Questionnaire
SDS	Social and Development Studies
SPRINT	School Programme of In-service Training for the Term
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
TAQ	Teachers Attitude Questionnaire
ZAJE	Zambia Journal of Education
ZBEC	Zambia Basic Education Course
ZTR	Zambian Traditional Religion
ZEPH	Zambia Education Publishing House

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 Overview**

This chapter presents the background to the study, research problem and the purpose of the study. The research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, the conceptual framework, delimitations, operational definitions and some ethical considerations of the study have also been framed.

### **1.1 Background**

Zambia's education system has predominantly followed the British models because of the colonial history (Mwanakatwe, 1968). These models have also been superimposed on the curriculum and more specifically in different subject areas like Religious Education (Mujdrlica, 1995). Both at primary and secondary levels of education in Britain, Religious Education has undergone changes which mainly focused on drifting away from confessional to educational and from Christian oriented to multi-faith approaches (Simuchimba, 1997). These changes were as a result of the realisation that Britain was becoming a pluralistic society and that there was need to strengthen the position of secular neutrality (Barns and Kay, 2002).

With regard to syllabus content, there have been attempts from both British and Zambian perspectives to come up with the primary school Religious Education curriculum that had to shift the emphasis from the subject-matter of instruction to the needs and capabilities of children. To this effect, primary school Religious Education was expected to acquaint pupils with the knowledge and skills to understand religion and respond individually to it (Schools Council Working Paper 44, 1972). In other words, the subject is expected to contribute to the well being of learners and the society by fostering social harmony and to overcome religious prejudice and discrimination (Barns and Kay, 2002). Therefore, some research and reforms on primary school children and Religious Education have been done to address the above changes.

One of the prominent researchers in Primary school Religious Education was Ronald Goldman whose study advocated for a new approach to the teaching of the subject to the young ones. Ronald Goldman's research findings were published in 1964 and 1965. Goldman's first publication, *Religious Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence* (1964), was designed as a diagnostic guide to see what truths, in what form and to what level children and young people could understand religion. He did that by using the psychological bases of religious development, reviewing the natural limitations as well as the basic needs of the young, and how Religious Education should be affected by current educational theory and practice. However, the emphasis of Goldman's (1965) publication which he called *Readiness for Religion: A basis for Developmental Religious Education* was to examine what content and methods of teaching could be consistent with the healthy development of children and adolescents. In other words, his concern was to move away from the older authoritarian methods of teaching to methods involving personal participation by the children so that they are encouraged to find out for themselves. In the preface of his second book, Goldman (1965) also states that the book was written in order to offer alongside it materials to be used with children which would help implement the effective teaching of Religious Education. Most importantly, the two publications were meant to help teachers in schools, students on training, lecturers, clergy and ministers and local education authority committees understand the child centered methods of teaching Religious Education (Goldman, 1964: 1965).

It is important to mention that before Goldman's research, the Religious Education which was offered in England and Wales was Christian oriented. That meant that most of the school activities both in and out of the classroom were done to promote the Christian faith. For example, most children in state schools in England and Wales attended morning assembly and received Christian Religious Instruction as a requirement of the 1944 Education Act. Most of the Religious Education materials recommended at that time for every age group was Biblical and that it was rarely that non-Biblical resources were recommended. Additionally, attempts were made to relate the syllabuses to children's experiences and needs, but the main weight of Biblical teaching had remained as a solid

content source for the syllabuses. Therefore, most of the pupils found such content far too difficult (Ibid, 1965).

Goldman's research had a profound influence in the field of Religious Education and it gave rise to a far-reaching reassessment of the place and purpose of Religious Education as a subject in primary schools. His work was prompted by a general concern about the apparent ineffectiveness of the teaching based on the Agreed Syllabuses of Religious Education. The Agreed Syllabuses were based on the assumption that the Bible was a textbook of Religious Education and, as such it was supposed to be covered adequately during the years of schooling. Consequently, it was discovered that many young people could go through ten years of compulsory Religious Education but at the end of it all, they had little idea of what religion was all about (Schools Council Working paper 44, 1972).

Goldman's research further suggests that the way primary school Religious Education was taught as well as the content of Bible-centered Religious Education syllabuses in British schools was too advanced for young pupils. Presentation of parables and teaching of prophets for example to pupils in their primary schooling were items of intellectual diet which were unsuitable for children. Therefore, Goldman decided to seek the answers to that problem, and gave a descriptive account of how primary school children think about religion and the content of their thought as they are taught religion. The aim was to help teachers, parents, clergy and all who were involved in Religious Education to clearly see its problems (Goldman, 1964).

Goldman's (1964) study focused on children's ability to understand religious concepts in particular as they appear in biblical narratives. He analysed the responses to questions based on selected pictures, Bible stories about God, prayer, Jesus and church concepts. He did that by using semi-structured interviews which presented 200 British school children aged between five and sixteen with three drawings depicting religious scenes. The three stories used were Moses at the burning bush, the Israelites crossing the Red Sea, and the temptation of Jesus. Amongst the many questions that Goldman put to children in the course of the interview were five questions that were used to classify children according to

their developmental level of understanding. All the five questions, as can be seen below, were related to Bible stories.

1. Why was Moses afraid to look at God?
2. Why do you think the ground on which Moses stood, was holy?
3. How would you explain the bush burning, but not being burnt?
4. How would you explain the dividing of the waters of the Red Sea?
5. Why wouldn't Jesus turn the stone into bread?

Based on analysis of children's responses to these questions, Goldman proposed a five-stage developmental model of religious thinking. He observed that children and adolescents pass through the same stages of development in their religious thinking as in their more general thinking though there is a delay in the onset of the stages in the case of religious thinking compared with general thinking (Goldman, 1964). It is important to state that Goldman borrowed Piaget's four-stage idea of children's intellectual development. Like Piaget, Goldman follows the same developmental stages though he arrived at five stages of children's religious thinking. He called these stages: Pre-Religious thought (5-7 years), the Sub-Religious thought stage one (7-8/9 years), the Sub-Religious thought stage two (8/9-11/12 years), Personal Religious thought stage one (11/12 years) and Personal Religious thought stage two (13/14 years and above).

In brief, the characteristics of children in the first stage aged between five and seven are as follows. This is a preoperational, intuitive stage in which the child is incapable of distinguishing relevant from irrelevant details in the Bible stories. At this stage of development, religious thinking according to Goldman is "unsystematic and fragmentary." Due to a lack of reversibility of thought, the child is unable "to work back from an inconsistency to check on the evidence in the light of conclusions reached" (ibid: 52-3). An illustration of this mode of thinking is the child who answers the question, "Why was Moses afraid to look at God?" with the response, "God had a funny face" (ibid).

Around the ages of seven and eight which is the second stage called the Sub-Religious thought stage one (7-8/9 years), children are considered by Goldman to be in transition

between intuitive and concrete religious thinking. This transitional phase is characterised by a striving on the part of the child to break out of the limitations of intuitive modes of thought. During this stage, “the child sees the necessity of a different process of thinking, but has not developed enough skills or insights to execute it” (Goldman, 1964: 54). An illustration of thinking during this intermediate phase is provided to the child who answers the question, “Why was Moses afraid to look at God?” with the response that God, “might kill Moses for putting the bush on fire.” Here the child attempts to answer the question by relating to more than one aspect of the situation. However, he is still unable to make a distinction between relevant and irrelevant aspects of the narrative.

At the Sub- Religious thought stage two (8/9-11/13years), children successfully employ inductive and deductive logic, but its scope is limited to “concrete situations, visual experience and sensory data” (Goldman 1964: 55). Typically children at this stage see God as a man or a power threatening specific action, often in relation to a specific wrong that has been committed. A typical response to the question, “Why was Moses afraid to look at God?” by a child at this stage is, “Moses thought God would chase him out of the holy ground, because Moses had not taken off his shoes” (ibid 1964: 56). Here the child employs operational modes of thinking in formulating his response but still focuses on concrete features of the story.

The Personal Religious Thought stage one (11/12-13/14 years) where children gradually begin to employ more advanced inductive and deductive logic and more abstract modes of thought. However, these more advanced modes of thinking may sometimes be distracted by concrete elements in the situation that the child seems unable to shake off. Whereas children at the concrete stage tend to cite a specific wrongdoing as the basis of Moses’ fear, at this stage they are more likely to offer a generalised statement such as, “Perhaps he had done evil things.” However, it is typical of children at this stage that this general idea of Moses’ unworthiness often turns out on further questioning to have been put forward on the basis of some concrete reason such as, “He smelled of sheep” (ibid, 1964: 58).

In the Personal Religious Thought stage two (13/ 14 years and above), and is an abstract or formal operational stage, which is characterised by a capacity to think hypothetically and deductively without interference from concrete elements in the situation. Reversibility now operates at the propositional level and the child is able to achieve consistency by exploring the implications of a particular statement and tracing them back to the original argument. A frequent response made by children at this stage is to the question, “Why was Moses afraid to look at God?” is the proposition that Moses shared with all men a general sense of sin or unworthiness that made him hesitate to look at God. This type of thinking is illustrated by the child who answers this question with the response, “God is holy and the world is sinful” (ibid, 1964: 60).

It was on the basis of the above findings that Goldman maintained that children at the intuitive and concrete stages tend to accept Bible stories at their face value and that they are unable to recognize analogies such as the nature of God and what they are. Therefore, they accept such as statements of facts (Goldman, 1964). Besides, children in their early stages of primary schooling might regard God as a frightening, unpredictable person possessing magical powers, one who can cast out spells, punish, and pay back for any offense but can be regarded as a friend. Such assumptions suggest that the emphasis in primary schools should be increasingly in terms of influence rather than instruction. Bible teaching would appear to be wasteful and inappropriate with the younger children. In addition, children at primary school level make sense of things by attempting to find physical explanations which meet the facts as they see them. Only after reaching a mental age of 13 to 14 years do young people have the intellectual ability to consider a situation from the point of view of its underlying meaning, and to make the transferences needed to make symbolic expressions (Schools Council Working paper 44, 1972).

Furthermore, it was on the basis of the above findings that Goldman’s 1965 publication recommended the appropriate content, materials and methods of teaching Religious Education to each stage of development of children at primary school. Besides, it was from the 1964 research that Goldman is seen as an advocate of ‘no Bible teaching’ before the age of thirteen. He suggested a drastic reduction of Bible material in syllabuses for primary

school children. He contends that the Bible is the major source of Christianity for adults. It is written by adults for adults and is not a children's book (Goldman, 1965). To help children become familiar with it too early is to invite boredom and confusion. What should be tried, according to Goldman's theory, is to help children to encounter the experiences of which the Bible speaks at suitable stages of their development. Therefore, he recommended the drastic review of Religious Education content for young children and the only way to do that is by turning to the feeling and fantasising ways of learning as more appropriate for the primary school age group. He condemns the Bible teaching as inadequate content for Religious teaching since it asks too much of the child and does not involve enough of children's experience to make it more relevant or sensible (Ibid 1965).

Moreover, Goldman (1965) recommends the content of primary Religious Education to be life-themed. According to Goldman, life-themes relate religion to life by emphasising the total unity of experience. Life themes demonstrate the interrelatedness of all knowledge and a cross subject teaching is employed so that religion is not confined to a separate role on the timetable (Ibid, 1965). A life theme can take any of a child's experience of which he or she has firsthand knowledge. It should be about matters in which a child has a natural interest and in which a large amount of diverse detail can be explored, related together into a meaningful unit and the capabilities of the child. For instance, life themes such as homes, people who help us, the food we eat to mention but a few, have some religious and Biblical illustrations throughout. They may begin with a religious emphasis or end with religion as a focal point.

With regard to methods of teaching Religious Education at primary school level, Goldman recommends the use of more child-centered methods of teaching to be applied. His theory suggests that it is essential to involve the pupil as personally as possible in what he or she learns. He notes that the most effective learning occurs when children do not passively receive what is given to them but are actively engaged in the learning process. For this reason, play and fantasy should be encouraged since the children's imaginative explorations are an important intellectual and emotional expression. Therefore, activities such as movement through music and dance and molding and painting leisurely must help

children think more creatively about religious experience. It is unfortunate to mention that a failing of so much Religious Education at all levels of development is that much of it has tended to be teaching of an instructional kind, which has not sufficiently engaged the pupils in active personal search. Nevertheless, as recommended by Goldman (1965) it is important to make use of experimental data in life-themes which will personally involve children in what they learn and create active interest in understanding what is taught at a deeper level.

It is important to mention that Ronald Goldman's theory has undergone a lot of criticism. Good examples of this criticism were that Goldman (1964: 3) defined religious thinking as "no different in mode and method from non-religious thinking," and then went on to define the process of thinking in exclusively cognitive-developmental terms. This opened him up to accusations of restricting religious thinking to the cognitive domain and ignoring its attitudinal and affective aspects (Slee, 1987). Besides, another criticism has suggested that Goldman was biased in his study because of the particular Bible stories which he chose to use, and in some subtle changes that he made to them before presenting them to the children. The two criticisms were that it would have been difficult to think of a harder story for children to understand than simpler stories such as 'temptations of Jesus' which were the only New Testament story which Goldman included in his study (Howkins, 1966; Langdon, 1969). In addition, Goldman's work or theory was bound to be criticized because it was published at a time when Religious Education had only recently been made mandatory in British state schools and during which there was vigorous disagreement amongst Church groups about what role the Bible should play in Religious Education. However, Goldman's findings and conclusions coincided with the progressive thinking of the time and were used as scientific ammunition by advocates of reform. Goldman's research work was thus an obvious target for those who opposed these reforms (Hyde, 1984).

However, Murphy (1978; 1980), Hyde (1984), Slee (1987) and Gottlieb (2001) are among other educationists in Europe and America who have accepted Goldman ideas for bringing fundamental changes in the outlook and the practice of Religious Education in many

countries, drawing particular attention to the content, materials and methods of teaching primary school Religious Education to the young ones.

Fifty years back after Goldman's study seems a long time in light of all the reforms that have been done in terms of what is to be offered as primary school Religious Education. However, Goldman's work has not been swept aside particularly *Readiness for Religion* which Hyde (1984) calls 'something of a valuable museum piece.' Therefore, a number of research studies in the field of primary education particularly Religious Education have been done both locally and in foreign countries which follow the British model of education.

In Zambia since independence, reforms have been carried out in trying to come up with what to be offered as the appropriate primary school Religious Education. Researchers like Simuchimba (2001; 2005), Carmody (2004), Cheyeka (2005) and Mc Given (2005) have debated on the integration of primary school Religious Education into Social and Development Studies. Similarly, Yambayamba (2007) and Chiyuka (2011) have carried out research studies on primary school Religious Education in Zambia. However, the concern of the above scholars was the status of primary school Religious Education after being integrated into Social and Development Studies study area as recommended by *Educating Our Future* (MOE, 1996).

So, it seems that no research has been done to test Goldman's Educational theory in the context of Zambian primary school Religious Education. The rationale behind testing Goldman's theory and not any other is that it recommends no Bible teaching to the young children. As such, it has a direct correlation with proclamation of being a 'Christian nation.' The proclamation, which was done by the late Second Republican President, Dr F.T.J. Chiluba in 1991, is said to be one of the contentious issues in the teaching of Religious Education from the primary to secondary school in Zambia. That is because both the public and private schools are dominated with teachers from a Christian background. These teachers in both types of schools have continued to teach Religious Education in a traditional approach from primary to secondary school despite the subject moving from

being denominational to being educational in order to meet the needs and aspirations of Zambians (Simuchimba, 2005). Therefore, this study seeks to test Ronald Goldman's theory of children's religious thinking in the context of teaching and learning of Zambian primary school Religious Education, paying particular attention to the content, methods and materials used.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

After fifty years of Ronald Goldman's research, despite so many reforms in primary school Religious Education, it appears the practice of teaching the subject, its content and materials used are still problematic. Firstly religious activities based on the Christian faith seemed to be heavily practiced both inside and outside the classroom. Approaches and methods of teaching the subject are still more of teacher-centered, and that the content and materials used seems to be abstract for some young children at primary school level. Such a problem has especially been necessitated by the proclamation of Zambia as a 'Christian Nation.' Despite so many reforms and research studies done on Zambian primary school Religious Education, we do not know clearly the nature of primary school Religious Education that is offered in Zambia and that it appears there is little to almost non-existent documentation to test Goldman's theory of children's religious thinking. Therefore, this study endeavours to test Ronald Goldman's theory of children's religious thinking in the context of teaching and learning of Zambian primary school Religious Education paying particular attention to the content, methods and materials used. If Goldman's theory is not tested, teachers will continue to teach Religious Education in the confessional model and not the educational model. This situation might lead to indoctrination of learners in the learning process.

## **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to test Ronald Goldman's theory of children's' religious thinking and learning with regard to materials, content and methods of teaching primary school Religious Education in the Zambian context.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

1. To test Ronald Goldman's theory on children's religious thinking in the Zambian context.
2. To assess the methods used in the teaching and learning of primary school Religious Education in light of Goldman's theory.
3. To examine the relevance of primary school Religious Education content to children's learning needs according to Goldman's theory.
4. To assess the appropriateness of materials used to teach primary school Religious Education in line with Goldman's theory.

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

1. How is Ronald Goldman's theory of children's religious thinking applied in the Zambian Religious Education context?
2. How are the methods used in the teaching and learning of primary school Religious Education in the light of Goldman's theory?
3. To what extent is the content of primary school Religious Education relevant to children's learning needs according to Goldman's theory?
4. How appropriate, in line with Goldman's theory, are the materials used to teach primary school Religious Education?

#### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The findings of the study may be relevant to the broader knowledge in Religious Education. Teachers, parents, clergy and many others who teach religious aspects to children might benefit in the way they deal with primary school children. It may also bring to light the various factors involved and underlying formulation of religious education curriculum. By focusing on primary schools, this study will highlight the experience of children with Religious Education, thereby having the potential for implications on policy.

## **1.7 Conceptual Framework**

A conceptual framework can be defined as a set of broad ideas and principles taken from relevant fields of enquiry and used to structure a subsequent presentation (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). It is a plan of action that directs the movement of the whole research. For example, the conceptual frameworks directs the collection and analysis of data and shows the ways ideas are organized to achieve a research project's purpose. The conceptual framework of this study is based on Goldman (1964/1965) whose theory recommended for the reformation in the content, materials and methods used in teaching primary school Religious Education to different age groups of children. His research was based on the confession type of Religious Education which was taught based on the Agreed Syllabuses since the passing in England and Wales of the Educational Act of 1944. The Agreed Syllabuses tended to be based on the assumption that the Bible was the textbook of Religious Education and as such, was to be adequately covered during children's years of schooling.

The central focus of Goldman's research was upon child's intellectual struggle to comprehend the central ideas expressed and implied in Religious Education teaching (Goldman, 1964). He maintains that 'religious teaching for younger children is too rational in attempting them to understand religious concepts'. He recommended the change in content teaching, materials and the methods to be used in teaching primary school Religious Education in England and Wales (Barns and Kay, 2002). This led to Goldman's research ideas to be adopted by most educationists from different continents such as America and some African countries which follow the British model of Religious Education. However, it appears that Goldman's theory has not been tested in the Zambian context to explore the primary school Religious Education in terms of the content, materials and the methods used to teach the subject. Despite so many reforms in what is to be considered as the appropriate primary school Religious Education, the declaration of Zambia as a 'Christian Nation' still affects the teaching of the subject. It appears the current approaches/methods of teaching the subject are still confessional and more of

teacher-centered. This trend is especially common in privately owned schools, which claim to be imparting spiritual and moral values into young children using their faith.

To give justice to the above, Simuchimba (2001:19) noted that “there is a growing practice of starting RE lessons with either a Christian prayer or a reading from the bible.” This indicates that teachers use their confessional religious practices from the Christian faith to teach Religious Education to young children. Moreover, Ziwa (2007:39) observes that “though teachers are trained to handle Religious Education properly and use the appropriate methods and techniques, they may still fail to apply what they have learnt, probably because of their cultural and, indeed, religious affiliation.” Play and fantasy seemed not to be emphasised as Ronald Goldman recommended in his theory, and that the content and materials used seem to be too rational and abstract for the young children at primary school level. Most teachers would rather use teaching and learning aids such as a written text on a chart or in the pupil’s text books as opposed to concrete or real objects which stimulate pupils learning process of theoretical subjects such as Religious Education.

Nevertheless, in order to achieve holistic learning and religious understanding of the children at primary school level, teacher-centered methods emphasising play and fantasy as advocated by Ronald Goldman, need to be used. Furthermore, concrete learning and teaching materials as opposed to abstract teaching, and life themed content which reflects children’s experiences should be used in primary school Religious Education teaching.

If the above expectations are fully recognised by the curriculum planners and the implementers of primary school Religious Education, then there is hope of achieving holistic learning of the subject in Zambian primary schools. Therefore, despite the fifty years since Goldman’s work, the researcher still saw the need to study and test Ronald Goldman’s theory of children’s religious thinking in terms of content, materials and methods of teaching Zambian primary school Religious Education. The following figure below is an illustration of the conceptual framework of this study:

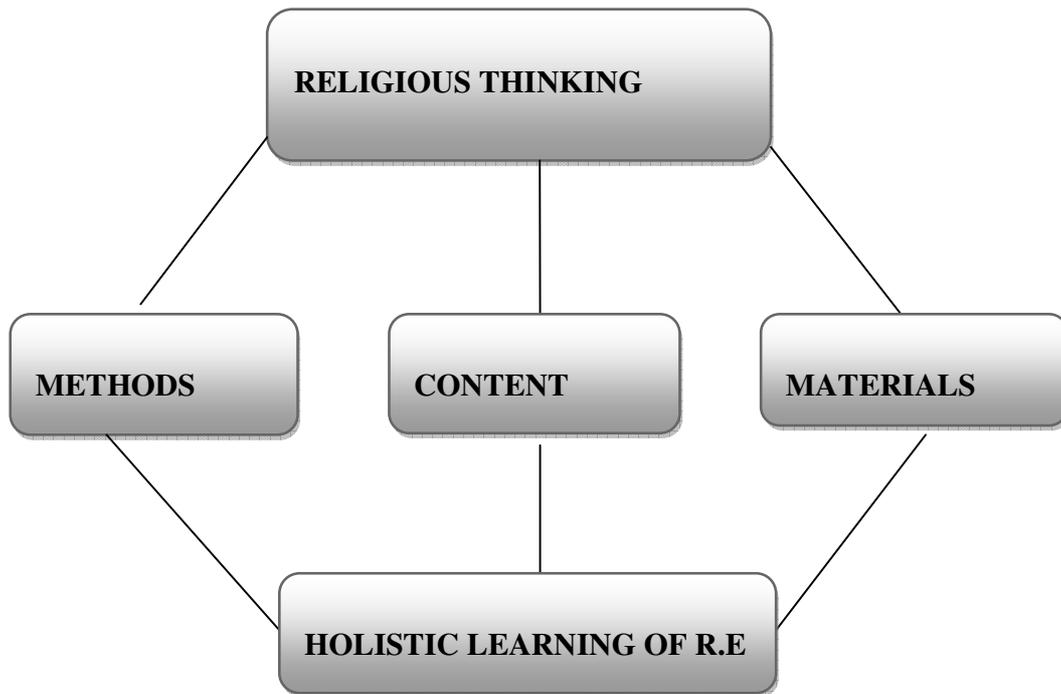


Figure 1: *Conceptual Framework*

### **1.8 Delimitation/ Scope of the Study**

The study was confined to Munali constituency in Lusaka District. The study was also restricted to those children that made up the sample from the selected schools. There were a total of three private schools from which the participants were drawn. The reason for this scope of study is firstly, the researcher has taught at one of the privately owned primary schools within the constituency before, thereby having an idea of how Religious Education is handled. Secondly, private primary schools were targeted because of the common trend among them of practicing confessional Christian faith (oriented types) of activities which in turn has affected the teaching of primary school Religious Education. Thirdly, the three schools are confined in one area hence, making it convenient for the researcher to easily and cheaply reach them.

### **1.9 Limitations of the Study**

The main challenge faced by this study was the design to be used. Testing a theory in most studies has been done quantitatively. However, this study utilised the case study design, which was restricted to selected privately owned primary schools within Lusaka district.

This factor might limit the generalisation of the research findings. Secondly, this research was conducted in privately owned primary schools, and as a consequence, the researcher had challenges to seek permission to conduct the research. Some schools' authorities thought the schools negative practices in academic work would be exposed. About three privately owned primary schools declined participation in this study. Finally, another limitation is related to the unavailability of and access to adequate and relevant literature for review as little or no research has so far been done to test a Religious Education theory in Zambian context.

### **1.10 Operational Definitions**

Words in a text may be used to mean different things depending on the situation or context. However, the following words whose working definitions are given below were used in the context of the study.

**Religious thinking:** In this study, religious thinking refers to thinking about religion, thus what is learnt in Religious Education at primary school.

**Methods:** In this study, methods refer to the techniques, approaches and strategies used in the teaching of Religious Education both in and outside the classroom situation at primary school.

**Content:** In this study, content refers to the subject matter of what is taught as primary school Religious Education.

**Materials:** In this study, materials refers to the teaching and learning aids such as real objects, charts and relevant books that are used in teaching primary school Religious Education.

**Holistic learning:** In this study, holistic learning refers to learning of Religious Education that encompasses the whole systems of beliefs and not just a single faith.

### **1.11 Structure of the whole dissertation**

Chapter one has provided and explained the background to the study, the statement of the problem, purpose, the research objectives and questions. It has also given the significance of the study, the conceptual framework of the study, delimitation or scope of the study, the limitations encountered and the operational definitions used in the study.

Chapter two discusses the relevant literature of the study. Literature was reviewed from both foreign and local studies which supported, refuted and bridged the gap of the study.

Chapter three discusses the methodology of the study particularly, the research design, research study area or site, study population, study sample, sampling techniques, instruments used for data collection, procedure for data collection and data analysis.

Chapter four presents the findings of the research study. The findings will be presented according to the themes drawn from the research questions.

Chapter five discusses the findings of the study. The discussion was done under themes emerging from the findings of the study objectives. The study objectives are mirrored by the emerging themes which presents what the study has established from the findings.

Chapter six will give the conclusion of the study which aims at testing Ronald Goldman's theory of primary school children's Religious thinking with particular attention to the methods used, the relevance of the content, appropriateness of materials used in teaching primary school Religious Education. It is also in chapter six that the study has given the general and specific recommendations based on the findings of the study.

### **1.12 Conclusion**

In conclusion, chapter one has presented the background to the study, research problem and the purpose of the study. The research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, the conceptual framework, delimitations, operational definitions and the

structure of the whole dissertation have also been presented. The next chapter discusses the literature reviewed in this study.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.0 Overview

This chapter firstly discusses the theoretical foundation of this study and explains its relevance to the teaching of primary school Religious Education. Thereafter, it discusses the literature in form of different studies both foreign and local that was reviewed. Fink (1998: 3) defines literature review as “a systematic, explicit and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating, and interpreting the existing body of recorded work produced by researchers, scholars, and practitioners. Similarly, Kombo and Tromp (2006) define literature review as an account of what has been published on a topic by other scholars and researchers. In simpler terms, literature review is a selection of available and relevant information (both published and unpublished) on the proposed topic which should fulfill certain aims of the study.

Thematically, literature in this study accounts for what others have said about Ronald Goldman’s theory of children’s religious thinking and the recommendations in the publication *Readiness for Religion*. The literature also discusses and explores major variables in the study, the methods other researchers used and their findings as well as the benefits for this study. This has been done so as to situate the study more broadly and make it more meaningful and systematic as well as to show the gap to be filled in by this study.

### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

Kombo and Tromp (2006:56) define a theoretical framework as “a collection of interrelated ideas based on theories. It is a reasoned set of prepositions, which are derived from and supported by data or evidence”. In simple terms, a theoretical framework is a set of broad concepts that guide the research or study. This researcher is aware that there are several theoretical frameworks, depending on the researcher’s goals and purposes, which guide qualitative research in order to analyse data. Apart from the main theory presented in the background, there are two other theories selected to be relevant to this study. The first

of these was Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development. Piaget's theory of cognitive development helped the researcher frame her understanding of children's religious thinking within the context of cognitive abilities of children. In fact, it is from the same theory that Ronald Goldman based his theory of children's religious thinking, from which this study derived the motivation to assess the religious thinking of children in the selected primary schools in terms of materials, content and methods of teaching. The second is James Fowler's faith development theory. The theory was chosen as it also gives religious developmental stages related to those of Goldman and Piaget. Fowler's faith development theory is also one of the prominent theories which have a direct link to Religious Education and it offers an understanding of religious concepts at every stage of human development.

The theory of cognitive development was propounded by Jean Piaget. Piaget made three basic assumptions about children: Firstly, that children construct their own knowledge in response to their experiences. Secondly, that children learn many things on their own without the intervention of older children or adults. Thirdly, that children are intrinsically motivated to learn and do not need rewards from adults to motivate learning. Further Jean Piaget developed what is commonly known as stages of cognitive development. The theory has four main stages which are briefly discussed below:

The first of the four stages in cognitive development which "extends from birth to the acquisition of language" is called the sensorimotor stage. During this stage, infants progressively construct knowledge and understanding of the world by coordinating experiences such as vision and hearing with physical interactions with objects such as grasping, sucking, and stepping (Kalat, 1999). Infants gain knowledge of the world from these physical actions they perform within it. They progress from reflexive, instinctual action at birth to the beginning of symbolic thought toward the end of the stage. The child learns that he or she is separate from the environment and that aspects of the environment continue to exist, even though they may be outside the reach of its senses. In this stage, according to Piaget, children develop the understanding that objects continue to exist even though they cannot be seen or heard (Ibid, 1999). During this stage, the child is still in the

hands of the parents and the family is an important environment for it. Therefore, the stage is not very important to this study as the concern is centered on children from the age of seven to thirteen years who will have started Grade One at primary school level in Zambia.

The second of Piaget's stages of cognitive development is the pre-operational stage, which starts when the child begins to learn to speak at age two and lasts up until the age of seven. During the Pre-operational Stage of cognitive development, Piaget notes that children do not yet understand concrete logic and cannot mentally manipulate information. Children's increase in playing and pretending takes place in this stage. However, the child still has trouble seeing things from different points of view. The children's play is mainly categorized by symbolic play and manipulating symbols. Such play is demonstrated by the idea of checkers being snacks, pieces of paper being plates, and a box being a table. Their observations of symbols exemplify the idea of play with the absence of the actual objects involved. By observing sequences of play, Piaget was able to establish that a qualitatively new kind of psychological functioning occurs, known as the Pre-operational Stage (Berk, 2003). At this stage, children are still incapable of mental operations. Furthermore, children are egocentric in their thinking, which makes it difficult for them to see the viewpoint of others. Like the above stage, this one is not too relevant to this study which is mainly dealing with primary school children. According to the Zambian educational policy, a child who is eligible to start primary school in Grade One should be seven years of age and above.

The third stage is concrete operational stage. This stage occurs between the ages of seven and eleven years and is characterised by the appropriate use of logic (Fowler, 1981). During this stage, a child's thought processes become more mature and "adult like. They start solving problems in a more logical fashion. Abstract thinking has not yet developed, and children can only solve problems that apply to concrete events or objects. Piaget determined that children in this stage commonly experience difficulties with figuring out logic in their heads (Piaget, 1979).

The final stage is known as the formal operational stage (adolescence and into adulthood, approximately 11 to 15/20 years of age). At this stage, Kalat (1999) posits that intelligence is demonstrated through the logical use of symbols related to abstract concepts. At this point, the person is capable of hypothetical and deductive reasoning. During this time, people develop the ability to think about abstract concepts, including such concepts related to faith as god and the supernatural. Thus this stage is characterised by logical abstract thinking towards concepts, which becomes important. This type of thinking involves hypothetical situations and is often required in science and mathematics. The concrete and formal operational stages are important to this study as they encompass the age ranges of children at primary school level as advocated by Ronald Goldman in his study of children's religious thinking.

The second theory relevant to this research study is the theory of faith development propagated by James Fowler (1981). This is a model of operational stages which are integrated and reintegrated at each of the six stages. Similar to Piaget's stages of cognitive development, Fowler's theory concerns the development of logical thinking, the construction of social perspective, the form moral judgment takes, the understanding of social reference points, the interpretation of what legitimises commitments, the ways of unifying meanings, and the understanding of symbols (Webster, 1984). As such they can best be described as apertures into the structures underlying faith.

In this theory, the complete cycle of development moves from a phase typical of infants up to three years which is pre-conceptual, pre-linguistic and in which trust, courage, hope and love are fused in an undifferentiated way according to Fowler. In the first stage of faith development children have intuitive projective faith. This means that at this stage, the faith is episodic and fantasy-filled, and runs between three to seven years (Webster, 1984). The faith is unrestrained by logical thinking and God is seen as magical and pre-anthropomorphic.

The second stage, referred to as the stage of mythic-literal faith, is characterised by children's recognition of rudimentary ways of teachings, symbols and perspectives of the

community and they appropriate them in a quite literal way. According to Webster (1984), it is at this stage that children view God as anthropomorphic, as a kingly law-giver whose moral judgments are based on fairness and consideration of the intentions behind action. This means that at Stage 2- 'Mythic-Literal' faith children are mostly in primary schools. At stage two persons have a strong belief in the justice and reciprocity of the universe, and their deities are almost always anthropomorphic. During this time, metaphors and symbolic language are often misunderstood and are taken literally.

The third stage in the theory of faith development is the synthetic-conventional faith, which does not usually emerge before the twelfth year. At this stage, Fowler (1981) contends that children's faith becomes more complex as it is required to reintegrate wider social experiences, make sense of diverse involvements and provide a unifying basis for identity and outlook. Despite this development, faith is not yet objectified and is not made a matter of detached examinations. The concepts of God are surrounded with mystery and awe.

In the fourth stage of the theory of faith development, there is an individuating-reflexive faith, which according to Webster (1984) is achieved with a deepening self awareness and a personal responsibility for values which are integrated into an ideology. This is less attained before the age of eighteen years, and represents a demythologising stage which brings about recognition of the relativity of experience. We can therefore contend that at this stage, the image of God is as one who is dynamic, inviting humans to be fellow workers.

The fifth stage is known as the stage of paradoxical-consolidative faith. This type of faith is not reached until mid life; individuals attempt to unify contradictions experienced before. According to Webster (1984), faith at this stage is vulnerable to the strangeness that is beyond it, and is further open to the anarchic voices of the deep self and its God is highly personal. The sixth stage is the stage of universalising the faith, a stage that is experienced mainly by a few men and women. At this stage, for the people experiencing this faith, the paradoxes of the previous phase disappear and they find themselves in an

incarnate spirit of a fulfilled community. Such individuals experiencing this faith create zones of liberation from various fronts including social, political and economic.

The mythic-literal faith and the synthetic-conventional faith stages in Fowler's theory are very important as the two stages are closely related to the concrete and formal operational stage in Piaget's theory of cognitive development where children in these stages tend to think and react to things using concrete objects as opposed to abstract thinking. Therefore, the two theories are vital in helping anchor this study to some framework, building on the conceptions which would be vital in assessing the different developmental stages of religious thinking of children in primary schools in Zambia. In addition, the two theories are important as they will help the researcher to link the developmental stages in the theories to the main variables of the study.

## **2.2 Foreign Literature**

Barnes and Kay (2002) conducted a review of Religious Education in England and Wales. In the first instance, they contend that the church can legitimately lay claim to have initiated the entire education system in England and Wales, which then follows that it was the church that had an influence in the introduction of Religious Education in schools. Religious Education was provided in a slightly different form in the various categories of church schools, but in essence there was a commonality between the great majorities of schools within the same state.

The type of Religious Education was largely seen as being confessional. This is made clear by Barnes and Kay (2002) who observed that Religious Education in the 1950s was confessional in aim and it was intended to press the claims of Christ and Christian beliefs and values in the minds of young people. That prompted Ronald Goldman to carry out a research particularly on primary school children and their religious thinking. After his research in 1964, Ronald Goldman (1965) then highlighted what and how primary school Religious Education was to be taught. His research had a profound influence on the subject and therefore led to academic research and many reforms by different Religious Education scholars and educators in different countries worldwide. The aim of such research studies

and reforms were mainly to examine and determine what could be offered as appropriate primary school Religious Education and how the subject should be appropriately handled.

The first study entitled: 'An Instructional Package for training teachers of religion in the skillful use of questions', was done by Driessnack (1977). She used her own background as a Sunday school young child which played a significant part in choosing such a topic for research. In her study, Driessnack tested methods of teaching used in Sunday schools in a primary and secondary school classroom situation where she observed teachers delivering a Christian Religious Instruction lessons. According to her, lecturing to young children was a common method of teaching which was used. Such a method of teaching was purely teacher centered. Driessnack (1977) commented that Sunday school was centered on a teacher lecturing with little response expected of the pupils who more often confused or bored pupils by the entire teaching procedure. This means that teacher-centered methods like lecturing are not at all appropriate methods of approaching religion to young ones at primary school level. She therefore, recommended the use of questioning method which proved to be the key to good and effective teaching of young ones. She argued that, "If the application of questions appropriate for the learners in secular subjects had been so successful, then the same method should be applied in the teaching of religion" Driessnack (1977:158). After employing Piaget's and Goldman's theories, her study concluded that children under thirteen years are simply not ready for abstract theological thinking. Children under the age of thirteen find such abstract thought meaningless. Instead, questioning techniques, and simple stories related to their own experiences are the best primary teaching methods to be applied.

Driessnack's study is important to this study despite doing her research both at primary and secondary school levels of education. Her research details pedagogies which are appropriate to the teaching of young children at school. One of the pedagogies she discusses is the child-centered pedagogies such as the questioning and storytelling. These are of great value to my study in that the underpinning principles are vital for learning what is envisaged as appropriate methods of teaching Zambian primary school Religious Education.

Hyde's (1984) study called 'Twenty years after Goldman's Research' is another work which acknowledged that Goldman's research will remain the basis for other significant research studies and that it would be responsible for an enormous volte-face in primary school Religious Education. Hyde was motivated to carry out this study as he envisaged that twenty years after Goldman's research was a period of an obvious change in primary school Religious Education. His focus was to assess how much primary school Religious Education had changed in Britain.

In acknowledging Goldman's work, Hyde (1984:23), comments, "Goldman wanted to reduce the Bible material in the syllabus and not really the misconception that he was a no Bible teaching before the age of twelve." However, according to Hyde research findings, he observed that even during the time he was writing his article, thus twenty years after Goldman's theory, primary schools were generally concerned with providing children with a Religious Education based on the Bible and Christian beliefs and values. Thus, the kind of Religious Education offered was still confession in approach. In addition, the curriculum 20 years after Goldman's research did not consider whether the biblical teaching was relevant to the children's experience as Hyde would certainly want to know.

The only change which, Hyde (1984) had observed was that Religious Education which had existed at that time was life-themed and that it was associated with work on a general topic such as 'helping others'. He noted that such life-themed Religious Education was merely related to children's everyday experiences or to geographic or historical contexts. Such kind of Religious Education prompted Hyde to recommend that revisers of the syllabuses are to show clearly what really would be the religious content of implicit and explicit religious teaching and indicate how children might come to recognise it as religious.

Hyde's work is important and fits well in this study as it firstly tested how much primary school Religious Education had changed in terms of content and the way it was taught 20 years after Goldman's research. In line with Zambian primary Religious Education, the gap that exists is to explore how much primary Religious Education has changed with regards

to content, material and the methods used in teaching the subject fifty years after Goldman's research.

Slee (1987) carried out another study on religious thinking from the perspective of linguistic considerations. The argument made in this study that builds on the work of Goldman and Jean Piaget is that a linguistic model of religious thinking is needed to do justice to the essential nature of religious thought itself. It builds on the psychological nature of the subject of religious thinking by asserting that the concept of religious thinking is itself complex and flexible as it is capable of referring to various mental processes. Her article indicates that language is a vitamin thought processes including thinking about religion. Reviewing work of other scholars, she argues that language is remarkably economic in that once acquired, it is extremely rapid, effortless and naturally available. Secondly, there is recognition that language is transparent to thought. It is a fundamental mode of being in the world, and of constructing and representing the world as well as interacting with others.

As such, language has naturally gained an important role in religious thinking. It is argued that this relationship is based in the unique relationship which obtains between religious identity and religious language. There is recognition within this research that philosophers have acknowledged the peculiar nature and characteristics of religious language. In this case philosophy of religion has been concerned with examination of the way in which religious believers characteristically employ distinctive kinds of discourse to perform a variety of functions unique to the religious way of life. The general contention is that religious thinking operates within the peculiar structure of religious discourse, and is itself characterised by the unique logic and characteristics of that discourse.

The implication for research from the fore-going's focus on religious thinking and linguistic perspective is that much greater attention needs to be paid to linguistic factors in the development of religious thinking. Not only that, her study provides an insight into religious thinking and language and is necessary for consideration in the current study on

religious thinking of children. It helps this research study appreciate the role of language in cognitive abilities of children, as well as religious thinking in general.

Reflecting on studies centered on Ronald Goldman, Willows (1997) did a study entitled: 'Promoting of spiritual development through Religious Education.' The main aim of Willows' thesis was to explore what it means in practice for teachers of young children to promote spiritual development within the context of the National Curriculum. She began her study by setting the discussion within a particular historical and philosophical context; a context which was heavily influenced by the basic assumptions of Rationalism. She further explored the new methods in Religious Education teaching as an experiential approach in one particular model for promoting spiritual development in the classroom. She then tested the influential work of Goldman (1964) who applied the psychological methodologies of Jean Piaget (1929) to the particular subject of Religious Education, looking specifically at his understanding of children's language development. This was after she noted that since the 1960's, Religious Education had been dominated by the research findings of Ronald Goldman. Under the influence of Piagetian psychology, Goldman sought to exclude certain concepts of religion from the education of young children on the basis of their apparent cognitive incapacity. This is the main issue which is relevant to this study.

Willows (ibid) contends that lack of conceptual understanding in religion lay primarily with what Goldman saw as a misuse of the Bible which was then the main source book for Religious Education. She also adds that, the primary school aged child will, according to Goldman's research be unable to think in abstract terms other than the concrete. For instance, it becomes a problem basing all your Religious Education on the narratives of the Bible, which is highly abstract, non-concrete and full of richly metaphorical language. This means that, the content of Religious Education should not by far consider the inclusion of the Christian Bible scripture which are taken as too abstract for the primary school child. Therefore, from Goldman's findings, Willows concluded the primary task of Religious Education is to develop methods of learning that imaginatively transform the child's experience of the world rather than burden her with factual knowledge. She further added

that Religious Education needs to be fully integrated with a child-centered curriculum, affirming personal spiritual experiences and seeking to incorporate them into appropriate conceptual frameworks of religious belief. This means that the role of the religious educator is primarily to encourage the art of inquiry and reflection upon childhood experiences. The educator must also search for imaginative ways in which to relate these experiences to broader theological perspectives that seek to highlight the spiritual dimension of the whole school curriculum.

Another study done in Kenya by Githaiga (1995) investigated the attitudes of teachers and students towards Christian Religious Education in selected secondary schools as a tool for shaping moral values of students. The study also sought the suitability of the teaching methods used in CRE in meeting objectives within the affective domain in which attitudinal changes lie. Teachers Attitude Questionnaire (TAQ) and Students' Attitude Questionnaire (SAQ), containing both closed and open-ended items were used to collect data in her study. Data were analysed through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 9.0. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used. The results of the study indicated that the study of CRE was important and relevant in the world today owing to its contribution to moral and spiritual development and provision of career opportunities.

Githaiga's study is of great importance to this study with regards to teaching methods used in teaching CRE. According to Githaiga, many teachers used teacher-centered methods which included lecture and expository methods of teaching. This suggests that despite Religious Education being taught by trained teachers like in other subjects such as sciences, teachers have continued to take Religious Education as a theory oriented subject which could simply be handled using the old traditional methods of teaching as opposed to learner centered methods such as drama, group work and discussions. Such learner-centered methods of teaching encourage pupils' participation in class and therefore stimulate the learning process.

Gottlieb (2001) is another researcher whose study is entitled: 'Religious Thinking in Childhood and Adolescence: Argumentative Reasoning and the Justification of Religious Belief,' is thought to be a replica of Ronald Goldman's. He studied the religious thinking of children with the aim of finding out the idea of God in children and to explore whether religious thinking could be taught, how it could be taught and the age constraints on the teaching of religious thinking. Gottlieb did his study on Jewish children and adolescents. According to him, the decision to focus on Jewish Israeli children and adolescents was motivated partly by personal interests and most importantly as a Jewish Israeli with a deep interest in Jewish education, as the population with which he was most personally concerned and because of the religious traditions he was most intimately familiar with.

With regards to methodological considerations Gottlieb used both qualitative and quantitative designs consisting mainly of questionnaire-based surveys of religious beliefs, attitudes and behaviour. He also used interviews to assess the religious life of the Jewish children. Gottlieb's study is important for review in this study because of the interest he took in exploring whether religious thinking could be taught, how it should be taught and challenges of teaching with regards to age. He contends that religious thinking in children cannot be taught in the abstract, but must be learned through practice and experience. He supported Goldman with this view that children who have not yet reached the stage of formal operations are capable of only an immature, concrete comprehension of most biblical material. This means that premature exposure to such material results in the over learning by children of immature conceptions of religion.

The above idea suggests that children at primary school level can only learn Religious Education in a concrete way because of the stage of development at which they are. Therefore, biblical or confessional Religious Education might not be appropriate for primary school children.

The most recent similar study was done by a group of researchers in England and it is called: *Materials used to teach about world religions in schools in England* (McKenna et'

al, 2010). The study was done in maintained and independent, primary and secondary schools. The main aim of the study was to investigate the materials used in schools to teach about world religions as part of Religious Education. The specific objectives of the study sought to answer the following questions;

1. What materials (books, ICT resources and other materials) are available to maintained and independent schools for teaching about and learning from world religions?
2. What materials are schools using in practice to develop an understanding of world religions?
3. What is the content / nature of these materials used by schools and how does this relate to current school regulations - in particular maintained schools' duty to promote community cohesion and the independent school standard to assist pupils in appreciating and respecting their own and other cultures?
4. How are these materials used by teachers in the classroom to enhance learning and to promote community cohesion?
5. What are the key factors for schools to consider when determining which materials should be used to teach world religions?

Under these objectives, McKenna and colleagues also sought to include an evaluation of the published materials readily available to schools (including books published since 2000), consideration of the contextual and pedagogical factors that influence the material selection and use in schools and classrooms, and an examination of the materials' contribution to learning. Using a case study design, the findings reported were that there were a wide range of Religious Education books to support teaching about world religions. However, most of the materials used in Religious Education lessons were generated by the teachers themselves using a mixture of electronic, print and other resources, many of which were not specifically produced for Religious Education purposes.

These findings meant that the quality of the materials, and of the students' learning through them, were dependent on teacher's knowledge, skill and commitment. In addition, lack of subject expertise among many teachers of Religious Education meant that they depended on the reliability of the materials they use as sources of information about world religions. That led to the argument that, despite the independent selection of materials by teachers, the published materials still lacked consultation with scholars in the field. That was evident in the high number of errors and the unequal coverage of religions. The materials also lacked of attention to deeper issues of spirituality and theology.

The work of McKenna *et al* (2010) is important to this study in the sense that the above objectives are similar to some objectives of this study. However, my study has tested Goldman's theory of children's religious thinking with regard not only to materials, but also content and methods used in the teaching of primary school Religious Education.

### **2.3   Zambian Context**

In the Zambian context, the first relevant study is the one done by Mujdrlica (1995) which evaluated Zambian secondary school Religious Education syllabuses. His study was centered on the junior and two senior secondary school Religious Education syllabuses (2044 and 2046). The aim of Mujdrlica's study was to make judgments based on solid evidence about the quality of Religious Education offered in Zambia, thus pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of the three syllabuses at secondary school level. He did his evaluation by largely depending on the existing documentation at that time. He used relevant books, articles and examination papers on Religious Education in Zambia. In addition, Mujdrlica also carried out his study by interviewing 20 teachers but also did participant observation. The criteria used in evaluating the three syllabuses were base on what is called 'twelve characteristics' of modern Religious Education, which were stated as follows:

1. Religious Education is educational as opposed to indoctrinating. It assists children to develop their own beliefs and values.

2. Religious Education is experiential as opposed to doctrinal. It exposes children to worthwhile experiences on which they can reflect.
3. Religious Education is developmental as opposed to static. It respects children's stages of development and challenges them to further growth.
4. Religious Education is Learner-centered as opposed to teacher-centered. It encourages pupils' full participation.
5. Religious Education is broadly based as opposed to narrowly based. It probes human shared experiences, established religions and individual beliefs and values.
6. Religious Education is process-based rather than content based. It stresses the links between life and religion, ones beliefs and behaviour.
7. Religious Education is balanced as opposed to one-sided. It uses both the life-themes and the systems approach.
8. Religious Education is realistic rather than just idealistic. It shows that religion is ambiguous: it can be liberating and enslaving.
9. Religious Education is critical rather than just appreciative. It helps children discern between good and bad religion.
10. Religious Education is an anti-religionist rather than just tolerant. It combats religionism.
11. Religious Education is contextual rather than general. It relates to local culture and development based on social justice.
12. Religious Education is democratic as opposed to authoritarian. It fosters responsible freedom. (Mujdrlica, 1995:18)

It was from the above criteria and other materials he used such as the *Teachers' handbooks* that Mujdrlica evaluated the junior and senior secondary school syllabuses. According to his findings, the junior secondary school syllabus had features of both life-centered model and spiritual model, which advocate for a pupil-centered and experiential approach. After an interview with the teachers, found that the topics in the junior secondary school syllabus are relevant to the youth of Zambia today, but few teachers pointed out that the way these themes were presented were far below the potential of Zambian children. In other words, the topics are too simple and easy and therefore do not give pupils a challenge both

intellectually and emotionally. This suggests that the content of the junior Religious Education syllabuses and the handbooks used are shallow and less appropriate for the learners at junior secondary school level of education.

The findings from the interviews with Religious Education 2044 teachers were that most interviewees praised the syllabus for its life-centeredness and the promotion of African culture although it was too biblical, confessional and Christian oriented. Most teachers just stressed the content of the syllabus and ignored its profound methodology. In addition, there was a suggestion that the church history dimension be replaced with Islam and Hinduism dimension.

On the other hand, from the evaluation of Religious Education 2046 syllabus, it was found that the syllabus is weak with respect to being educational as opposed to indoctrinating learners. The syllabus assisted pupils to appropriate Biblical beliefs and values. Mujdrlica (1995) stated that: "the crucial question is whether the 2046 syllabus helps pupils towards greater autonomy by assisting them to think for themselves though evangelism is deeply Christian, it is certainly more appropriate for churches than public schools which are meant for all persuasions." In addition, 2046 syllabus was weak with respect to being broadly-based as opposed to narrowly-based. The syllabus paid more attention to the shared human experiences of the biblical times than those of today. This means that the syllabus was overwhelmingly Christian without a single reference to non-Christian scriptures. Such findings led to the conclusion that, all the three syllabuses at secondary school level represented confessional Religious Education based on the Christian faith.

Mujdrlica's study is important to this study as his first 4 criteria of modern Religious Education deal with the children we teach as well as the appropriate approaches to use. In addition, despite doing an evaluation research in secondary school Religious Education, Mujdrlica's study gives highlights on what type of Religious Education is offered in Zambia in terms of strengths and weaknesses of its content. This particular study will however, concentrate on Zambian primary school Religious Education and highlight its

content, materials and methods used in the teaching of the subject in the light of Goldman's theory of children's religious thinking.

Simuchimba (2001) gives a brief review on Religious Education in Zambia, with a focus on syllabuses, approaches and contentious issues. These issues are said to have been influenced by two events in the history of the country namely the return to multi-party democracy and the declaration of Zambia as a Christian Nation.

Simuchimba explains the difference between education and religion indicating that religion is a multidimensional concept generally considered as a process of socialisation. The two main concepts of education today therefore are the older view which takes education as the uncritical passing on of customs and beliefs, and the newer view which is marked by a concern for objective knowledge, for truth and for reasons or public criteria. These represent the traditional and conservative approaches to education. In contrast to education, religion is more difficult to conceptualise. Simuchimba quotes Grimmitt (1987) who attempts a conceptualisation by asserting that religion is an ideology which provides 'synoptic meaning' which encompasses the whole life and predisposes those committed to the ideology to hold only to views which are consistent with its tenets. This conceptualisation is relevant as it helps to raise awareness that religion is a quite complex subject to understand from various perspectives. Religion in various respects is more in conformity with traditional, conservative approaches to education than modern liberal approaches.

Simuchimba's work provides a vital framework for understanding various aspects of religion and education in Zambia including some contentious issues in Religious Education such as the demand in some Christian quarters that the existing syllabuses should be set aside and be replaced by the bible, seeing that Zambia was declared a Christian nation. Such issues have affected peoples' attitudes towards the subject and the way Religious Education is taught both at primary and secondary school levels. As such, these events provide a motivation to undertake studies in religious thinking among children. One aspect is that although these studies including Simuchimba's provides insightful information on

education and religion, they do not focus on the religious thinking of children in private primary schools paying particular attention to content, materials and methods used.

Primary school Religious Education in Zambia has been subjected to educational integration. Primary school Religious Education has been integrated with Social Studies into one learning area called Social and Development Studies (SDS). This integration is still under discussion and research by local scholars as it stands out to be one of the most controversial issues in the primary school curriculum. So far, the scholars behind this issue have different views in the way they have conceptualised and understood it. Some scholars have strongly supported integration with justifications, while others have questioned its implementation and effect on Religious Education.

Simuchimba (2001; 2005), Carmody (2004), Cheyeka (2005), Mc Given (2005) have discussed the current Zambian primary school Religious Education syllabus through articles in the *Challenge Magazine* and in journals like *ZANGO a Journal of Contemporary Issues* and in *ZAJE Zambia Journal of Education*. It is imperative to mention that those scholars who question the status of Religious Education under SDS base their arguments on the fact that the subject has been absorbed by the SDS learning area. There is fear that Religious Education will be taught as History, Civics and Geography (Carmody, 2004). Mc Given (2005) bemoaned the fact that there are no longer subject inspectors in the Ministry of Education as there used to be. This means that there is no overall inspector or specialist at Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) specialised to protect the interests of the subject in the whole country.

Cheyeka (2005) pointed out that, there is a lot of skipping and just giving notes to pupils for Religious Education topics by most teachers today as they are not very familiar with the content. The teachers have paid more attention to other subject themes of the subject, ignoring the aspect of Religious Education. Not only that, teachers take pupils to be familiar with Bible stories they hear from churches and anything to do with Christianity as a religion. What is even more unfortunate is that the declaration of Zambia as a Christian Nation has put the teaching of Religious Education in Zambian primary schools at stake.

Religious Education has been Christianised in the sense that most teachers including other stake holders consider the subject not to be multi-religious and outcome based, but Christian content based.

Yambayamba (2007) also carried out a research study for his Master's degree dissertation in Isoka and Nakonde districts. He was concerned with the status of primary school Religious Education under SDS. He called his study; 'The real and perceived consequences of integrating Religious Education with social studies at lower and middle basic education levels.' He was motivated to do such a study due to the recommendation by the national educational policy document of 1996, *Educating Our Future* to integrate the subjects with related topics or themes at primary school level of education. The reason for integration was that the child at primary school level has not yet acquired the analytical capability of separating the world of experience which is unified and integrated into clearly defined categories, and that integration enhances the effectiveness and relevance of primary education in society (MOE, 1996).

Yambayamba's study revealed that the teaching and learning of Religious Education components at primary level would be easy and that the methods of teaching Religious Education would be improved. The problem of shortages of text books for Religious Education especially would be solved as Religious Education and social studies would be taught as one learning area called SDS. However, he found that some teachers concentrated on teaching Social Studies topics or components of SDS and not Religious Education. Therefore, Yambayamba recommended that as the curriculum was being implemented, it was important that the training and sensitisation of teachers about integration needed to be intensified. That could be done through intensified monitoring of how the curriculum was being delivered to the pupils by the teachers. In addition, the Directorate of Standards and Curriculum must ensure that the Curriculum Development Centre had well trained officers to assess and evaluate the quality of books in terms of subject content and before the books were published. Headteachers in schools could also play a big role if they were trained on selection of books in conjunction with the Directorate of Standards and Curriculum.

Similarly, Chiyuka (2011) conducted a study which is entitled: 'The effectiveness of the teaching of Religious Education as part of Social and Development Studies in the integrated primary school curriculum.' His main objectives were to assess the effectiveness of teaching Religious Education and to examine the attitude of teachers towards the teaching of the subject as part of SDS. He also looked at how competent teachers are when teaching Religious Education in an integrated SDS. In order to find out the effectiveness of teaching and learning Religious Education under SDS, the researcher used syllabus, integrated schemes, integrated weekly forecast, integrated lesson plans, integrated records of work, teachers' knowledge of religious components of the syllabus child-centered methods, out-come based learning, integrated teaching and learning materials used, pupils knowledge of religious components of the syllabus, SDS corner, and how well the teacher vested with knowledge on integration. If these features were visible then the teaching and learning of SDS would be taken to be effective.

Based on the above features, Chiyuka's findings revealed that the teaching of Religious Education as part of SDS was not effective because teachers were not adequately trained in the new integrated curriculum approach. The lack of teaching and learning materials in schools had contributed to ineffective teaching and learning of Religious Education under SDS. In addition, there was no serious monitoring of teachers, leading to some of them leaving out some Religious Education topics. Failure by CDC and District Education Standards Officers to make follow-ups on the implementation of the new integrated curriculum approach was another factor that had contributed to the ineffectiveness of the teaching of Religious Education as part of SDS. The negative attitude by teachers towards the change of methodology had also contributed to the non effective teaching and learning of RE. Some teachers give out unexplained work to pupils because they did not knowing what to do. Therefore, like Yambayamba (2007) Chiyuka (2011) recommended that teachers should be retrained in the new integrated methods and that teaching and learning resources should be provided in schools if the integration programme was to be successful.

The arguments by Simuchimba (2005), Carmody (2004), Cheyeka (2005), Mc Given (2005) in the challenge magazine and the two masters' research studies by Yambayamba

(2007) and Chiyuka (2011) are all important to this study because they have firstly highlighted the problems of primary school Religious Education arising from some curriculum reforms based on *Educating Our Future* (MOE,1996). In addition, the above works have provided insights on what research has so far been done on Primary school Religious Education in Zambia, thereby creating a gap for this study. Thus, the above scholars generalised their findings based only on government primary schools. However, it is the task of this study to test Ronald Goldman's theory with reference to the materials, content and methods of teaching primary school Religious Education to the pupils in the private owned Zambian primary school context.

A more recent study important to be reviewed in this work was done by Kamanga (2013). His study was entitled; 'Religious Education in Zambia: Towards religious literacy, religious Pluralism and liberalism. Kamanga wanted to ascertain whether the values promoted by Zambian senior secondary school Religious Education syllabuses were in conformity with the promotion of religious pluralism and liberalism, and whether they could promote the attainment of religious literacy which is a tenet of modern Religious Education. In trying to meet the objectives, a qualitative case study design was employed with methods of data collection which included in-depth semi structured interviews, lesson observations and document analysis, the semi structured interview guides, focus group discussion guide, lesson observation checklist and document analysis checklist. He also used the above methods of data collection to explore the teaching methods and approaches used in Religious Education at secondary school level. In his findings, he argues that Zambian Religious Education continues to be poorly handled, and teachers mostly employ teacher-centered methods and that pupils are exposed to Christianity, thereby not adequately covering much of the other religious traditions like Islam, Hinduism and Zambian traditional religions. His study further revealed that the Zambian Religious Education syllabuses promote values related to religious pluralism and liberalism.

From the foregoing, it is evident that Kamanga's study has great importance to this study. This is because he highlighted the kind of Religious Education that is offered in Zambia with regards to pluralism and liberalism as well as what teaching aids, content and methods

are used to teach this kind of Religious Education. However, Kamanga's research study leaves a gap for this study as he concentrated on the secondary school level and not the primary school where the introduction of Religious Education is done. Therefore, it is the task of this study to look at the content, materials and methods which are employed in teaching Religious Education at primary school level through testing Ronald Goldman's theory of children's religious thinking.

#### **2.4 Conclusion**

In conclusion, chapter two has reviewed relevant literature from foreign countries that have referred their studies to Goldman's theory of children's thinking. Zambian studies have also been reviewed, specifically those which have looked at primary school Religious Education and generally those studies which have provided the gap for this study. The chapter that follows discusses the methodological concerns of the study.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 Overview**

The chapter discusses the research design, research study area or site, study population, study sample, sampling techniques, instruments to be used for data collection, procedure for data collection and data analysis.

### **3.1 Research Design**

Research design involves deciding what the research purpose and questions will be what information most appropriately will answer specific questions and which strategies are most effective for getting the answers (Gay, 1996). The design of study is basically the overall approach used to investigate the problem of interest that is to shed light on, or answer the questions of interest. It includes the method of data collection and related specific strategies. Bless and Achola (1988) say, a research design is a plan of any scientific research from the first to the last step. In this wide sense, it is a programme to guide the researcher to collect, analyze and interpret the participant's views about the topic under investigation.

The study is qualitative in nature. Bryman (2001), states that qualitative research is a strategy that usually emphasises words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data. However, Creswell (2009) states that qualitative researchers endeavor to understand the context of the participants by making visits to the context and gathering of information personally. In other words, in qualitative research, the researcher interacts or collaborates with his or her subjects fully, a situation which helps him or her collect information in a natural environment (Ziwa, 2014). Despite testing a theory, the study used a qualitative approach because it was found to be the most appropriate way to interact with the respondents in order to gather truthful and broad information on the problem under investigation.

More specifically, this study employed a case study design. According to Yin (1989), there are several strengths to case studies, including the ability to study the complex relationships between phenomena, context, and people, and the fact that results are easy to present to a non-scientific audience. Case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. Meanwhile, Ghosh (1992) defines a case study as “an intensive study through which one can know precisely the factors and causes of a particular phenomenon”. He also gives several strengths to case studies, including the ability to study the complex relationships between phenomena, context, and people, and the fact that results are easy to present to a non-scientific audience. The case study design is appropriate for this study because this design aims at describing and explaining the unit it studies; thus, it studies the general characteristics of a given situation, thus, its overall purpose is to achieve understanding of how people apply primary school Religious Education phenomenon in the Zambian context, therefore allowing the researcher to undertake an intensive and in-depth study.

### **3.2 Study Site**

The study was conducted in Lusaka at privately owned primary schools in Munali constituency. The area lies in the East part of Lusaka District. The reason for this scope of study is, firstly, the researcher’s residential place is within Munali constituency, hence, had easy access to schools nearby, thereby avoiding financial and time constraints. Secondly, the researcher has taught at one of the privately owned primary schools within the constituency before, thereby having an idea of how Religious Education is handled, disposition which has led to the identification of the research problem. Thirdly, private primary schools have been targeted because of the common trend to practicing confessional and Christian faith oriented types of activities.

### **3.3 Population**

According to Bryman (2001), a population is a group of elements or causes whether individuals, objects or events that conform to specific criteria and to which the research intends to generalise the results of the research. Bless and Achola (1988) also state that a population is the entire set of objects and events or group of people, which are the objects of research and about which the research wants to determine some characteristics. The population of the study comprised of pupils, Head teachers and teachers of selected private schools in Munali constituency of Lusaka District and the curriculum specialist for Religious Education. In order to answer the research questions and have an effective research, this population gave the necessary or relevant information needed for this study.

### **3.4 Sample**

Sample, according to White (2005), is a group of subjects or situations selected from a larger population. Webster (1985) says a sample is a finite part of a statistical population whose properties are studied to gain information about the whole. In simpler terms, a sample is a sub-set of a population or the segment of the population that is selected for investigation (Bryman, 2001). Therefore, the study comprised of 40 participants out of which 30 were pupils from three primary schools (10 from each school); 6 teachers two from each school, three Head teachers one from each school and one was an official from the curriculum development center, Religious Studies section. In order to have an effective focus group discussion, the sample of 5 pupils from the lower primary and another group of 5 pupils from the upper primary from each of the three schools was sampled and was appropriate for this study as what is learnt in class was reviewed. The six teachers sampled were important for this study as the 2 teachers from each of the three schools demonstrated the real classroom teaching of Religious Education which was observed from both lower and upper primary in order to observe the methods of teaching in class and the use of teaching materials. The three Head teachers one from each school was of value to also be interviewed in order to find out and confirm the religious activities of the schools and how the teachers have been teaching Religious Education lessons. And 1 Religious Education

specialist was sampled in order to be interviewed on the curriculum of the subject at primary school level.

### **3.5 Sampling Procedure**

Sampling procedure is a process or criteria that the researcher puts across to gather people, places or things to study. It is a process of selecting a number of individuals or objects from a population such that the selected group contains elements representative of the characteristics found in the entire group (Orodho and Kombo, 2002). Therefore, the study used purposive sampling and specifically typical sampling.

Purposive sampling is a procedure a researcher uses to purposely target a group of people believed to be reliable for the study. In purposive sampling, a researcher samples with a purpose in mind usually with one or more specific predefined groups. Therefore, purposive sampling was used to select pupils from a selected level of primary schooling. A purposive sampling method was appropriate for this study because it only targeted those respondents who were expected to have adequate knowledge and information about the primary school Religious Education. Primary consideration was given to those who fall in the category of the age range of interest to this research. As such, the research purposively selected pupils between the ages of 7 and 13 years. This age range coincides with the middle childhood stage.

Purposive sampling was also be used to select key informants in the study. These were people who hold particular positions in relation to the subject of study and that they have an input that was of value to the subject. Thus, the curriculum planner, Head teachers and the teachers of Religious Education at primary school were also the key informants who were sampled in this study.

### **3.6 Methods and Instruments for data collection**

*Interviews:* The aim of the interview is to have the participant reflect on his/her experiences and then relate those experiences to the interviewer in such a way that the two come to a mutual understanding about the meanings of the experiences or of the account of

the experiences (Bryman, 2001). An interview, particularly in-depth interview, is defined as a situation in which the interviewer or researcher questions respondents face-to-face and records their answers. Kombo and Tromp (2006) argue that interviews are well suited for exploring and confirming ideas and provide in-depth information about particular cases of interest. The rationale behind use of interviews was that it had a high response rate and the interviewer was placed in a situation where she managed to probe the respondents for clarifications. Similarly, respondents asked for clarifications as sometimes questions were complex or were interpreted differently. This type of data collection technique therefore, allowed the researcher, through the interactions to gain an in-depth understanding of the social reality in focus. The researcher was also placed to gain full understating of what the respondent really wanted to say (Creswell, 2003). Interviews focus on the world of the interviewee and seek to reveal their beliefs, values, reality, feelings and experience of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). In this process, note taking and recording was vital as it led to a credible analysis. To ensure that the researcher does not miss a point, there was both note taking and audio-recording of the interaction. This data collection method was vital in this study as it allowed the researcher to get insights from the head teachers concerning the usual practices by teachers as they teach Religious issues both in and outside the classroom situation. In addition, interview data collection method enabled the researcher to find out more about the basis for primary school Religious Education from the curriculum specialist.

***Focus group discussion:*** According to Bryman (2001:503), focus group discussion is “a form of group interview in which: there are several participants in addition to the moderator or facilitator, and there is an emphasis on the questioning on a particular fairly tightly defined topic; and the emphasis is upon interaction within the group and the joint construction of meaning”. Kombo and Tromp (2006) adds that a focus group discussion should be composed of 4-6 individuals who share certain characteristics which are relevant for the study and that the discussion is carefully planned and designed to obtain information on the participants’ beliefs and perceptions on a defined area of interest. This was important to the study as it enabled the researcher to gain insight of pupils’ different

views of understanding of Religious Education, what they learn and find out what really happens as they learn the subject.

**Observation Checklist:** Sihdu (2014) states that observation method is a more natural way of collecting data. He further notes that data collected through observation is more real and true than data collected by any other method. The advantages of using such a method is that data collected is not affected by the future attitudes and that the information is collected on the basis of what a researcher is seeing without asking the respondent (Upagade and Shende, 2012). Direct observation has recently come to be looked upon as a scientific procedure of collecting data to meet the needs of the particular situation. However, it is important to state that direct observation of behavior has become an important means of appraising the work of progressive schools and of teachers who are interested in certain outcomes in addition to academic ones (Ibid, 2014). This means that in the field of education, observation method is important to judge pupils and teachers skills in teaching and learning. Thus, this method of data collection was vital to this study as it required direct observation of the real classroom teaching in Religious Education and that the researcher observed how and what the pupils are really taught in Religious Education.

**Document reviews:** White (2005) noted that documents are a good place to search for answers as they provide a useful check on information gathered in an interview. He further adds that when other techniques fail to resolve a question, documentary evidence can provide a convincing answer. Apart from providing evidence, White also states that documentary analysis allows the analyst to become thoroughly familiar with the materials and helps to save on time. The usefulness of documents as research tools is that they help corroborate and strengthen the evidence gathered using other tools. Therefore, this method of data collection was important to this study as it provided reliable and quality information from the documents reviewed. In other words, it offered a chance to the researcher to study past events and issues already documented within the field of study and that they are currently in use.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis according to Kasonde (2013) is a manipulation of the collected data for the purpose of drawing conclusions that reflect on the interest, ideas and theories that initiated the study. She further holds that data analysis involves uncovering underlying structures and extracting important variables. Hammersley, et al (1995:209), suggest that in analysing qualitative data, the initial task is to find concepts that help “make sense of what is going on”. Patton (1990) seems to suggest that these concepts about data analysis start arising during data collection and that marks the beginning of the analysis and this continues throughout the study. This shows that, unlike in quantitative research, where data analysis only takes place after data collection, in qualitative studies, like this study, data collection and analysis go hand in hand to build a coherent interpretation of the data (Sarantakos, 2005).

During data analysis in qualitative research, the researcher will have to put into consideration the following steps which can be found in interviews, focus group discussions and observation transcriptions (Booth, 1997). Sjöström’s study (2002) stated that the analysis includes seven steps. These steps to be used in this study are the following:

The first step is familiarisation, which means the researcher becomes familiar to the material by means of reading through the transcripts. This step is important in making corrections in the transcripts. The second step is compilation of answers from participants to a certain question. The researcher should identify the most significant elements in answers given by participants. The third step is a condensation, or reduction, of the individual answers to find the central parts of a dialogue. The fourth step is preliminary grouping or classification of similar answers. The fifth step is a preliminary comparison of categories. The sixth step is the naming of categories. The last step is a contrastive comparison of categories. It includes a description of the character of each category and similarities between categories. Therefore, this study analysed data from the interview guide, focus group discussions, observation schedule and the documents reviews by

grouping the emerging themes with emphasis on the main variables from the research questions and the objectives of the study.

### **3.8 Ethical Consideration**

This research conceptualised ethical considerations as moral integrity of the researcher throughout the process of data collection to the eventual completion. To this effect, and considering that the research involved human subjects, the researcher adhered to ethical principles, including among others the following:

*Anonymity and Confidentiality:* The researcher kept all information of participants relating to their identity as anonymous and confidential so as not to jeopardise the social and psychological safety of research participants.

*Informed Consent:* The researcher also had to seek informed consent from participants. To attain this, potential participants were informed of what the study was about, so that their decisions to participate were made entirely with an informed mind. For participants below the age of 16 years, the researcher had to seek consent from the school authorities as the study was conducted in the school environment, but also because the school authorities have a responsibility of these children in school.

### **3.9 Validity and Reliability**

This study used the combination of methods and sources of data. The study used four data collection methods. Validity examines the extent to which the results of the study could be generalised to the real world (Achola and Bless, 1988). The combination of methods increased reliability and validity. Multiple methods of data collection validate research. This is so because methods complement each other with no overlapping weaknesses (Brewer and Patton, 2002). Combination of methods ensures that inconsistencies are removed and thus valid and reliable data emerges (Patton, 1990). In other words, this is called triangulation.

In order to validate the findings, during field work, the researcher listened to the recordings at the end of each day so as to check for unclear material and then cross check with the respondents (Patton, 1990) .While cross checking, the researcher also made use of the responses for the verification of the findings. This is called member checking.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

In this chapter has described the research design and methods that were used in data collection. It has also explained the population, sampling, data collection instruments, data analysis, ethical considerations that were adhered to during the study and validity and reliability that confirmed the data from the research findings of the study. The next chapter will present the research findings of the study

## **CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **4.0 Overview**

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The data are presented according to the research questions. These were: (1) How is Ronald Goldman's theory of children's religious thinking applied in Zambian context? (2) How are the methods used in the teaching and learning of primary school Religious Education in the light of Goldman's theory? (3) To what extent is the content of primary school Religious Education relevant to children's learning needs according to Goldman's theory? (4) How appropriate in line with Goldman's theory are the materials used to teach primary school Religious Education?

### **4.1 Children's Religious Thinking in Zambia**

A number of questions were asked to pupils during focus group discussions. The questions asked to pupils mirror the questions to be answered by the study. Below are the findings:

At school A, selected 5 pupils from the lower primary grades within the age range of seven and eight years old were asked about what they learn in Religious Education. The pupils revealed that they learn about God and Jesus Christ, things in the past in relation to God, the birth and death of Jesus Christ, the things in the Bible such as stories of the Bible in the New and Old Testament. Follow up questions were asked to get their understanding about God and Jesus or the Bible stories they were taught. Most of them did not express their views about Jesus and God but were able to narrate some simple stories they remembered. For example, one pupil contributed: "I remember in grade one we were taught about the story of Noah and the ark, that he built a big ark because he wanted to live in it with his family and his animals when the big rains caused the floods." She concluded that the story was interesting and it made her like the subject, Religious Education.

At the same school, the question was asked to the selected 5 pupils from the upper primary grades within the age range of ten to thirteen years old. One pupil from the group commented as follows:

Religious Education is a very good and important subject which enables them to learn quite a number of things which are not learnt at church. We even learn about other religions like Hinduism, Islam and other Zambian tradition at church it is very impossible to talk about the good part of such religions. For example I did not know that other religions call their places of worship with different names other than us who calls our places of worship as the church.

Another pupil added that; “it is very interesting to know that there are places of worship like the temple, mosque and many others from different religions.” One of the pupils further noted that the most important thing they learnt in Religious Education was about the different beliefs people have about God.” He gave an example based on the teachings about how God views marriage in Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. When the pupils were asked to briefly explain their belief towards marriage, one responded that he as a Christian believes and learnt that marriage was a union between a man and a woman and it is viewed as sacred by God and that he could not just remember the scriptures which talks about that.

Asked to describe what pupils within the age range of seven to ten years learn in Religious Education at school B, a lower primary school, it was very motivating to see almost all the pupils wanting to contribute. One pupil stated that; “it was just the previous week when we learnt about a very interesting story from the Bible. This story is about David and Goliath and it is found in the Old Testament, but I cannot remember the verse.” The other pupil also remembered the story and narrated it to the group. Through follow up questions to test their understanding and meaning of the story, one pupil contributed that; “we just learn without telling us the meaning of the story.” However, she was challenged by another pupil of the same group who gave this rebuttal that: “For me, I think the meaning of the story is simple because it teaches us not to underrate shot and small people like David if we are tall and giants like Goliath.” He continued: “God has made us in a unique way that he has a purpose for everyone whether they are small, too big, short, tall, or not beautiful.”

Still at school B, the selected 5 pupils at upper primary school level who were within the age range of eight to thirteen years revealed what they learnt after being asked the same question as above. One respondent contributed that they so much learnt about things in the

Bible, especially some topics to do with Jesus' birth, his life up to his death. Asked what they remember about Jesus' life, another respondent from the same group commented:

I remember learning about some things that Jesus did while on earth. For example, Jesus told so many parables to people which are useful even this time we are living in. For instance, the parable of the 'Good Samaritan' teaches us to be good to everyone all the time.

One participant added that they recently learnt about the topic Prayer and Worship where they learnt some proverbs about God in the Bible and in Zambian tradition. When the pupils were asked to give examples of the proverbs they learn in both the Bible and Zambian tradition, all the responses were based on Zambian traditional proverbs. None of the pupils could remember a proverb in the Bible but most of them remembered what they learnt in Zambia tradition. Some responses were: *Lesa mufushi tafulira umo* meaning that: God is God of all not for an individual, *Lesa nimalyotola*, meaning God punishes.

At school C, 5 selected pupils at lower primary school within the age range of eight to nine years were asked the same question like others from the other two schools. From the pupils' responses, three pupils revealed that what they learn in primary school Religious Education was about God, stories in the Bible such as, stories about Jesus' birth and death, the Lord's Prayer, ceremonies, Hindus and Muslims. After some follow up questions on their understanding of God, one pupil commented; "we learn that God is a good man who cares for us so much, but we should not be taking him for funny because when you do not follow his rules, he can punish you like he punished people in the city of Sodom and Gomorrah." Another pupil in the same group added that, when they learnt about punishment in grade three, teacher said that God punished people in the time of Noah by sending the floods to destroy all those who were disobedient and sinning against him.

Responding on what is learnt in primary school Religious Education, the selected 5 pupils within the age range eleven and thirteen from the upper level at school C revealed that Religious Education is all about teachings in different religions. One pupil further commented that: "despite teaching about God in Christianity, other religions such as Islam,

Hinduism and some small religions have their own beliefs about God.” Another pupil stated that primary Religious Education is not just about God but there are other important people in each religion and these people play a big role in teaching about God. He said, for example,

Jesus is very important in Christian lives just like we learnt that Muhammad is also important for the Muslims. Why am saying so is that Jesus is the son of God who died for our sins for us to be saved. That is why we celebrate Palm Sunday, Easter Sunday and Christmas day when Jesus was born.

The general finding from the pupils about what they learn in Religious Education was that they learn about the Christian God, proverbs, Jesus’ life on earth, parables and different Bible stories.

#### **4.2 Methods used to teach primary School Religious Education**

In trying to explore the methods used to teach Religious Education at primary school level, a teacher’s lesson observation checklist was used. The instrument had indicators pertaining to what is expected in a real classroom situation. The answers ‘yes’ or were used to indicate whether the methods of teaching were teacher or learner centered, respectively.

At school A, teacher A teaching a lower Grade Three class was observed on the topic;“Division.” From what the researcher observed, the teacher in the introduction used question and answer method of teaching and she connected her introduction ideas to the development of the lesson using the same method. The researcher’s view was that, the method of teaching was appropriate as it allowed pupils to participate through answering the questions. The teacher in some cases managed to motivate the learners as she did not just point at those who raised their hands but also the learners who looked passive. For example, the teacher said; “yes”, say something! I know you have an idea and that your idea is brilliant. Please, try. We want to hear your voice as well!” Not only did teacher A do that, she was also gender sensitive when it came to pointing at which pupil to answer the questions.

In the development of the lesson, teacher A continued teaching using lecture method and no activities were assigned to pupils such as group work or discussion. It was generally observed that lecture and question and answer methods were used throughout until she concluded the lesson. This entails that the methods extensively used were question and answer and lecture method.

In summary, there was no integration of a variety of teaching methods in the way teacher A taught. The lesson had less learner centered strategies to stimulate the learning process.

At the same school, a Grade Seven class teacher (labeled as teacher B) was observed on the topic, "Christian Teachings about Marriage." In the introduction, the teacher used question and answer method to capture learners attention and test their previous knowledge. However, there was less participation from the pupils as some of them commented that they were not married and it is therefore very difficult to talk about such issues. That led the teacher to connect the lesson to the development by asking pupils to be in groups of six. She then issued the Bibles to the pupils in groups. Teacher B then asked the pupils from one group to read a passage from Mark10:1-12 and another group were assigned to read Malachi 2:12-16, while the third group was given to read 1Peter 3:1-7. The three groups read the scriptures and reported their findings on the Christian teachings on marriage. After the reports from the pupils, teacher B continued teaching still in the development of the lesson using the lecture method. However, in concluding the lesson, Teacher B went back to question and answer method so as to find out from pupils what knowledge they acquired had in the lesson. The lesson ended with an individual exercise taken from the Grade Seven pupils' Social and Development Studies book by Mwajionera publishers.

The general findings on the foregoing lesson were that teacher B tried to integrate a variety of teaching methods. The observed methods of teaching reflected from teacher B was learner centered because it placed more emphasis on pupils than on the teacher.

Moreover, interviewing the headteacher from school A to find out whether he had been mentoring and observing the teachers teaching Religious Education at his school, the head teacher named head teacher A stated that he did observe the teachers in a classroom situation after a fortnight. However, he stated that mentoring at his school is an on-going process which took place every day from Monday to Friday as his school was a privately owned and did not want to compromise the quality of education offered. Asked what kind of teaching methods the head teacher had observed being used different teachers teaching Religious Education at his school, his response was as follows:

Mostly, the teachers here are teaching all the subjects including Religious Education using learner centered methods which involves, group work, discussion, role plays, question and answer, poetry and other dramatic methods of teaching which encourages play among children at primary school level. However, it is also important to mention that sometimes teachers are forced to use teacher centered methods such as teacher exposition if that particular teacher would want to offload the whole subject matter or content of the lesson to the pupils.

The headteacher concluded that, all the teachers at his school were trained teachers with relevant qualifications such as primary school teacher's certificates and diplomas and that they knew what they are expected to do and how to handle or teach at primary school level.

At school B, teacher C was observed teaching a grade four class on the topic: *Courage, Freedom and Justice* with the sub-topic; "how faith and prayer can help people to be brave," taken from the book of 1Samuel 17:34-36. Observing the introduction of the lesson, the researcher watched teacher C use question and answer to find out whether the pupils were familiar with any Bible story in relation to the sub-topic of the day. The pupils took time to respond as they were not familiar with such a Bible story. Teacher C then took out and distributed the pupils' book, *Grade Four Breakthrough to Social and Development Studies*. She then asked pupils in pairs to read from pages 42-44. She further used question and answer to find out from pupils about the picture in the book and what they read from the story. Teacher C then brought out the Bible and read the scripture. Through question

and answer, she then asked pupils what they understood from the bible story. Thereafter, she lectured to pupils by explaining the whole subject matter and pupils listened passively until the end of the period for Social and Development Studies.

From the above, it is clear that the methods of teaching applied in the lesson were mostly teacher-centered. The only time the teacher applied learner-centered methods was when she asked pupils to read a story from the pupil's book in pairs though only those pupils who were fluent readers benefited as they took part in the reading. She also used the common questioning and answer method which became more difficult for pupils to participate as the story seemed to be new to the pupils.

At the same school, teacher D, was observed teaching Grade Six class on the topic; "Prayer and Worship" but the sub-theme was; "Reasons why people pray and worship." Teacher D started his lesson in a unique manner compared to the earlier discussed lessons. He firstly displayed a picture to the pupils showing a Muslim bow and kneels to pray. Teacher D then asked pupils what the picture was all about. Similarly, question and answer method was extensively used from his lesson introduction to conclusion but he used lecture method to explain what the pupils had not answered. From teacher Ds' lesson presentation, question and answer and lecture methods of teaching were dominant.

School B head teacher B was interviewed concerning the methods of teaching the teachers use in teaching Religious Education both at lower and upper primary levels. Headteacher B responded: "The main emphasis is on learner-centered methods of teaching." She added that she encourages her teachers mostly to involve pupils when teaching in class as opposed to using teacher-centered method such as teacher exposition which sometimes make pupils sleep in class especially if the teacher him/herself is boring. After probing her further on what she meant by 'learner-centered methods,' headteacher B explained that there were so many learner-centered methods of teaching that were used at his school. The most common among them were group work, discussions, and drama methods of teaching and of course question and answer which is very important in all the stages of lesson development. Headteacher B further explained:

Religious Education, in as far as I know, deals with children's religious experiences. Therefore, what they learn from their different churches is manifested here at school during Religious Education. Therefore, I personally when giving feedback to the teacher after observing him or her teaching Religious Education subject, I normally advise them to use methods of teaching that will encourage pupils to verbalise their experiences. Such methods are like role-plays, drama, song and dance, storytelling, discussions, group work and poetry.

According to the findings, it can safely be concluded that the common methods of teaching Religious Education at school B were teacher exposition or lecture method, which is not advisable at primary school level. Question and answer method was also used almost in all lessons.

At school C, teacher E was observed teaching a Grade One class. She firstly displayed a picture from a big story book in large print. Then she asked pupils whether they recognized the story. Some pupils managed to respond with the following answers: "Noah and the ark" "story about animals." Teacher E continued teaching her story using question and answer method from the introduction of the lesson to the conclusion. However, it was observed that pupils could not answer the questions individually but in chorus as a group. She ended the lesson through lecture method and gave the pupils an activity to draw the rain ball individually.

The last actual classroom lesson observation in Religious Education was at school C. The lesson observation was on teacher F who taught a Grade Five class on the topic: "Christian Festivals." The lesson was different all in the sense that teacher F just tried to involve pupils when he asked the question about the celebrations they do at their churches. The rest of the lesson was entirely teacher-centered through teacher exposition. No activity was given to pupils at all. The teacher continued lecturing pupils on the Christian festivals, when they are done and how they are done until he ran out of time for the subject.

Responding to an interview question concerning what methods of teaching teachers at school C used to teach primary school Religious Education, Head teacher C revealed that her teachers had been using storytelling, question and answer, projects through home work policy, and dramatic methods of teaching such as role-play and drama. She stated that the former were learner centered methods of teaching but she confirmed that teachers used teacher-centered methods such as lecture or teacher exposition so that they could clarify the points in the subject matter.

From what the researcher observed, the headteachers' responses were not in line with the actual classroom situation and methods used in teaching Religious Education at her primary school. This is because both teachers E and F had limited use of other teaching methods apart from lecture or teacher exposition which they used extensively.

While data on teaching methods used in primary school Religious Education was collected from the teachers' real classroom teaching and interviews with the headteacher. It was also important to interview the Curriculum Specialist for Religious Education at CDC. It was important to consult him over what recommendations were put in place in the syllabuses on the methods of teaching applicable to Religious Education young ones. Accordingly, the following was recorded from the Curriculum Specialist:

Since part of my duty is to develop the syllabuses, in each syllabus we recommend appropriate child-centered methods that teachers could use during teaching. Learner-centered methods should be those which encourage pupils' full participation or interaction in a learning environment. Such methods include; pair work/group work, field trip, project work, drama, role-play, case studies, question and answer, problem solving, brain storming, discussions, games, poems, song and dance, demonstrations, storytelling, half story and many other methods of teaching. However, teachers are free to use any other methods outside what is recommended in the syllabuses depending on the ability of pupils and instructional materials available in the area.

So in answer to the research question, ‘what are the methods used to teach primary school Religious Education?, data collected from the classroom lesson observations and interviews with the headteachers and the Curriculum Specialist were used. From the headteachers and the Curriculum Specialist responses, it was evident that they expect the teachers to use learner-centred methods of teaching Religious Education to the young ones at primary school. The three headteachers and the Curriculum Specialist reported that their teachers use learner-centered methods such as drama, role-play, poetry, song and dance, groupwork, storytelling, projects and question and answer methods. Headteachers think that the lecture method at their schools is only used when teachers would want to emphasise important points in the lesson. However, the headteachers expectations of teachers are far from what happens as none of the above mentioned learner-centered methods of teaching were observed in the actual classroom situation apart from a few, such as the common groupwork and discussion methods. All the 6 teachers observed extensively used the lecture method of teaching with an accompaniment of question and answer. This means that 100% of the teachers prefer using teacher-centered to learner-centered methods. Only 2 out of 6 teachers observed, thus teacher B from school A and teacher C from school B integrated methods of teaching by using groupwork and discussion methods. This suggests that only 40% of teachers observed in the classroom situation could use and integrate learner-centered methods stated above.

#### **4.3 Content of Primary School Religious Education**

In order to address the research question, to what extent is the content for primary school Religious Education relevant to the children in line with Goldman’s theory?, the researcher used secondary data from the main books that are currently used in the teaching of primary school Religious Education in the three schools where research was conducted. These books are: *Zambia Basic Education Course (ZBEC) syllabus Grade 1-7*, published by Curriculum Development centre. *Breakthrough to SDS pupils books Grade 1* by Longman Zambia, *Living in One World Grade 2 pupils’ books* by Longman publishers. *Grade 3 SDS pupils’ book*, by MK publishers. *Breakthrough to SDS pupils book Grade 4* by Longman Zambia. *Breakthrough to SDS pupils book Grade 5* by Longman Zambia. *Grade 6 SDS*

*pupils book* by MK publishers and *Grade 7 SDS pupils' book* by Mwajionera publishers Limited.

Interviews were also used to find out about the appropriateness of primary Religious Education content that was taught to pupils. The headteachers from the 3 target schools were interviewed as well as the subject Curriculum Specialist.

Document review was based on whether the content presented was life-themed or biblical-themed with some biblical texts and direct quotations from the Bible which are thought to be too advanced for the primary school children by Goldman.

In the integrated SDS syllabus, the component of Religious Education has five running themes from Grade One to Seven. These are:

1. Living Together
2. Spiritual and Moral Education
3. Food
4. Environment
5. Communication and Transport (MoE, 2003).

Religious Education falls under Spiritual and Moral Education and there are themes for each Grade. For example, Grade one has the major theme, *God in Our Lives* and sub-theme, *working for God and other people*. Grade Two has, *Religion in Zambia* and has a sub-theme as, *Love, friendship and conflict resolution*. Grade Three has *Cultural and Religious Celebrations* and the sub-theme is *Punishment and Forgiveness*. Grade Four has *Courage, Freedom and Justice* as the main theme but without the sub-theme. Grade Five has the main theme as: *Traditional and Initiation ceremonies* and the sub-theme is, *The Bible and other scriptures*. Grade Six has the main theme as, *Prayer and worship and Happiness* as the sub-theme. Grade seven has the main theme as, *Family Life* and without the sub-theme.

From the information above, it is clear that most of the topics in the syllabus are life-themes which target the children's experiences and have no reference to biblical content.

However, the Grade Five syllabus pages 115 under the sub-theme, *The Bible and other scriptures*, clearly show the presence of Biblical texts. This is evident even from the specific outcomes to be covered. For example, “mention examples from the Bible of history letters, sermons, songs and parables, relate the story from Luke 2:41-51 about Jesus when he was twelve years old.”

In addition, Grade Four Three and Two had objectives which were far from being life-themed but were purely Biblical type of content. For instance, page 106 and 109 of the SDS syllabus reflects the following specific outcomes:

1. Relate stories of Jesus’ friendship towards children
2. Relate stories of Jesus and his disciples
3. Say the Lord’s Prayer and other prayers about forgiveness.
4. Describe how Jesus reacted to suffering during his trial and crucifixion (MoE, 2003:109).

Apart from the syllabus, the pupils’ books used by the schools where the study was carried out were also used for secondary data collection.

In the *Breakthrough to SDS Grade One pupils’ book*, the content is life-themed, but pages 32-33 have the parable of the Good Samaritan. *Living in one world Grade two pupils’ book* is purely life-themed without any references to the Bible. The Grade Three pupils’ books by MK publishers had life themes in some Religious Education topics but page 57 has Genesis chapters 3 and 4 describing about the city of Sodom and Gomorra, page 58 had Acts 5:1-10, 11 telling the story about *Ananias* and *Sapphire*. On the same page, there is a direct quotation from the book of Galatians 6:7-8.

*Breakthrough to SDS Grade Five pupils’ book*, page 40 had a story about David and Goliath and 1 Samuel 17:1-54 was quoted and on page 43 pupils were asked to read the scriptures from the Bible. Page 46 of the same book had the story of Jesus reacting to suffering and John 19 is quoted. Page 51 of the same book also has a direct quotation from John 3:16. Besides, *Breakthrough to SDS Grade Five pupils book* pages 36-38 had the

following Bible quotations: John 12:12-15, Matthew 21:1-9, Matthews 28:1-10 and Matthews 2:1-12. All the four scriptures relate the Christian festivals that are celebrated. In addition, page 42 of the same book, proverbs 23:13-14 is quoted to explain about corporal punishment. The Lord's Prayer from Luke 11: 1-4 is also quoted directly in grade five pupils book.

The Grade Six pupils' book by Mk publishers was also used for document analysis. The findings were that, on page 55, the scripture John 1:1 was directly quoted to spot the differences between Jesus and the preachers in Zambia. Also, Genesis 21:6-7 was quoted on pages 63 to explain the similarities between Christian happiness and other religions.

Finally, in the Grade Seven SDS pupils' book by Mwajionera publishers, findings were that direct biblical quotations from both the old and New Testament were present. These included Genesis2:18-25, Mark 16:1-12, Malachi 2:13-16, Hosea 2:1-31, Ephesians 5:2-6, Ephesians 5:21-23, John 8:1-11, Peter3:1-7, Psalms 121:3, Genesis15:2, Samuel 1:1-18, Proverbs 22:15-23, Proverbs 23:13-14, Proverbs 29:15-17 and Deuteronomy 5:16 from page 65-66 of the book.

As already alluded to, head teachers from the three target schools were also interviewed so as to find out the appropriateness of primary school Religious Education content.

When headteacher A at school A was asked whether the books used to teach primary school Religious Education had the appropriate content for the level of the learners, he revealed that:

The content of the books for primary Religious Education is appropriate especially that it encourages interaction between pupils and the society. The other thing is that, before integration of Religious Education into SDS, the content was too broad such that it was difficult to finish it within a year for a particular grade. Now that it is under SDS which is a combination of social studies topics and Religious education, the content has been reduced into related smaller units which can be covered within the course of a specific year. Most importantly, the content in the old syllabus before

integration was heavily loaded with Biblical, confessional information which was too difficult for the level of our pupils at primary school. The content of Religious Education before integration encouraged pupils to memorise some concepts which is not the requirement. However, the integrated syllabus which is currently in use, has reduced the confessional material and there are only a few examples from the Bible.

Similarly, headteacher B at school B said:

The content of primary Religious Education should be appropriate for the level of our pupils because we use the recommended syllabus and pupils books and teachers handbooks by CDC. These materials have been assessed to see that the level of learners can assimilate with the content or information.

On the other hand, head teacher C at school C expressed some doubt about the appropriateness of the content of Religious Education taught to primary school children. She commented:

Some materials are sometimes appropriate but others are not to the level of our children in Zambia due to the mushrooming of independent book publishers. However, there have been some reviews of book in which I also participate in writing. The content of these books is taken from what CDC recommends. For example, content selection is dependent on the ability and the age of the pupils.

When the Curriculum Specialist was interviewed on the appropriateness of the content of primary Religious Education, his answer was:

At the moment, I think the content is appropriate and relevant to the level of pupils at primary school. However, since all the pupils are not intellectually the same, it is possible that some find the content probably difficult and others find it reasonably easy to handle.

From the data above, all the three schools are still using the Zambia Basic Education Course syllabus and that the new curriculum to teach most subjects had not yet taken shape

when this research study was conducted probably owing to unavailability of teaching materials. From the data collected, all in SDS syllabus reflects the use of life-themed approach. In all the Grades, data has shown that only 3 out of 7 syllabus is somewhat free from biblical texts. However, data findings revealed that in Grade Five (5) the SDS syllabus has one sub-topic themed: “The Bible and other scriptures.” The sub-theme indicates the opposite of a life-themed approach. For example, Page 115 of the syllabus clearly indicates the presence of biblical quotations as evidenced from the specific outcomes to be covered. Luke 2:41-51 is directly quoted to describe Jesus’ way of life when he was 12 years on earth. Not only that, pages 106, 109 of the syllabus carry Jesus’ stories which have religious language that is too difficult for children to understand at primary school level. Moreover, data from the 7 pupils’ books from Grades 1-7 that were reviewed from different publishers clearly show that only the grade two (2) pupils book by Longman Zambia publishers contained a purely life-themed approach. The rest of the pupils’ books loaded with biblical texts and direct quotations from the bible as already highlighted above. Such quotations encourage memorisation of the texts, which result in pupils forgetting in a shortest period of time. Besides, most of the Bible stories presented in the pupils’ books are taken with literal meaning without understanding its religious significance.

Therefore, it can be concluded generally that despite most topics and sub-topics depicting life-themes, the content of the subject has also been laden with the biblical quotations from both the Old and New Testaments. That is an indication that there is something wrong with the content of primary school Religious Education. That also explains how advanced and inappropriate the content is to the level of the young learners from Grade One to Seven.

#### **4.4 Materials used to teach Primary School Religious Education**

To answer the research question on materials used to teach primary school Religious Education, the focus was on what teaching /learning aids were used by teachers as they taught Religious Education at the 3 schools under study. Below are the findings:

At school A, teacher A teaching a Grade Three class did not have any teaching/learning aid at all. She did not even use the pupils' books for a class exercise. No practical activity was involved. The researcher tried to look around the classroom if at all there were some aids for Religious Education at SDS corner, but nothing of such kind was observed.

At the same school, teacher B was observed teaching a Grade Seven. Again teacher B did not use any teaching/learning aids apart from the pupils' books for the class activities. Like teacher A, no Religious Education aids were observed at the SDS teaching corner in her class. Besides, the talking walls on the SDS corner where the aids are displayed in both classes from school A only reflected Social Studies topics and not Religious Education.

At school B, teacher C was observed teaching a Grade Four class. No teaching / learning aids were used at all in her lesson. The teacher only used the pupils' book as she was copying a class exercise on the chalk board. There was also nothing on Religious Education on the SDS corner apart from the social studies pictures.

Prayer and worship was the topic teacher D presented to her Grade Five class at school B. Like with teacher C of the same school, no teaching aids were presented during teacher Ds' lesson presentation. No pupils' activity was given and that there were no teaching / learning aids at SDS teaching corner.

At school C, teacher E was observed teaching a Grade One class. Teacher E demonstrated quite a departure in her teaching to other teachers who never had any teaching/learning aid at all. In the first step, teacher E used a story book with pictures depicting a Bible story. She was teaching about Noah and the Ark. In the application of the lesson, she used the chalk board to draw a rainbow and used a picture on the chart. She asked pupils to draw Noah's family, the ark and animals as home work. However, all the charts at the SDS teaching corner reflected Social Studies topics about food, transport and communication.

At the same school, teacher F taught a Grade Five class. From the lesson observation, teacher F also did not have any teaching aid at all and the talking walls SDS corner did not have any picture for Religious Education.

From the six lesson observations, it is clear that primary religious education holds less value in the curriculum because of the way it is implemented by the teachers. It is clear that most teachers have no interest in the teaching of the subject because from all the three schools and the six lessons observed, only two lessons seemed to have some reflection of teaching and learning aids. However, the rest of the four lessons, teachers just taught without teaching /learning aids. Besides, there was also evidence from the SDS corner where talking walls /picture and charts are displayed for the learners. None of the charts and pictures reflected the topics from Religious Education.

Interviews of headteachers from the three target schools were conducted. Headteacher A was asked to comment on the teaching /learning aids or materials used by his teachers in teaching SDS/Religious Education. Headteacher A from school A revealed the following:

Teaching aids used are those teachers make or design on their own and those bought by the school. Teachers normally use charts as they prepare their lessons and sometimes they use the projector to display their work and pictures as aids to teaching and learning.

Asked about what aids were used by teachers at school B, Headteacher B narrated that:

Concrete aids are used at this school because children will understand better, easily and will ask a lot of questions to find out about the topic. That is because you may not assume that children know these things and yet they do not. When they see they can ask a lot of questions. If you go round the classes there are talking walls so that children could see and teach themselves. Only from secondary school can children learn from abstract because they are able to think rationally.

Head teacher C at school C did not waste much time responding to the question about teaching / learning aids. According to him the teaching / learning aids used at his school were pictures, books, models and charts.

From the data above, it can be concluded that out of 6 lesson observations from the 6 teachers, only 1 seemed to have used teaching/learning aids such as a chart and pictures

from the story book used when teaching. That means that 5 teachers taught in abstract without engaging any teaching aids at all. Such also means that 93% of teachers did not use aids in their lessons. Moreover, all the Grades and classes observed did not at all reflect any Religious Education aids displayed as talking walls for pupils to use them at their own free time. That means that, 100% of the talking walls reflected on SDS corner are for social studies topics such as transport and communication, living together and many others. What was so surprising was that data from the teachers' lesson observation was different from what was narrated by the three headteachers from the three target schools. All the headteachers reported that their teachers used charts, projectors, pictures, models and story books as concrete teaching and learning materials that are used in their schools. However, from the lesson observations, only a chart and a story book were used in one out of the six lessons observed.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

Chapter four has presented the research findings of the study based on the research questions which mirrored the objectives. The questions which the chapter attempted to answer were (1) How is Ronald Goldman's theory of children's religious thinking applied in Zambian context? (2) How are the methods used in the teaching and learning of primary school Religious Education in the light of Goldman's theory? (3) To what extent is the content of primary school Religious Education relevant to children's learning needs according to Goldman's theory? (4) How appropriate in line with Goldman's theory are the materials used to teach primary school Religious Education? The next chapter discusses findings of the study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **5.0 Overview**

The previous chapter presented the research findings of the study. This chapter discusses the findings of the study. The main purpose of the study was to test Ronald Goldman's theory of children's' religious thinking and learning with regard to materials, content and methods of teaching primary school Religious Education in the Zambian context. The discussion will be done under themes derived from the study objectives, which also informed the conceptual framework. The objectives were: (1) To test Ronald Goldman's theory on children's religious thinking in Zambian context. (2) To assess the methods used in the teaching and learning of primary school Religious Education in light of Goldman's theory. (3) To examine the relevance of primary school Religious Education content to children's learning needs according to Goldman's theory. (4) To assess the appropriateness of materials used to teach primary school Religious Education in line with Goldman's theory.

### **5.1 Children's comprehension of religious issues**

As drawn from objective one, the study has established that, Primary school children struggle to comprehend religious issues. Zambian Primary school Religious education is taught to children between the ages of seven (7) to thirteen (13) years old. This is the concrete operational stage according to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, the mythic-literal faith according to James Fowlers theory of faith development and the Sub-Religious thought stage one (7-8/9 years) and the Sub- Religious thought stage two (8/9-11/13years) of Ronald Goldman' theory of children's religious thinking. According to the findings of the study, the study has proved that children struggle to comprehend religious issues through what they learn at school in Religious Education. It evident from the findings that after trying to find out about children's ideas of God and Jesus Christ, proverbs, parables and other Bible stories from both the New and Old Testament, children expressed literal meaning and understanding about such issues. All that was pronounced by children highlighted some Biblical quotations both from the Old and New Testaments.

However, they were able to narrate some simple stories they remembered through memorisation. For example, one pupil narrated she remembered learning about the story of Noah and the ark in grade one. When she was asked to explain her understanding about the story, she explained that Noah built a big ark because he wanted to live in with his family and his animals when the big rains caused the floods. Such a response clearly indicates that children in the concrete stage, thus 'children at primary school level' struggles to get to the understanding about rational or abstract type of religious concepts. This means that they take religious concepts in a literal way as everything to them is something real or concrete. The children cannot explain the meanings of the stories, proverbs and parables because that is abstract thinking which is outside their concrete reasoning.

Not only that, the religious language used in the Bible especially in proverbs of the Old Testament and parables of the New Testament have hidden interpretations such that even elders need critical reasoning to get to the understanding of the meaning. For instance, in the Grade One pupils' book, Breakthrough to SDS, the first topic in Religious Education is about the parable of the 'Good Samaritan.' In the first understanding, it would be very difficult for the teacher to introduce the meaning of the term 'parable' to a Grade One child. Secondly reading the parable itself from the Bible will be a sheer waste of time because literacy levels at that age have not yet developed to understand the meaning of the whole story. Thirdly, telling the story to the children would be somewhat abstract because of the context of the story which is not in line with the children's experiences. Children will of course question who a Samaritan is and would not find the answer in their context. Pictures in the pupils have been used to illustrate the parable. However, the mention of the parable complicates the religious issue that is to be brought forth to the children.

The above finding is in line with Slee (1987) whose article indicates that language is a vitamin thought processes including thinking about religion and that it is vital in thought and naturally plays an important role in religious thinking. In support of the above, Piaget's cognitive development theory indicates that, children between the ages of seven and thirteen are in the concrete operational thinking. Therefore, abstract, thinking has not yet developed, and children can only solve problems that apply to concrete events or

objects. Piaget's theory again supports the above idea as he states that, children at concrete operational stage are able to incorporate inductive reasoning which involves drawing inferences from observations in order to make some generalisations, but they struggle with reasoning, which involves using a generalised principle in order to try to predict the outcome of an event (Piaget, 1979).

Not only Piaget, Gottlieb (2010) also argued that, "Children who have not yet reached the stage of formal operations are capable of only an immature, concrete comprehension of most biblical material." He went on to claim that premature exposure to such material results in the over learning by children of immature conceptions of religion. As they grow older and fail to unlearn such conceptions, they continue to associate religion with childish and incoherent beliefs." Therefore, Willows (1997:83) concluded that,

The primary task of Religious Education is to develop methods of learning that imaginatively transform the child's experience of the world rather than burden her with factual knowledge. Religious Education needs to be fully integrated with a child-centered curriculum, affirming personal spiritual experiences and seeking to incorporate them into appropriate conceptual frameworks of religious belief. The role of the religious educator is primarily to encourage the art of inquiry and reflection upon childhood experiences. The educator must then search for imaginative ways in which to relate these experiences to broader theological perspectives. Religious Education should seek to highlight the spiritual dimension that penetrates the whole of the school curriculum.

In view of the above discussion, it is important to note that Biblical or confessional type of Religious Education might not be appropriate for primary school children because children find it difficult to understand or they struggle to comprehend some religious issues. Teaching young children at primary school should emphasise children's experiences, and that emphasis should be on the bible influence rather than instruction. That is the reason why Piagets' cognitive development theory of (1979), and James fowlers' theory of faith

development (1981), have helped to confirm the findings of this study on children's religious thinking.

Therefore, it can be concluded that, objective one of this study has been attained since the findings of the study have demonstrated that children's ideas of God and Jesus Christ, proverbs, parables and other Bible stories from both the New and Old Testament, are expressed in a literal and childish manner with little or no understanding of the religious significance. That is evident from the pupil's responses in all age groups between seven and thirteen years old which clearly show that what they learn as primary Religious Education is mostly taken from the Biblical context. Such material has been proved to be too difficult for pupils at primary level. The study has also confirmed the establishment from the pupil's responses which have heavily focused on a Christian God, other stories from the Bible and especially with the common mention of Jesus' life. After testing the pupils understanding on their ideas about what they learn as primary Religious Education, pupils expressed limited knowledge and that they could not explain the significance of some proverbs, some stories from the bible from both new and Old Testaments. Therefore, such is what Goldman (1964) regarded as items of intellectual diet which demonstrated to be unsuitable for children.

## **5.2 Methods used to teach Primary School Religious Education**

From objective two on the methods of teaching, the study has established that, the methods used to teach primary school Religious Education are inappropriate. With ongoing debate on which methods of teaching Religious Education at primary school level are appropriate, scholars have contended that learner-centered methods of teaching are the best as opposed to teacher-centered methods such as lecture or teacher expository. In Zambia, the methods of teaching Religious Education since the historical development of the subject have continued to be used even now. However, the recommended methodologies to be used by any trained competent teacher from primary to secondary education are learner-entered methodologies which include, pair work/group work, field trip, project work, drama, role-play, case studies, question and answer, problem solving, brain storming, discussions,

games, poems, song and dance, demonstrations, storytelling, half story and many other methods of teaching. These methods play a very important role in imparting knowledge and skills into the learners. Learner-centered methods involve the full participation of pupils in class and the teacher acts as a facilitator to guide the pupils, while in teacher-centered methods, the teacher is the authority giving instructions and determining class activities while learners take a passive role (Kamanga, 2014). This entails that in teacher-centered methods, the teacher is a custodian of knowledge and pupils are regarded as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge.

With regard to the findings of the study, through interviews, all the 3 head teachers of the three target schools and the R.E curriculum specialist maintained that the learner-centered methods of teaching were the ones which the teachers use when teaching primary school Religious Education. Contrary to that, the study has proved that all the 6 teachers extensively used lecture method of teaching with an accompaniment of question and answer. That suggests that 100% of the teachers prefer using teacher-centered to learner-centered methods mentioned above. Only 2 out of 6 teachers observed, thus teacher B from school A and teacher C from school B integrated methods of teaching by using groupwork and discussion methods, suggesting that only 40% of teachers observed in a classroom situation could use and integrate learner-centered methods stated above.

The above evidence is in accordance with Githaiga (1995) research findings that discovered that many teachers used teacher-centered methods which included lecture and expository methods of teaching. This suggests that despite Religious Education being taught by trained teachers like in other subjects such as sciences, teachers have continued to take Religious Education as a theory oriented subject which could simply be handled using the traditional old methods of teaching as opposed to learner centered methods such as drama, group work and discussions. Similarly, Ziwa (2007) also found out that, though teachers are trained to handle Religious Education properly and use the appropriate methods and techniques, they may still fail to apply what they have learnt, probably because of their cultural and, indeed, religious affiliation.

However, even though teachers are at liberty to use any method of teaching given the circumstances, lecture method has always been condemned and that it is not suitable when teaching young ones even at secondary level of education. This is because there is limited teacher-pupil interaction, a necessary ingredient in the learning process so that passiveness and boredom is avoided at all cost. One English idiom states that; “all work without play makes Jack a dull boy.” Such a saying meant that children learn well when they fully participate in the learning process. Without participation, there is a risk of inviting passiveness and boredom in the children which in turn will turn off the whole learning process. This is in agreement with what Driessnack (1977:158) experienced as she did her research at a Christian school. She noted that: “at a Christian School, learning as I remember it, centered on a teacher lecturing with little response expected from the pupils. Sometimes pupils were interested in the topic, but more often they were confused, bored and were simply turned off by the entire teaching procedure.” When she applied Piaget’s and Goldman’s theories, her study concluded that children under thirteen years are simply not ready for abstract theological thinking.

Therefore, the theories of Piaget and Goldman as applied in Driessnack (1977) study have helped to understand that Children under the age of thirteen find abstract thought meaningless, and that simple stories related to their own experiences are the best primary teaching methods to be applied. According to Goldman’s theory, (1965) such methods of teaching encourage play in class which is an important educational activity that makes a serious contribution towards children’s discovery of knowledge. This is because children cannot always reason their way into a situation, especially where there are problems, they will feel or fantasise their way into it. Therefore, teacher-centered methods like lecturing are not at all appropriate methods of approaching religion to young ones at primary school level.

It can therefore be concluded that objective two of this study has been attained since the findings of the study have demonstrated that teacher-centered methods of teaching are inappropriate for teaching religion to children because there is limited teacher-pupil interaction which is necessary in the learning process so that passiveness and boredom is

avoided. The study has also confirmed through data collected from the teachers that despite the emphasis on the learner-centred methods, primary school Religious Education subject is still poorly handled, not because the classes are too big to manage, but that teachers have made it a habit to teach the subject in a traditional manner because these are teachers teaching small classes with maximum numbers of 20 pupils in class. Therefore, any learner-centered methods of teaching can be applied to make the lesson live and effective at the end of the day. But to the contrary, it was discovered that teachers only found it simple to use question and answer method and extensively used teacher- centered method such as lecture or teacher expository methods of teaching which makes the children lose interest in learning, thereby making the lesson ineffective.

### **5.3 Content of Primary School Religious Education**

From objective three on content, the study has concretely shown that, the content for primary school Religious Education is advanced and not relevant to the children. Content of Religious Education in primary schools is referred to the subject matter which is actually to be taught. According to Goldman's theory (1964), the most effective Religious Education is through influence, by the quality of personal and group relationships and the climate of understanding and tolerance within the community. This means that, children at primary school are ready to explore through their life experiences. Therefore, biblical teaching is inadequate content for Religious Education since it asks too much from the child and does not involve enough of children's experiences to make the content more relevant and sensible. That is why Goldman (1965), suggests that, the more consistent with the intellectual and emotional needs of children at primary school level is teaching by means of life-themes based upon their real life experiences. Life-themes according to Goldman (1965) relate to life by emphasising the total unity of experience. They demonstrate the interrelatedness of all knowledge, and that it can take any area of a child life. Life-themes should be about matters in which children have a natural interest and that a larger amount of diverse detail can be explored. Examples of life-themes possible for the young children at primary school level include, homes, people who help us, birthdays and

parties to mention just a few. Any of these themes may have a religious illustration throughout.

While respondents like the curriculum specialist from CDC and the Head teachers from the three research schools came out clearly that the existed content that is relevant and appropriate for primary school Religious Education because there have been an ongoing revision of the syllabus and other books providing content of the subject. Not only that, the respondents alluded to the fact that the content of primary Religious Education at the moment is relevant and appropriate for the pupils because the syllabus and the books in use undergo scrutiny, assessed and recommended by the curriculum development centre. Notwithstanding that fact, document analysis was done and the findings from the syllabus revealed that most of the topics reflected life-themes which target the children's experiences. However, the Grade Five syllabus pages 115 under the sub-theme; "The Bible and other scripture," clearly describes some presence of Biblical texts. This is evident from the specific outcomes to be covered. For example, "mention examples from the Bible of history letters, sermons, songs and parables, relate the story from Luke 2:41-51 about Jesus when he was twelve years old." Not only in grade five, but data reveals that in grade Four, Three and Two, the objectives which are to be achieved by the end of the grade are far from being life-themed but purely Biblical type of content. For instance, page 106 and 109 of the SDS syllabus reflects the following specific outcomes; "Relate stories of Jesus' friendship towards children, relate stories of Jesus and his disciples, say the lord's prayer and other prayers about forgiveness and, describe how Jesus reacted to suffering during his trial and crucifixion" (MoE, 2003:106). In addition, the document analysis done on pupils books used in Religious Education revealed that all the books used by the three research schools reflect the presence of both Old and New Testament Biblical narratives except for Grade Two living in one word published by long man Zambia. These Biblical narratives include proverbs, parables told by Jesus and many other Bible stories which are expected to be consulted and read by a pupil.

From the findings, it is true that, since the effecting of the (1977) educational reforms attempts have been made to come up with syllabuses, teachers' handbooks and pupils

books that are made to relate the content to children's experiences through life-themes approach. However, it is so unfortunate that the main weight of Biblical teaching in Religious education has remained as the solid content of the syllabuses, teachers' handbooks and pupils' books. This is in accordance with Hyde (1984) who tested Ronald Goldman's work after 20 years. According to Hyde, twenty years after Goldman's research primary schools were generally concerned with providing children with a Religious Education based on the Bible and Christian beliefs and values in a narrative form. Thus, the kind of Religious Education offered was still confession in approach. In addition, the curriculum 20 years after Goldman's research did not consider whether the biblical teaching was relevant to the children's experience as Hyde would certainly want to know. The only change which Hyde (1984) had observed was that Religious Education which had existed at that time was life -themed and that it was associated with work on a general topic such as 'helping others' which is partially the case with Zambian Primary schools.

What is also confusing about primary school Religious Education content is that these other world religions taught to Zambian pupils such as Hinduism and Islam have written scriptures which should have also been quoted just like it is with the Bible for Christians. Besides, there are some religious leaders who have expertise and can help in evolving scriptures that are suitable for children from these other world religions. As reviewed from the documents such as pupils books, the teachings of these other religions are presented purely in life-themed approach. There is no single quotation from either the Koran which is a sacred book for Islam religion and or the Vedas which is the sacred scriptures for Hinduism religion. Only traditional Zambian religions have been fortunate as their scriptures are partially exposed in primary school Religious Education content through stories and songs although some proverbs provided in the syllabus have also been too problematic to be comprehended by children. Unfortunately, this has not been done even now regardless of Zambia being a multi-faith society and whose Religious Education is claimed to be educational and not confessional. Therefore, the three theories used in the study are of help in that the content of Religious Education would drastically undergo further reviews, and the only way to do that according to Goldman's theory (1964; 1965) is

by turning to the feelings and fantasising ways of learning, thus making sure that the content (subject matter) delivered to young children should be purely life-themed without so much of intellectual data which result in so much literalism which in turn builds confusions and creates the necessity for a great deal of later learning.

Objective three of the study has therefore been attained as the findings of the study have demonstrated that; all the Grades in SDS syllabus reflect the use of life-themed approach. Data has shown that only 3 out of 7 syllabuses are somewhat free from biblical texts. However, data findings revealed that Grade Five (5) SDS syllabus has one sub-topic themed: “The Bible and other scriptures.” The sub-theme has indicated the opposite of a life-themed approach. That is evident from Page 115 of the syllabus clearly indicates the presence of biblical quotations from the specific outcomes to be covered. Luke 2:41-51 is directly quoted to express Jesus’ way of life when he was 12 years on earth. Not only that, page 106, 109 of the syllabus reflects Jesus’ stories which have religious language that is too difficult for children to understand at primary school level. Moreover, data findings from the 7 pupils books from Grades 1-7 that were reviewed from different publishers, clearly indicates that only the Grade Two (2) pupils book by Longman Zambia publishers reflected a purely life-themed approach. The rest of the pupils’ books are heavily laden with biblical texts and direct quotations from the bible as already highlighted above. Such quotations encourage memorisation of the texts which result in pupils forgetting in a shortest period of time. Besides, the objective have also been met in that data findings proves that despite most topics and sub-topics expressing life-themes approach to the content of primary school Religious education which encompasses children’s experiences, the content of the subject has also been burdened with the biblical quotations from both the New and Old Testaments. That is an indication that there is something wrong with the content of primary school religious education. That also explains how advanced and inappropriate the content is to the level of the young children.

#### **5.4 Materials used in Primary School Religious Education**

From objective four on materials, the study has established that, the materials used to teach primary school Religious Education are abstract and are inappropriate. Religious materials are anything that can be used to teach in a classroom situation. These include books such as pupil's books, story books, charts, pictures, flash cards, work cards, puppets, models, and real or concrete religious objects which can be seen by pupils in class. In short, such materials are teaching and learning aids that a teacher can use to make the learning process more effective in the sense that, aids will maintain and arouse pupils' interest in class, promote perception and aid memory and retention. In addition, teaching and learning aids are helpful tools for teaching in a classroom or with individual pupils. They are helpful in the sense that, teachers can use them to;

1. Help pupils improve reading and other skills;
2. Reinforce what they teach;
3. Ensure that concepts, theories and principles are understood and appreciated;
4. Enable pupils to visualize and experience something that might be impractical to see or do in life and
5. Engage pupils other senses in the classroom learning process and relieve anxiety and boredom (Muzumara, 2011: 52).

In the presentation of research findings on appropriate teaching and learning aids used to teach primary school Religious Education, responses from the three head teachers indicated that, the teachers normally prepare teaching and learning aids such as charts, models, pictures as they get ready to teach their lessons. Sometimes they use the projectors to display their work and pictures as aids to teaching and learning. These teaching/learning aids used are those teachers make or design on their own and those bought by the school. However, data findings from the actual teacher classroom observations from the six teachers, contradicted with the Headteachers' responses about teaching/ learning aids used to teach primary school Religious Education. It was discovered that teachers did not entirely use teaching/learning aids when teaching primary

school Religious Education. Out of the six teachers who were observed, only two had teaching/learning aids.

In addition, the practice by teachers teaching the subject without aids can therefore be argued that primary school Religious Education holds less value in the curriculum. This is because of the way it is implemented by the teachers. The findings clearly showed that most teachers have no interest in the teaching of the subject because from all the three schools and the six lessons observed, only one lesson seemed to have had some reflections of teaching and learning aids. However, the rest of the five lessons, teachers just taught the lessons without considering the importance of teaching /learning aids to the children at primary school. Besides, there was also evidence from the SDS corners where talking walls /pictures and charts were displayed for the learners. All the charts and pictures reflected the topics from social studies and not Religious Education. Therefore, that is an indication that primary school Religious Education is not taken seriously. Because of the integration with social studies topics, most teachers have concentrated on teaching social studies topics denying the pupils chance to learn Religious Education.

The above establishment is in accordance with Cheyeka (2005) who noted that, there is a lot of skipping or giving notes to pupils for Religious Education topics by most teachers today as they are not very familiar with the content and that teachers have paid much attention to other themes of the subject, ignoring the aspect of Religious Education. Not only that, Chiyuka (2011) supports Cheyeka's comment by revealing that the teaching of Religious Education as part of SDS is not effective because teachers are not adequately trained in the new integrated curriculum approach. In addition, the lack of teaching and learning materials in schools has contributed to ineffective teaching and learning of Religious Education at primary school.

Therefore, Goldman's theory (1964;1965) have helped this study in that it has brought out the realisation that the use of pupils' books and charts with text as teaching/learning aids to young children at primary school may only reinforce crude ideas because they are presented intellectually. He noted that artistic activities such as leisurely paintings,

concrete objects, models and other real images, help children think more creatively and enhance play and verbal religious experiences. Therefore, the use of pupils' books cannot be regarded as appropriate teaching/learning aids as it is abstract for the pupils at primary school level.

It is important to conclude that objective four has been met since the study has established that out of 6 lesson observations from the 6 teachers; only 1 seemed to have used the appropriate teaching/learning aids such as a chart and pictures from the story book used when teaching. That means that 5 teachers taught in abstract without engaging any teaching aids at all. Such also means that 93% of teachers did not use aids in their lessons. Moreover, all the grades and classes observed did not at all reflect any Religious Education aids displayed as talking walls for pupils to use them at their own free time or as evidence that the teaching of the subject is actually taking place. That means that, 100% of the talking walls reflected on SDS corner are for social studies topics such as transport and communication, living together and many others. What was also surprising was that data from the teachers' lesson observation was different from what was narrated by the three headteachers from the three target schools. All the headteachers reported that their teachers use charts, projectors, pictures, models and story books as concrete teaching and learning materials that are used in their schools. However, the only concrete teaching/learning materials observed were a chart and pictures from a story book.

### **5.5 Implications of Goldman's Theory**

Literature reviewed in this study on Goldman's theory of children's religious thinking (1964; 1965) such as Murphy (1978; 1980), Hyde (1984), Slee (1987) and Gottlieb (2001) in Europe and America have supported and accepted Goldman ideas for bringing fundamental changes in the outlook and practice of the subject in many countries. Goldman's theory as a 'no Bible teaching' to children under the age of 13, maintains that religious teaching for younger children is too rational to help them understand religious concepts. He therefore recommended the change in content teaching, materials and the methods to be used in teaching primary school Religious Education in Britain and Wales.

That led to Goldman's research to have a profound influence in the field of Religious Education giving rise to a far-reaching reassessment of the place and purpose of religious education as a subject in primary schools. His opposition on the idea of the Agreed Syllabuses which was based on the assumption that the Bible was a textbook of Religious Education and was supposed to be covered adequately during the years of schooling led to the discovery that many young people could go through ten years of compulsory Religious Education but at the end of it all, they had little idea of what religion was all about (Schools Council Working paper 44, 1972). Consequently, Goldman's theory advocated for a Life-themed approach to content, learner-centered methods of teaching and concrete or real teaching/ learning aids or materials to be used for teaching primary school Religious Education.

Therefore, this study has tested Goldman's theory of children's religious thinking with particular attention to the content, methods and materials used to teach primary school Religious Education in the Zambian context. From the findings of the study objectives, the study has established that Goldman's theory is not supported in Zambian context. This is because Zambian primary Religious Education still demonstrates a confessional type of model based on Christianity religion whose content has direct Biblical quotations or texts such as proverbs, Jesus' parables and other biblical stories both from the New and Old Testament. According to the findings of the study, such content have proved to be too advanced and rational for the pupils at primary school level. Besides, methods applied when teaching the subject are teacher-centered such as lecture method and that the materials or teaching /learning aids are abstract and do not stimulate the learning process at all. From the content of Religious Education in the document analysis, interviews and through researcher's lesson observations, it is clear that Zambian primary school Religious Education still remains poorly handled using a confessional model and that Goldmans theory is never supported at all.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

In summary, this chapter has discussed the findings of the study. The discussion was done under themes emerging from the findings of the study which are informed by the objectives and conceptual framework. The themes presented what the study established from the findings. These emerging themes were that; (1) Primary school children struggle to comprehend religious issues, (2) The methods used to teach primary school Religious Education are inappropriate, (3) The content for primary school Religious Education is advanced and not relevant to the children and (4) The materials used are abstract and are inappropriate. The next chapter gives conclusions of the study and some recommendations based on the research findings.

## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.0 Overview**

The study aimed at testing Ronald Goldman's theory of primary school children's Religious thinking with particular attention to the methods used, the relevance of the content and suitability of materials used in teaching primary school Religious Education. This chapter gives conclusions of the study and some recommendations from what has come out of the research findings.

### **6.1 Conclusions**

In line with the objectives of the study, the following conclusions were made:

With regard to testing Ronald Goldman's theory on children's religious thinking in Zambia, it is clear that primary school children struggle to comprehend religious issues. This means that in line with Piaget's cognitive development theory, Zambian primary school children are in the concrete stage of thinking. Therefore, when they are exposed to rational religious concepts such as the meanings of some biblical narratives, stories, proverbs and Jesus' parables that are taught in Zambian primary school Religious Education, the pupils fail to give comprehensive explanations. The children's responses clearly showed that they could not give meanings to biblical texts like proverbs and parables. Instead of understanding the religious concepts, the children take them literally as everything to them should be real or concrete. The children cannot explain the meanings of biblical stories, proverbs, and parables because this involves abstract thinking which is outside their concrete reasoning.

Coming to the methods used in teaching and learning of primary school Religious Education, it can be concluded that primary school Religious Education is poorly delivered to children. This is because most teachers are still using the traditional teacher-centered methods such as lecture or teacher exposition which leads to passiveness and boredom in the learning process. The only learner-centered method used by the teachers in the study

was question and answer, which also becomes ineffective sometimes because of poor questioning techniques.

With regard to the relevance of primary school Religious Education content, it can be concluded that although relevant, the content in the current subject syllabus is too advanced and difficult for primary school children. The syllabus has some solid biblical scriptures which are taught to children who cannot understand such abstract teaching.

On the appropriateness of materials used to teach primary school Religious Education, the findings showed that most teachers did not use appropriate materials such as teaching/learning aids at all. Therefore, it can be concluded that abstract religious materials such as the bible and books are mostly used to teach the subject. The few teaching materials some teachers used were small pictures from the story books, charts with texts and pupils' books for learning activities. However, these which were still not appropriate for the level of learners who need concrete or real objects to get to the understanding of religious teaching.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

In view of the results of the study and the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations were made:

1. There is need for the Ministry of Education Science, Vocational Training and Early Childhood Education (MESVTEE) through the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) to revise the primary school Religious Education syllabus in such a way that it meets the needs of young children or primary school learners as recommended in Goldman's theory of children's religious thinking and learning.
2. There should be on-going in-service training through GRACE and SPRINT meetings on issues such as good methods of teaching and design of appropriate content and materials for effective teaching of primary school Religious Education.
3. The Curriculum Specialist for Religious Education should be someone who has relevant qualifications and experience in primary school Religious Education so

that as they plan the curriculum and syllabuses, they should also cater for the young children or primary school learners.

4. In terms of the primary school Religious Education materials, authors of books, teachers' handbooks and other materials used to teach the subject should be chosen on the basis of relevant qualifications and experience so that they produce relevant materials.
5. Monitoring of primary school teachers of Religious Education should be regularly done both internally and externally by headteachers and Education Standard Officers, respectively so that the quality of teaching in all the schools is not compromised due to some political pronouncements such as the Declaration of Zambia as a 'Christian Nation.'

### **6.3 Recommendation for further research**

Having assessed *Zambian Primary School Religious Education* in terms of Goldman's theory of children's religious thinking and learning, it is necessary that future research on the subject at this level focuses on evaluating the current syllabus or components of it using international criteria for primary school Religious Education.

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## APPENDICES

### A: Interview guide for R.E Curriculum Specialist

Interviewer:

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Interviewee:

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Place: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ StarTime \_\_\_\_\_

Please note that this is purely academic study which seeks to investigate the basis of Primary School Religious Education Curriculum, content and materials. The information you give will not in any way interfere with your job.

1. As R.E curriculum specialist what levels of curriculum planning are you involved in?
2. What challenges do you face in coming up with primary school Religious Education curriculum?
3. Has the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation affected the primary R.E curriculum planning?
4. What is the basis of curriculum planning at primary school level in Religious Education?
5. Why do you think such considerations are important when planning primary school Religious Education in Zambia?
6. What is the criterion for appropriate content selection for primary school religious education?
7. Are you the one who recommends the authorship of primary school Religious Education pupils and Teachers guides?
8. What are the criteria and factors put in place for the recommendation of the primary school Teachers and pupils books authorship?

9. Do you think the content in primary school pupil's books is appropriate and relevant to the level of pupils we have at primary school?
10. What recommendations do you put across in the syllabuses for the implementers of the curriculum when it comes to methods of teaching primary school Religious Education?
11. If you are to improve on current primary RE what would you change in future? Why?
12. Do you have anything you think you have left out and would like to add?

End time: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your time and participation in this study.

## **B: Interview guide for the school headteacher**

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Please note that this is purely academic study which seeks to investigate the teaching of Primary School Religious Education with particular attention to the content and materials and methods of teaching the teachers of this school use. The information you give will not in any way interfere with your job.

1. As the Head of the school, you are responsible for the welfare of the entire school. Do you mentor/monitor/observe your teachers at this school?
2. How often do you observe your teachers in a classroom situation?
3. Have you ever observed a teacher teaching Religious Education in SDS?
4. What methods of teaching do the teachers use as you observe them?
5. What teaching and learning aids do the teachers use when teaching R.E?
6. What teaching and learning materials such as syllabuses, teachers guides and pupils books do you have for RE/ SDS at this school?
7. What is your view about the appropriateness of the content of the materials used to teach Religious Education at this school?

End time \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your time and participation in this study

**C: Teacher lesson observation checklist for primary R.E**

Observer: \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Duration \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

S/N	INDICATOR	YES	NO	COMMENT
1	Introduction of the lesson as learner centred			
2	Methods of teaching in the development involved story, drama, role-play, question and answer, group work, class discussion, to mention but a few.			
3	Methods of teaching in the development of the lesson as learner-centered			
4	The teaching/learning aids concrete			
5	The Content taught is appropriate for the level of pupils			
6	Pupils' activities applicable to the lesson and the level of learners.			
7	The conclusion of the lesson was learner-centred.			
8	There is evidence of religious teaching and learning appropriate for the level of learners'			
9	Was the lesson educational?			

### **D: Focus group interview guide for pupils at primary school**

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time \_\_\_\_\_

1. What Grade are you in?
2. How old are you?
3. How many subjects do you learn at this school?
4. Do you learn Religious Education in SDS?
5. What specifically do you learn in Religious Education?
6. What do you know about God and Jesus?
7. What activities do you do when learning Religious Education in class?
8. What do you like or dislike about the lesson activities in Religious Education?
9. Have you ever been involved in drama, role play and dance or had a field trip or project in Religious Education?
10. What about outside the classroom, do you take part in religious activities?
11. Identify and explain the religious activities that take place outside the classroom.
12. What do you like and dislike about religious activities outside the classroom?

End time: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your time and participation in this study.

**E: Document analysis checklist**

**F: Documents: primary school religious education materials**

DOCUMENT	BIBLICAL TEXT IN CONTENT		LIFE-THEMED CONTENT	
	YES	NO	YES	YES
Zambia Basic Education Syllabus Grade 1-7 (2003).				
Breakthrough to Social and Development studies Grade 1 pupils' book				
Living in one World Grade 2 pupils' book				
MK ZPEC Social and Development Studies Grade 3 learner's book				
Breakthrough to Social and Development studies Grade 4 pupils' book				
Breakthrough to Social and Development studies Grade 5 pupils' book				
MK ZPEC Social and Development Studies Grade 6 learner's book				
Social and Development Studies Grade 7 pupils' book (Mwajionera)				