



East African Journal of Education Studies

eajes.eanso.org

Volume 8, Issue 2, 2025

Print ISSN: 2707-3939 | Online ISSN: 2707-3947

Title DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37284/2707-3947>

ENSO
EAST AFRICAN
NATURE &
SCIENCE
ORGANIZATION

Original Article

Teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the revised Christian Religious Education curriculum for New Lower Secondary Schools in Uganda

Bweyale Josephine^{1*}

¹ Makerere University, P. O. Box 7062, Kampala, Uganda.

* Author for Correspondence Email: josephine.bweyale@mak.ac.ug

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.8.2.2980>

Date Published: **ABSTRACT**

09 May 2025

Keywords:

Christian,
Religion,
Education,
Content,
Curriculum,
Teachers.

The study investigated teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the content of the New Lower Secondary Curriculum (NLSC) for Christian Religious Education (CRE). Religion plays a central role in Uganda; it influences political, cultural socio-economic sectors. This is reflected in Uganda's motto, 'For God and my country', and the national anthem, 'Oh Uganda may God uphold thee'. In Uganda, people's faith matters and when in 2008, the government attempted to ban religion from Uganda's curriculum, there was national outrage and demonstrations from different sections of the population. Subsequently, the teaching of or about religion is a sensitive issue as it triggers some of the most heated controversies. As Silvestri and Mayall (2015) contended, 'humanity is influenced by religion; it shapes how humans make decisions that express their relationship with the cosmos' both horizontally and vertically. The religious motivation fine-tunes the behaviours and practices of humans in relation to the cosmic order. The study aimed to understand teachers' perception of the new content, its appropriateness within Ugandan contexts and its alignment with Uganda's traditional cultural values. The study employed qualitative research paradigm methods, mainly interviews and focus group discussions. It employed convenient sampling research techniques (Golzar et al., 2022) and targeted secondary school CRE teachers who enrolled and registered to pursue further studies in the teaching of CRE at levels of Master's and doctoral degrees. The study reveals that teachers were not consulted, and there are pertinent issues that were not considered in the design of the CRE new curriculum. Therefore, the laudable goals and aims of the NLSC may not be achieved. Findings reveal that CRE teachers perceive the subject content as majorly Pentecostal, confessional in methodology, simplistic in content, lacks detail, ignores critical issues such as the right to freedom of belief and worship, cultivating the African identity and promotes religious discrimination. The study recommends consultation and engagement of CRE teachers in all processes of reviewing the CRE curriculum, because they know what works, what does not, and they understand learners' moral values and challenges learners experience in day-to-day life.

APA CITATION

Josephine, B. (2025). Teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the revised Christian Religious Education curriculum for New Lower Secondary Schools in Uganda. *East African Journal of Education Studies*, 8(2), 343-357. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.8.2.2980>

CHICAGO CITATION

Josephine, Bweyale. 2025. "Teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the revised Christian Religious Education curriculum for New Lower Secondary Schools in Uganda". *East African Journal of Education Studies* 8 (2), 343-357. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.8.2.2980>

HARVARD CITATION

Josephine, B. (2025) "Teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the revised Christian Religious Education curriculum for New Lower Secondary Schools in Uganda", *East African Journal of Education Studies*, 8(2), pp. 343-357. doi: 10.37284/eajes.8.2.2980

IEEE CITATION

B. Josephine "Teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the revised Christian Religious Education curriculum for New Lower Secondary Schools in Uganda" *EAJES*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 343-357, May. 2025. doi: 10.37284/eajes.8.2.2980

MLA CITATION

Josephine, Bweyale. "Teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the revised Christian Religious Education curriculum for New Lower Secondary Schools in Uganda". *East African Journal of Education Studies*, Vol. 8, no. 2, May. 2025, pp. 343-357, doi:10.37284/eajes.8.2.2980

INTRODUCTION

In Uganda, religious education is a critical subject as it is perceived and designed to shape values, making moral decisions, spiritual growth and promotion of social cohesion among people. Religion is a distinctive subject where teachers' perceptions and attitudes are pertinent because of the potential to influence the direction of the teaching and may change the mindset of learners. For instance, Nelson, & Yang (2023) argued that teachers' religious beliefs influence how they teach, the choice of teaching materials and aids, lesson examples and the relationship with learners. It is arguable that teachers of religious education may choose to orient the teaching towards personal attitudes and beliefs. Subsequently, the article argues that the teachers' perceptions and attitudes have the potential to influence learners' mindsets to make them convert to other religions, deepen their faith, turn into atheists or demean other faiths. Teachers' advice may cause learners to develop peculiar or nuanced attitudes towards their beliefs and the religious beliefs of others.

The study argues that unlike other school curriculum subjects, RE teachers have a responsibility to choose to position themselves either; (i) at the neutral end (teach RE without

expressing personal views); (ii) take a balanced position (present all beliefs as factual) or; (iii) use confessional approaches (to coerce/manipulate learners into deepening their faith). The teacher's choice is influenced by his/her perception and attitude.

Teachers' perceptions are pertinent as they influence the ways in which teachers understand, interpret, respond and teach learners. Arthur, et.al (2019) contend that each individual religious education teacher's personal worldviews shape one's motivation and the way one perceives the content. The concept of teacher perception is varied as it constitutes different aspects of teaching, such as perceptions of learners' motivation, curriculum change, teaching methods, school support and professional development, among others. In 2020, the Ministry of Education revised and rolled out the new lower secondary curriculum (NLSC). The old curriculum was designed during the colonial times, and accordingly, some content is out-of-date, and the methods were not enabling learners to acquire the necessary skills. The review was centred on producing a secondary school graduate who has acquired 21st-century competencies, skills, values and attitudes. The colonial CRE curriculum centred on promoting and deepening a learner's Christian faith and identity, remained catechetical in content

and methodology, and non-dialogical in pedagogy (Bweyale, 2018). As Holsinger and Cowell (2000) observed for a long time, most former colonial states did not change the colonial school curricula. Ssekamwa & Lugumba (2001) observed that the problem with the colonial curriculum is that it was designed following a colonial education policy that was aimed at educating only a few individuals to occupy middle-level clerical and administrative colonial ranks. The CRE content followed a purely confessional approach and aimed at producing devoted Christians. The only acquired skill was to read the Bible and acquire Christian values and morals to propagate them further. The 1992 Education White Paper recommended a radical curriculum change within the secondary school education sub-sector – a shift towards an inclusive curriculum that would enable young people to develop skills according to their abilities (Republic of Uganda, 1992). However, the recommendation was never effected until the recent 2020 NLSC. The Knowledge-Based Curriculum (KBC) paid no attention to the subject content and promoted confessional content at the expense of marketable transferable skills and competencies (Mubangizi, 2020). The NLSC holds high hopes for focusing on national goals of education, including values such as social cohesion, peace, harmony and skills for national development. CRE is expected to equip learners with equal opportunities to acquire not only knowledge but also skills

Statement of the Problem

In 2020, the Ministry of Education, through the National Curriculum Development Centre, rolled out a revised competency-based curriculum for lower secondary schools. The revised curriculum is learner-centred and focuses on emphasizes competencies and skills such as critical thinking, creativity and innovation, values, key learning outcomes including self-assured individuals, responsible and patriotic, long life learners and positive contributors to society. While these components are ideal and appropriate, the subject of

religious education requires more attention because of its nature, purpose and its position in Uganda's curriculum. It is not yet known how CRE teachers understand, perceive and interpret the content. Yet for a subject that aims at imparting moral values, spiritual growth and development, character formation and promotion of social cohesion, understanding the teachers' positionality is critical to prevent the negative influence of learners. The major objective of the inquiry was to explore CRE teachers' perceptions and attitudes of the content of the CRE CBC and assess the implications for teaching and the effect on learners. The major research question was: 'What are the perceptions and attitudes of CRE teachers towards the content, and what are the implications of such attitudes to the teaching and learning of CRE in Uganda?'

The New CRE Curriculum

The new CRE curriculum is not oriented to any particular Christian denomination. It aims at promoting learners' spiritual and moral development, and enabling them to engage in a search for meaning, value and purpose in their lives. CRE is compulsory in S.1 and S.2, and optional later. CRE enables learners to understand the importance and benefits of religious beliefs and practices in society. Learners understand acceptable moral values in society and develop an appreciation of faith within communities. The CBC's practical approaches to CRE are experiential and expose learners to diverse spiritual contexts. CRE also inculcates positive attitudes towards responsibilities towards self, family, society and government. Learners are enabled to understand and appreciate multicultural identities in pluralistic environments and establish bonds among human beings (NCDC, 2020).

Using society-based scenarios in the new CRE curriculum gives learners opportunities to apply CRE in real-life contexts and create solutions. The curriculum aims at making learners achieve the key learning outcomes, including self-assured,

responsible and patriotic citizens, lifelong learners and positive contributors to society; values such as respect for humanity and environment, social responsibility, justice, honesty, social harmony, creativity and innovativeness, among others. It illuminates generic skills such as critical thinking, communication, a sense of creativity and cooperation that are sought by employers in the world of work. The curriculum also exposes learners to life-cutting issues, including gender differences, diversity and inclusion, healthy issues of safety and environmental awareness (NCDC, 2020).

The CRE Outphasing Curriculum

A committee of Catholics and Protestants designed the out-phasing CRE curriculum, 'Christian Living Today', in the early 1970s. During this time, the mainstream Christian sects (Catholicism and Anglican Church) dominated Christianity as well as formal education and replaced the Cambridge Bible Knowledge syllabus that was offered by Cambridge Examinations under the East African Examination Council.

The CRE syllabus was purely confessional in both content and methodology and aimed at enabling learners to grow into responsible Christian maturity, understand the Christian faith demands and shape learners' values and morals around the Christian doctrines and practices. Consequently, life themes included: Man in a changing society encompassing (Living, working and Leisure); Order and freedom in society (Justice, service and loyalty); Life (Happiness, unending life and success); Man and Woman (courtship, marriage and family) and Man's response to God through faith and Love (Man's quest for God, Man's evasion of God and Christian Involvement in the world. The themes were designed to enable learners to relate all life experiences to Christian teachings. Each of the themes was discussed and analysed from four dimensions namely; (i) the present situation (providing an insight into the current experiences as

witnessed by the learners); (ii) the African tradition (providing an overview of the African experiences, values that shape and appreciate the African identity); (iii) Church History (highlighting the Christian traditions and relating them to the present and (iv) relate the past to the present Christian tradition, Biblical linkages (Old and New testament-to synthesize experiences and assign Christian meaning to all life (Chapman, 1974). Subsequently, the Christian Living Today CRE instilled deep Christian faith among learners.

Besides, the outphasing curriculum was informed by colonial philosophy and worldview. It is against this basis that the Ministry of Education and the NCDC decided to revise the curriculum drastically from a knowledge-based to a competency-based Curriculum (CBC).

Aims and Objectives of the Revised RE Curriculum

The curriculum reform in Uganda aims at the following; (i) promotion of effective learning and acquisition of skills; (ii) addressing the needs of all students and lay the foundation for improved pedagogy; (iii) improved assessment procedures which allow learners to more effectively realise their full potential and demonstrate their achievements; (iii) addressing the social and economic needs of the country by meeting the educational needs of learners who will take jobs in the world of work, become self-employed people or pursue academic studies beyond senior four; (iv) allowing flexibility to absorb emerging fields of knowledge in a rapidly-changing world; (v) reducing content overload by specifying a realistic set of expected learning outcomes with a range of essential generic skills at the heart of the curriculum; (vi) the revised curriculum intends to give opportunities to learners who may not be academically successful to realize their potential through participating in other activities including BET/VETS, sports and clubs to enable them exercise their capabilities; (vii) the revised curriculum emphasizes what learners are expected

to do rather than what they are expected to know; (viii) it is aimed at enabling learners to think critically and solve community and national problems; (xi) emphasizes at making learners entrepreneurs and creative thinkers in order to solve problems they may encounter in their professional lives; (x) focuses on developing a secondary school curriculum that can mold young people into becoming more self-reliant, proactive professional capable of competing for jobs right out of school (NCDC, 2020).

Arguments for Teaching Religion in Ugandan Schools

The teaching of religion as a school subject in Uganda is historical, as it is considered a subject that moulds civic leaders in communities. As Hansen (2017) argued that in African countries, no one was considered educated unless one practised religion (mainly Christianity). In African countries, religion is an imperative aspect of any educational curriculum. 'A curriculum which ignores religion would itself have serious religious implications' (Nord, 2011). It is important for young people to be aware of the ways in which religion manifests in human lives, just as health, economics and politics impact human beings. Failure to teach religion in schools implies a denial of the importance of religion in man's history; religion is *sine qua non* to any education system. Religion is influential as it acts as an anti-indoctrination subject in schools and in the community. It is a teaching about principles of life and traditions that influence lives, as well as creating awareness of a religious understanding and interpretation of life. Whitehead, (2011), an advocate of religious education who expressed that 'education should be for the heart and the head, also echoed the need for religious education. Consequently, Musiime (1996) asserted that 'if it is for the two, then students have to be instructed in academic as well as religion'. Lamukwaya (1993) reported that the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Education stressed the importance of religious knowledge when he emphasised that

Uganda's educated persons need to appreciate religions that have shaped and are influential in culture and actions. However, the permanent secretary was emphatic on the fact that Religious Education should not be mixed with sectarian or dogmatic propaganda that promotes the beliefs and practices of a particular religion to win converts. In 1963, the Castle Education Commission report stated that the teaching of RE in Uganda should be of 'highest standards', that is, RE must be pinned to moral values and virtues such 'as honesty, charity, cooperation and responsible attitudes' in content-wise, approaches and methodology (Musiime, 1996). Consequently, according to the Ministry of Education white paper, the goals of RE were stated as follows; (i) to develop ethical and moral behaviour among students; (ii) to promote a sense of discipline and spiritual values; (iii) to promote a sense of responsibility and personal initiatives and; (iv) to acquire knowledge about God (Republic of Uganda, 1992).

In the 1990s, the government proposed to remove religious education from the Uganda's curriculum for what they say are strategic and ideological reasons. The proposal to scrap RE from Uganda's educational curriculum was received with hostility. For instance, Ojacor (2008) stated that 'to even think of removing the teaching of RE in schools in a country whose motto is "For God and my Country" and where every national celebration begins with prayer is ridiculous enough'. In the same vein, Ahimbisibwe (2008) reported that the Minister of Ethics, Hon. Nsababutuuro observed that *'Ugandans know that religion serves us well, true religion espouses us to developmental ethical values which are fundamental to our freedom, stability, security, peaceful coexistence and prosperity. The values include honesty, hard work, respect, care for the underprivileged, faithfulness, love and justice. True religion speaks against practices such as infidelity, homosexuality, murder, witchcraft, pornography, abortion, prostitution and theft. With these advantages, why would anybody*

oppose the teaching of ethical values that are critical to our development?'

Similarly, Uganda's former Minister for Finance, Mayanja Nkangi stated that an educational system where children spend up to nine months of the year at school, school remains the best place to inculcate morality in them- parents are engrossed in other secular activities (looking for money) and in most cases, they are not able to have enough time to religiously shape their children (Wanyama, 2008). Consequently, it became difficult to scrape RE from Uganda's curriculum. Indeed, while many subjects were removed from the curriculum in the latest reforms, RE was maintained as a moral and values subject.

The Role of Learners in the Revised RE Curriculum

The revised RE curriculum clearly states the role of the learners other than being a knowledge consumer who reproduces what he/she has been taught for assessment. According to the NCDC (2020) curriculum document in the revised RE curriculum, the learner has the opportunity to;

(i) interact with real-life situations inside and outside the classroom; (ii) look at pictures or diagrams, exam statistics, or read texts from a range of sources; (iii) find out knowledge and ideas for themselves; (iv) express their new ideas and knowledge in their own words, not those of the teacher and; (v) do demonstrate that they have understood what they have learnt. Further, the NCDC (undated) states that the revised RE curriculum encourages learners to be responsible for their own learning; think for themselves and form their own ideas and opinions and become critical thinkers, ready to face new challenges and situations for themselves.

The Role of the Teachers in the RE Curriculum

RE teachers teach sensitive and controversial subject content matters and aspects that relate to religion. Therefore, RE teachers sometimes

encounter peculiar challenges. For instance, RE teachers are required to be cautious of the ways in which learners may respond and behave towards each other. Therefore, as Flensner (2020) contends, teachers always critically analyse how learners can discuss sensitive issues such as life after death. Teachers ought to guide learners in understanding the difference between facts, opinions, myths and beliefs (Lindström, 2020). CRE teachers demonstrate to learners the obligation to express balanced views and opinions and discourage learners from extreme and fundamentalist thoughts and tendencies. Arguably, an RE teacher is obligated to support learners who may be traumatised by sensitive issues encountered during lessons.

In Uganda's system of education, the teacher has always been the centre of teaching and the source of knowledge. However, in the revised RE curriculum, the teacher's role includes: (i) shaping the learning experiences to accommodate the requirements and interests of each learner; building on learners' existing knowledge and experiences; (iii) extending learners by posing problems to the learners; (iv) go beyond the textbooks and provide as many meaningful contexts as possible; (v) teachers have to give learners an opportunity to think, research, reflect and contemplate on their experiences and their observations in their communities in order to create new knowledge for themselves; (vi) address higher-order cognitive skills, not just rote memorization; (vii) combine continuous and summative assessment to improve efficiency with which exams are administered while still encompassing a range of cognitive skills (NCDC, 2020). It is thus pertinent to understand the perceptions and attitudes of CRE teachers concerning the changed roles of teachers. Teachers have to be at the centre of all curriculum reforms, revisions and changes because they are the implementers of the curriculum at all levels. Schoolteachers in all contexts are responsible for the success of educational reforms at all educational levels (Aboagye & Yawson, 2020). Consequently,

it is pertinent that teachers identify with all undertakings that concern curriculum from the philosophy, the content, goals, aims and objectives. It is important that teachers participate in all curriculum reform processes because they are the designers of the teaching approaches, teaching methods, and all learning and teaching materials. As Mabonga (2021) argues, teachers should walk side by side with all curriculum reforms. Teachers must understand the revisions or changes and the requisite knowledge and skills of how to implement the particular revised curriculum. Curriculum reforms are expected to improve the teaching and learning process, make education more effective, update content and revise educational goals to integrate the contemporary education needs.

The revised curriculum is meant to address the loopholes in the out-phasing curriculum, which included outdated content and teaching methods in all subjects across all subjects. Pedagogical approaches have been revised from teacher-centred, and the revised curriculum also caters for the integration of Information Science and Technology (ICT) to suit contemporary technological advancements. As Janík et al. (2018) assert, curriculum reforms are supposed to enhance the quality of education in a given context. Curriculum reforms always happen after thoughtful processes by the education policymakers and all stakeholders, including teachers. Therefore, curriculum reforms comprise valuable goals and aims, and they are carefully structured. In order to make sure that the reforms succeed, the philosophy, the principles, the content and the pedagogical approaches and methods must be understood by the people who are supposed to implement them.

However, after conducting several studies about curriculum reforms and teachers' perceptions, Park and Sung (2013) observed that in most cases, teachers generally have negative attitudes towards curriculum reforms. Curriculum reform processes must involve programs to support the implementation of curriculum reforms, including

support for teacher training and provision of professional development programs, facilities and materials (Kirk & McDonald, 2001). Therefore, teachers' beliefs, knowledge and perceptions are essential in the effective implementation of curriculum reforms. According to Kennedy (1996), stakeholders' responses to curriculum reforms require interactive activities and collaborative processes. To effectively implement the revised RE curriculum, RE teachers must play their roles and responsibilities. RE teachers need to update their subject content knowledge and adapt to new learner-centred teaching approaches and methods. Moreover, RE teachers need to change their attitudes and perceptions. Teachers must be familiar with the design and the underlying principles of the RE revised curriculum, the content and methodologies. Kennedy (1996) argues that teachers may not perceive curriculum reforms as effectively as developers expect. Teachers may form personal attitudes and formulate meanings and perceptions about the new curriculum reforms. It is against this basis that the study sets out to investigate the perceptions and attitudes of CRE teachers towards the revised curricula for lower secondary schools in Uganda.

METHODOLOGY

To gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward the CRE curriculum content, a qualitative descriptive research design was employed to collect data. Unlike other subjects, researching about the teaching of religion means delving into exploring, discussing, researching, probing and learning about faith matters that are sensitive, controversial and may cause emotional reactions. Subsequently, the phenomenological research methods, such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, enabled the study to capture some of the emotional attitudes about the CRE NLSC. Ruslin, et.al (2022) and Barriball & While (1994) state that semi-structured interviews are advantageous because they are faster in execution, help to obtain

comparable responses, and because of their nature of being lesser interviewer bias, the interviewers ask the questions as they are and in the same manner.

Using convenience sampling, the study targeted CRE teachers who came from different parts of the country to pursue further studies at Makerere University at higher levels of Master's and PhD. The study targeted 56 CRE teachers (Degree holders) who applied for the graduate program. However, only 23 registered and 18 reported on time. Subsequently, the study focused on the 18 graduate students who reported on time, and they participated in interviews and focus group discussions.

A discussion of Religious Education content in Uganda may be sensitive because different religious leaders have severely complained to the Ministry of Education against resistance towards including other religions instead of focusing only on Islam and Christianity. For example, Bahai, the Faith of Unity Movement (OWOBUSOBOZI) and **Tondism** (*Enzikiriza y' obuwangwa n' ennono*) are among the religious movements and sects that have approached and National Curriculum Development Centre to demand inclusion of these faiths into the religious education curriculum. Besides, there are teachers who teach a religion which they do not confess to; for instance, there are Muslims who teach CRE and vice versa. A teacher may feel that his/her faith is not adequately represented in the content, yet teachers must be impartial and present the curriculum as it appears. Both the researcher and participants may be emotionally affected (Lawson, undated). Subsequently, the inquiry of this nature may raise religious emotions. The investigation adhered to the recommended research ethics that explained the purpose of the study to teachers, maintained anonymity and confidentiality throughout the study and used pseudonyms in all dissemination and reporting. Above all, all religious views were treated with respect to ensure constructive engagement and prevent emotional backlash during interviews and focus group discussions.

Data was analysed and presented by use of thematic analysis, themes were constructed as they emerged from data and accompanied by verbatim quotes. The findings are reported in a synthesised format, that is, it is integrated with the literature to show how they fit into the broader conversation about teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the NLSC CRE curriculum.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study investigated CRE teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards the competence-based CRE curriculum.

Teachers' Perceptions and Understanding of the New CRE Curriculum

Teachers gave general and specific comments about the process of the CRE curriculum design. When the revised CRE was rolled out, teachers perceived it with pessimism because they did not feel involved in the process of its design.

'We did not like it, we were not part of the planning, and to us, it was a hoax, we wanted it to fail like CURASSE', TA.

Teachers were not consulted, were not involved in the process and are not satisfied with the revision processes. It should be noted that in 2008, the Ministry of Education prepared to roll out a revised Curriculum – Assessment – Examinations (CURASSE), which had been designed to wipe out all Uganda's education problems but was not implemented (Clegg, et.al, 2007). Therefore, it was not the first time that the Ministry of Education was attempting to review the curriculum.

'We don't know who participated in the revision, we just heard that the curriculum had been changed, we were not consulted, we planned not to implement it, to fail it', TA.

Teachers' attitudes and perceptions are shaped by the entire curriculum revision and development process at all stages, which makes them part of the curriculum. When they are involved, they own it,

support it, promote it and implement it with passion. Curriculum development, revision and intervention studies such as Janík, et.al (2018); Areekkuzhiyil (2014) revealed that teachers are key stakeholders in the implementation of any curriculum, their involvement in the design, development and revision shapes their attitudes and perceptions and commitment towards implementing it. Areekkuzhiyil (2014), based on the failure of the thematic curriculum that had recommendable objectives and goals to enhance literacy and numeracy to assert, asserts that when teachers do not participate in the processes, intentional practices often do not translate into classroom reality. Teachers fail to comprehend not only the concepts but also the goals and objectives that remain abstract to a classroom teacher. CRE teachers also expressed that the curriculum was hastily implemented, without giving teachers adequate training and preparation.

‘We started training for the CBC as it was being rolled out into schools; the training was inadequate; it was hurried’, TC.

Other stakeholders have complained about the speedy implementation of the CBC, as Mafabi (2022) observed, ‘the CBC has been rushed and implemented without proper planning and wide consultations. Parents and some teachers only heard of CBC when the implementation was already underway. The CBC training was done as the implementation was going on, and ‘stakeholders aren’t even aware of all its details; as they are being released in bits,’ (Mafabi, 2022). CRE teachers and other stakeholders complained about the CBC training; they were rushed, not comprehensive, and the trainers displayed ignorance of the CBC concepts. Besides, CBC teacher training was conducted using the omnibus approach. Subject teachers were not given specific attention to understand the concepts, content and pedagogies. A teacher stated,

‘Teachers of all subjects were lumped up together, put in a big hall and trained for a

week, yet each subject has different concepts, competencies and learning outcomes’, TD.

Teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the CBC revision processes. The CBC CRE, just like other CBC subjects, was handed over to teachers by policymakers; they frowned about it, hesitated to accept it, and took a long time to implement it. Consequently, as Nangonzi & Nakakande (2024) reported, ‘some schools kept teaching both the new and old curriculum were still cocooned in the traditional teaching methods’.

Teachers’ Thoughts on the Appropriateness of the CBC CRE Curriculum

Teachers are not content with the CRE curriculum as it promotes denominational differences in schools that make CRE discriminative.

Denominational Differences in CRE

Some teachers feel that the CBC-based CRE curriculum is religiously discriminative in content and may not profoundly contribute towards the 21st-century skills. There are observations that the CRE is fundamentally Pentecostal, the content does not focus on the distinctive doctrines and practices of particular Christian sects. It generalises Christianity. It leaves some learners in need to understand the differences within the different Christian sects. The omnibus approach to the teaching of CRE is generic and limits learners from understanding of the peculiarity of each Christian sect. A section of teachers argues that,

‘CRE favours the Pentecostal sect; it doesn’t explain traditions such as Catholic, Orthodox, Seventh Adventist and others’, TP.

CRE does not mention the theological structures and details of any one Christian sect. Instead, it takes an omnibus approach; the content is generic Christianity, and some sects perceive it as discrimination. A CRE SDA teacher stated,

The education system discriminates against the Seventh Day Adventist Christian (SDA) sect.

The Sabbath day is not taught in CRE and is not respected by the Republic of Uganda'. TE.

'SDAs are excluded from public and private events that are scheduled for Saturdays; the government should make a decree that no event should be calendared for Saturday.' TB

CRE employs a mono-sect approach, which may not be possible in a multi-Christian faith landscape like Uganda. While a mono-sect approach to CRE may deepen understanding and commitment within a desired Christian sect, the teaching of CRE makes the subject lack objectivity.

Religious Shadows in the New Curriculum

Teachers were concerned that CRE content does not expose learners to contexts used by self-seekers who disguise selfish plans under religion. There are so-called preachers who hoodwink the public about miracles through which they exploit, deceive and commit other evils, including assaulting the faithful. A teacher stated:

'Kibwetere sacrificed many people, some pastors are paedophiles..., others have grabbed land and committed murder', TC.

Our children (students) need to be aware of the different 'Christianities'. Some Christian churches are personalised, worshippers are made to treat Pastors as if they are the 'Jesus' or even gods', TG.

'The CRE content leaves out evils committed under religious disguise, it does not teach about exploitations of congregants, especially the new Christian sects, many preachers are manipulators, they exploit people, why is RE silent about such evil?', TD.

In Uganda, especially within Pentecostalism and new religious movements, many Christian factions have arisen under the leadership of individuals who do not subscribe to any organised structures, such as the Catholic or Anglican Church. The prominent churches under this category include the Christian

Victory Church, the Kakande Ministries, Pastor Kayanja Ministries, Bishop Kiganda and many others, these are breakaway sects of the mainstream Pentecostal Church. Then, the prominent Kibwetere of the Movement of the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God and Alice Lakwena, the warrior priestess of the Holy Spirit movement, broke away from the mainstream Catholic Church. Some of the leaders of such Christian churches do not subscribe to any Christian structures; they are autonomous in doctrine and practice. These are new religious movements that have contributed towards religious confusion in Uganda. Some have caused loss of lives, like the case of Kibwetere and Lakwena, while others promote harmful practices such as discouraging medical treatment, dangerous fasting, excessive prayer, exploiting congregants, lack of accountability and promoting spiritual abuse. Therefore, CRE teachers opine that the teaching of CRE should expose learners to such practices of some Christian sects to prevent them from becoming victims of cultic practices and exploitation. Teachers suggest the need to equip young people with techniques to enable them to detect cultic intentions.

Besides, Uganda has a history of violent religious conflicts that arose with the coming of foreign religious beliefs. The sentimentalities that caused violent conflicts are still in people's minds. Subsequently, teachers believe that the structural and contextual setting and characteristics of the school as a communal relationship are ideal for propagating strategies for solving religious conflicts and challenges within the community. Such an observation is in tandem with Agnihotri (2017). who argued that 'religious education should be all-inclusive beyond individual faith'. CRE is a potential channel for mitigating religious differences and conversations about social evils such as hate speech, religious stereotyping and religious discrimination.

Confessional Pedagogies

Teachers confirmed that the CRE is confessional in nature and emphasises Christian doctrines and values.

The CRE CBC was revised from the common Christian Living Today and St. Luke's Gospel, designed in 1972 and 1974, respectively, by the Pastoral Institute of Eastern Africa. St. Luke's Gospel (223) syllabus was biblically based, as well as Christian Living Today (224) CRE syllabus was based on socio-anthropology and integrated aspects of sociology and anthropology into the teaching of Christian doctrines and morals. However, while learners were enabled to understand that the Christian faith operates in socio-cultural landscapes, CRE was oriented towards confessional approaches and pedagogies. The concepts and pedagogical practices of the CRE syllabus 223 and 224 were based on distinctive Christian values and were catechetical in nature. In his analysis, Byaruhanga (2018) contends that CRE is an essential part of Uganda's education system and it is aimed at, (i) developing learners' Christian maturity to enable them to develop a positive awareness of their own worth and; (ii) enabling learners to respond positively to what they believe to be the will of God. All these aims are confessional and doctrinal in nature. Some CRE teachers perceive CBC CRE content as continuing to instil the Christian faith. The S.1 topics and competencies focus on enabling learners to understand Christian beliefs and practices as reflected in topics such as 'Man's relationship with God'. Teachers expressed that,

'The CRE curriculum makes learners more Christian, it brings learners close to God, enables them to live a religious lifestyle, it will help us get rid of corruption and indiscipline',
TD.

Some CRE teachers applaud the curriculum for being confessional and therefore good for ethical and moral values. However, there is a need for CRE

teachers to question ways in which the confessional CRE curriculum contributes to the 21st-century education goals and aims. Greater emphasis is placed on the relevance and application of Christian beliefs within contemporary economic, social, and anthropological discourses reflected in such themes as man's social relations, man's dominion over the world and man's co-existence. CRE enables learners to explore horizontal and vertical relationships and understand human behaviour and culture, as well as how societies organise social structures and resources.

The Right to Religion and Belief and Religious Education

CRE teachers noted that the teaching of CRE does not consider the right to religion. The human right to religion is critical because it empowers learners to freely and fully participate in religious activities.

'The constitution of Uganda states, everyone has a right to religion, but people in Uganda are not aware, young people need to be taught what the right to religion means, ' TS.

The universal right to religion and belief is fundamental in human rights discourses. Cook (2019) asserts that any teaching about religion in school ought to contribute to the 'full development of the human personality', as stated in the 1948 UDHR art. 26 (2). Therefore, all RE curriculum and other programs ought to include 'teaching about freedom of religion and belief, and contribute to the education of human rights, mutual respect, and non-discrimination'. Including the universal right to religion and belief in the RE, the curriculum prepares learners for life in an increasingly pluralistic society. In Uganda, there are many cases of misuse of the right to religion, a CRE teacher expressed.

'Sometimes followers are forced to convert against their wish, denied from worshipping the way they wish, all this violates their rights because moving from one faith to another may

cause them death or chronic sickness and suffering', TM.

As Kakwenza (2024) stated, some preachers misuse the right to religion and belief and engage in acts like gimmicking, which entice gullible people to give money and materials. For instance, encouraging people to spend all their time in the church because God will grant them anything they desire, praising and worshipping loudly and creating noise in the neighbourhoods,

'Born again churches pastors exploit followers by making them overpay money in terms of 'tithe', 'offering', 'thanksgiving', 'seeding/ planting', 'sacrifice', and 'church building fees', everyone must pay for all these items', TK.

'Preachers in some Born Again churches engage in actions that disrespect the congregants, but because of ignorance, followers are coerced and justify their abusive behaviour using biblical teaching, they abuse followers emotionally and psychologically', TN.

'Religious literacy or ignorance has made Ugandans fall prey to numerous violations; they follow preachers blindly, the gospel of liberation makes worshippers depend on forthcoming miracles', TD.

Such are the symptoms of a society that is religiously illiterate. Therefore, religion needs to be taught using practical approaches, exploring contextual religious dynamics and interpretations and creating awareness among young people to prevent blind religious following.

Teachers' Views of the Alignment of the Revised Curriculum to Cultural Values

Teachers were concerned with the issue of traditional values that contribute to the shaping of morals and preserving traditions and customs.

'Our children must know that African knowledge and heritage as manifested in the traditional beliefs, practices, traditions, customs and taboos through teaching proverbs and wise sayings', TB.

'CRE should enable learners to identify with African cultures amidst modern confusion of gender mix-ups and modern lifestyles; we do not need to lose our African-ness', TM.

'African traditions are inseparable from religious beliefs and practices, the teaching of religion provides a space for inculcating African discipline into the young generations', TA.

Incorporating African traditional religious beliefs into RE is cognizant of the UNESCO and SDG 11.4, which stresses the rights to culture and heritage and the power of preserving cultural heritage to build a better world. Cultural heritage is a component of religion. For example, the prominent Nakayima tree in Mubende, some water bodies, hills and mountains and loyal sites such as the Masiro are regarded as sacred sites. Consequently, incorporating traditional religious beliefs and practices in the Religious Education curriculum increases spiritual connections with the natural phenomenon and results in the preservation of the cultural heritage.

'African tradition philosophies such as Ubuntu, which is summarised in Umuntu ngumuntu nga banye abantu' –people, are people through other people, I am because you are and because we are therefore I am, communitarianism, a child is raised by a village', TZ.

'Bantu education that focuses on the Ubuntu philosophy, which is summarised in a phorism umuntu ngumuntu ngabanye abantu- people are people through other people', TS.

'RE should be built on African philosophy, on the African values and skills and values, but

now CRE is Eurocentric and Christocentric', TP.

As Haingura (2014) contends, education should enable children to attain not only skills and ideas, but they must be taught the moral values, social attitudes and religious beliefs of their communities.

CONCLUSION

Teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards CRE determine how teachers design, package and deliver the CRE in class. A CRE teacher may influence learners' interpretation of the content and later may affect their attitude towards religion and belief. A CRE teacher has the potential to make a learner convert from one religion to another, become atheistic, develop fundamentalist and extremist tendencies and how they relate to people of other religious beliefs. While at the beginning, all teachers' attitudes towards the CBC were negative and biased, it was later embraced and accepted, teachers adapted and adopted to it. Markedly, CRE teachers' positive attitudes were connected with the learner-centred teaching methods and the continuous assessment [school-based], while dissatisfaction and resistance focused on the content that is said to be insensitive to the contemporary religious challenge in Uganda. Teachers incorporated the methodology. However, according to the study, teachers expressed that the CRE content may not achieve the stated goals because the content is mainly Pentecostal and shallow regarding the distinctive details of Christian denominations. The content is confessional in approach but short of important contemporary religious aspects that affect society, such as the right to freedom of religion and belief, ignores Traditional African values, doesn't expose learners to the current misinterpretation of the Christian Gospel and exploitative tendencies of new religious groups and manipulative religious leaders. The article concludes that the CRE content does not instil skills of critical thinking, creativity and innovation.

Recommendation

The study findings and discussions indicate that CRE is not holistic and does not encompass all issues that connect with religious belief and practice in the Ugandan context and beyond. Firstly, policy makers need to note that the subject is CRE is distinctive and a channel through which awareness can be created about sensitive religious issues in Uganda and strategise to encounter them. As teachers suggested, CRE should incorporate political and socioeconomic lifestyles and embrace cultural and social structures that make meaning and purpose to Ugandans. Many young people find themselves in religious cults and sects that commit inhuman acts that sometimes involve loss of lives, like the Kibwetere case. Some acts are exploitative and abusive and may lead young people into violent extremism. There are also beliefs that do not respect human rights and the right to religion and belief. Therefore, the Ministry of Education should design CRE to include components of African Traditional Religions that inculcate positive human values and enable learners to appreciate cultural identities. CRE should empower learners to overcome sentiments of 'indoctrinism', religious misinterpretations and abuse of religion in Uganda. In this way, CRE will be practical and applicable and will enable learners to acquire meaning and develop social skills to resist religious manipulation.

REFERENCES

- Aboagye, E., & Yawson, J. A. (2020). Teachers' Perception of the New Educational Curriculum in Ghana. *African Educational Research Journal*, 8(1), 6-12.
- Agnihotri, S. (2017). Critical reflection on the role of education as a catalyst of peace-building and peaceful coexistence. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 5(6), 911-917.
- Ahimbisibwe, F. (2008, May, 6th) "Uganda: Religion to Remain on Curriculum - Govt", -

- Nsababutuuro-New Vision, <https://allafrica.com/stories>
- Arekkuzhiyil, S. (2014). Attitude of Teachers Towards the Restructured Curriculum at Undergraduate Level in Kerala. *Online Submission*.
- Arthur, J., Moulin-Stožek, D., Metcalfe, J., & Moller, F. (2019). Religious education teachers and character: Personal beliefs and professional approaches.
- Barriball, K. L., & While, A. (1994). Collecting data using a semi-structured interview: a discussion paper. *Journal of Advanced Nursing-Institutional Subscription*, 19(2), 328-335.
- Bweyale, J. (2018). The Separatist Religious Education in Uganda: An Unhealthy Approach to Interreligious Dialogue and Extremism. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 5(10).
- Byaruhanga, C. (2018). *Essential approaches to Christian religious education: Learning and teaching in Uganda*. Globethics.
- Chapman, G. (1974). *Christian Living Today: Book One*. Cassel.
- Clegg, A., Bregman, J., & Ottevanger, W. (2007). *Uganda Secondary Education & Training Curriculum, Assessment & Examination (CURASSE)-Roadmap for Reform; the World Bank*.
- Cook, S. (2019). Freedom of religion and belief. In *Handbook on Human Rights in China* (pp. 323-347). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Flensner, K. K. (2020). Dealing with and teaching controversial issues: Teachers' pedagogical approaches to controversial issues in Religious Education and Social Studies. *Acta Didactica Norden*, 14(4), 1-21.
- Golzar, J., Noor, S., & Tajik, O. (2022). Convenience sampling. *International Journal of Education & Language Studies*, 1(2), 72-77.
- Haingura, S. S. (2014). *An investigation of multigrade teaching at three primary schools in the Kavango region, Namibia* (Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University).
- Hansen, D. (2017). *The teacher and the world: A study of cosmopolitanism as education*. Routledge.
- Holsinger, D. B., & Cowell, R. N. (2000). Positioning secondary school education in developing countries. *International Institute for Educational Planning/UNESCO*, 7-9.
- Janík, T., Janko, T., Pešková, K., Knecht, P., & Spurná, M. (2018). Czech teachers' attitudes towards curriculum reform implementation. *Human Affairs*, 28(1), 54-70.
- Kakwenza, R. (2024) 'Gimmicks in churches should top' , <https://www.monitor.co.ug>, Sunday, January 07, 2024
- Kennedy, C. (1996). Teacher roles in curriculum reform. *English Language Teacher Education and Development*, 2(1), 77-89.
- Kirk, D., & MacDonald, D. (2001). Teacher voice and ownership of curriculum change. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 33(5), 551-567.
- Lamukwaya, A. (1993, June, 20) 'Religious Education and culture,' Uganda Monitor Publications
- Lawson, R. (undated) Dilemmas in Religious Research: When a Stigmatized Researcher Researches a Conservative Church.
- Lindström, N. (2020, June). Controversial Issues and Their Role in RE. In *Conference Proceedings. The Future of Education 2020*.

- Mabonga, G. (2021). The reality on ground, successes, Challenges and recommendations for competence-based curriculum implementation in context of Uganda. *The Aga Khan University. East Khan Dar es Salaam: Institute of Educational Development*.
- Mafabi, D. (2022, January 16). Uganda's CBC education reform, good but Education Ministry must stop its hurried implementation and rethink it. *PML Daily*
- Mubangizi, P. (2020). Uganda's New lower secondary school curriculum: moving towards a competent and quality education system. *Policy Review*.
- Musiime, R. (1996). *A critical evaluation of the religious education curriculum for secondary school students in Uganda*. University of North Texas.
- Nangonzi, Y. & Nakakande. S. (2024). 'New O-level curriculum: Teachers still bent on rigorous assessments' , <https://observer.ug/news/>
- NCDC (2020) Lower Secondary curriculum: Christian religious education syllabus
- Nelson, J., & Yang, Y. (2023). The role of teachers' religious beliefs in their classroom practice-a personal or public concern? *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 44(3), 316-333.
- Nord, W. A. (2011). Does God make a difference? Taking religion seriously in our schools and universities: An excerpt. *Religion & Education*, 38(1), 3-23.
- Ojacor, A. (2008, New Vision, May 8th) 'Uganda: Religion Must Remain on School Curriculum' , <https://allafrica.com/stories>
- Park, M., & Sung, Y. K. (2013). Teachers' perceptions of the recent curriculum reforms and their implementation: what can we learn from the case of Korean elementary teachers? *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 33(1), 15-33.
- Republic of Uganda. (1992) *Government white paper on the Education Policy Review Commission report*. Kampala: Government of Uganda.
- Ruslin, R., Mashuri, S., Rasak, M. S. A., Alhabsyi, F., & Syam, H. (2022). Semi-structured Interview: A methodological reflection on the development of a qualitative research instrument in educational studies. *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education (IOSR-JRME)*, 12(1), 22-29.
- Silvestri, S., & Mayall, J. (2015). The role of religion in conflict and peacebuilding. British Academy.
- Ssekamwa, J. C., & Lugumba, S. M. E. (2001). 'A history of education in East Africa' , Kampala, Fountain Publishers
- United Nations. (1948). Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Chicago, Citation: (United Nations 1948). Bibliography: United Nations.
- Wanyama, D. (2008 New Vision, 4th May) 'Scrap Religious Studies from curriculum' , <https://www.newvision.co.ug/news/>
- Whitehead, A. N. (2011). Religion in the Making. Cambridge University Press.