

# A Critical Analysis Of The Introduction Of Comprehensive Sexuality Education In The School Curriculum In Zambia

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DOI: 10.29322/IJSRP.12.07.2022.p12746  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.12.07.2022.p12746>

Paper Received Date: 03rd July 2022  
Paper Acceptance Date: 18th July 2022  
Paper Publication Date: 20th July 2022

**Abstract-** Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) provides young people with opportunities to explore their values and attitudes and build skills so that they can make safe decisions; including reducing their risk of getting diseases such as HIV and AIDS, avoiding Child marriages and unintended pregnancies, Gender Based Violence, delay sexual debut and sexual abuse. That is why from 2011 an Adolescent Health Strategy was established to start providing interventions on Health issues for the adolescents and young people: unintended pregnancies; identity crisis, drugs and substance abuse; sexual relationships and experimentation; lack of decision making skills and assertiveness; HIV & AIDS; lack of information and Gender Based Violence; lack of access to medical services e.g. contraception; negative cultural and religious practices; failure of parents to educate their children and lack of adherence to proper use of contraception. The school curriculum was seen as the best conduit to reach out to the adolescents. Hence in 2014 the Ministry of General Education and other partners flagged off the programme. So the objective of this research is to critically analyse whether Comprehensive Sexuality Education has met the benchmarks needed for it to be taught to the youths in schools or elsewhere from the cultural, religious and moral point of view in the Zambian context. The Research Findings have left a sour taste in the mouth. As a result, a few recommendations have been done so that the Ministry of Education and its partners bring the programme to what is acceptable in accordance with the cultural, moral and religious world view of the people of Zambia.

**Index Terms-** comprehensive; sexuality; education; Adolescent Health Strategy; culture

## I. INTRODUCTION

It is important that young people know Comprehensive Sexuality Education because in some parts of the world, two out of three girls reported having no idea of what was happening to them when they began menstruating. Comprehensive Sexuality Education assists young ladies to know that pregnancy and childbirth complications are the second cause of death among 15 to 19 year

olds with approximately 70,000 adolescents affected annually and hence never to rush into intimate sexual affairs, but instead wait until they are mature enough. Through Comprehensive Sexuality Education, the girl-child is made alive to the fact that early and forced marriage is a risk factor – approximately 90 per cent of births to teenage mothers in developing countries occurs within marriage. Every year, an estimated 246 million children are subject to some form of gender-based violence (GBV), including mistreatment, bullying, psychological abuse and sexual harassment, in or on the way to school. It is a fact that around 120 million girls worldwide (slightly more than 1 in 10) have experienced forced intercourse or other forced sexual acts or any other form of intimate partner violence at some point in their lives. Then at global level, only 34 per cent of young people can demonstrate accurate knowledge about HIV prevention and transmission.

It is important that young people know Comprehensive Sexuality Education because in some parts of the world, two out of three girls reported having no idea of what was happening to them when they began menstruating. Comprehensive Sexuality Education assists young ladies to know that pregnancy and childbirth complications are the second cause of death among 15 to 19 year olds with approximately 70,000 adolescents affected annually and hence never to rush into intimate sexual affairs, but instead wait until they are mature enough. Through Comprehensive Sexuality Education, the girl-child is made alive to the fact that early and forced marriage is a risk factor – approximately 90 per cent of births to teenage mothers in developing countries occurs within marriage. Every year, an estimated 246 million children are subject to some form of gender-based violence (GBV), including mistreatment, bullying, psychological abuse and sexual harassment, in or on the way to school. It is a fact that around 120 million girls worldwide (slightly more than 1 in 10) have experienced forced intercourse or other forced sexual acts or any other form of intimate partner violence at some point in their lives. Then at global level, only 34 per cent of young people can demonstrate accurate knowledge about HIV prevention and transmission.

According to the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the United Nations, “Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible” (<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/WhatAreHumanRights.aspx>, viewed on 23/10/2021). Therefore, human rights are understood as rights belonging to any individual by virtue of being a human being, independent of any law. Since they are supposed to be recognised everywhere, they are therefore, universal guarantees which protect individuals and groups against actions and omissions which interfere with fundamental freedoms, entitlements and human dignity.

However, human history is a witness to many grave injustices suffered by children. According to the U.S. Chargé d’Affaires who was in Zambia by then in 2015, David Young, “the statistics provided by UNICEF, are sobering. Nearly 300 million boys and girls live with violence, abuse, child labour, neglect, sexual exploitation, physical and humiliating punishments, armed conflict, defilement, rape and harmful cultural traditional practices (<http://zambia.usembassy.gov/op-ed-children.html>, viewed on 21/12/2015). That is why even before the United Nations was born in 1948, the League of Nations already in 1925 declared June 1 as the International Children’s Day. (<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FactSheet10rev.1en.pdf>, viewed on 23/10/2021).

Although society has seen fundamental changes since then, yet some truths remain valid: all adults were once children; children remain the most vulnerable members of society; and each generation of parents wants to create a better future for their children. The stakes are high if a child is failed today, there will be a failed tomorrow (<http://zambia.usembassy.gov/op-ed-children.html>, viewed on 21/12/2021).

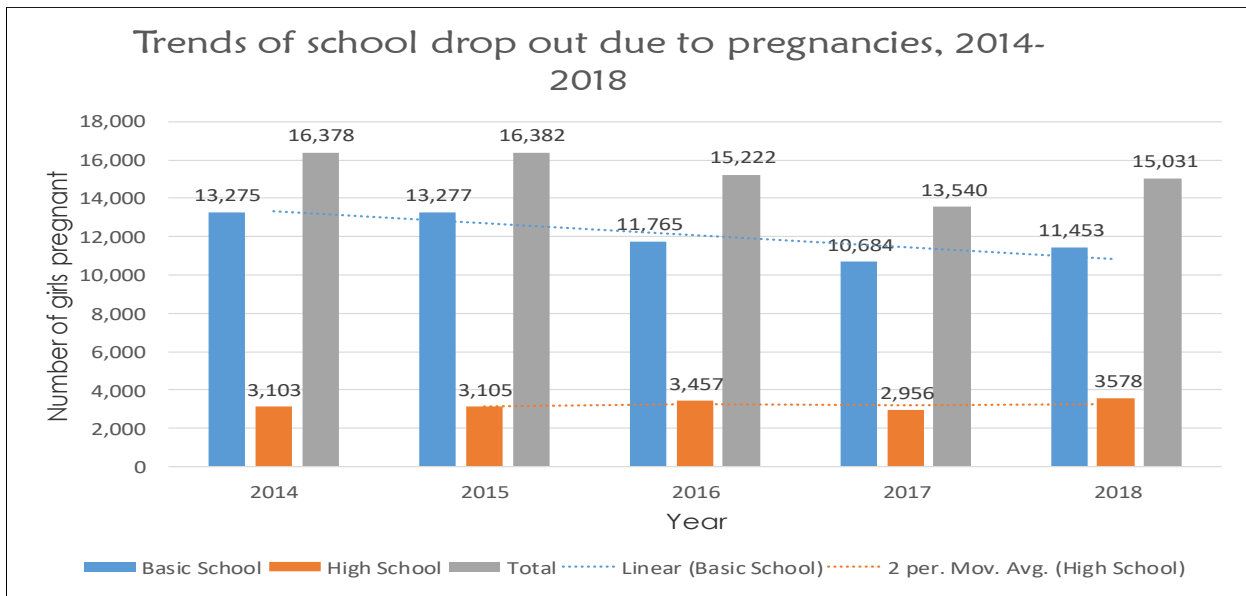
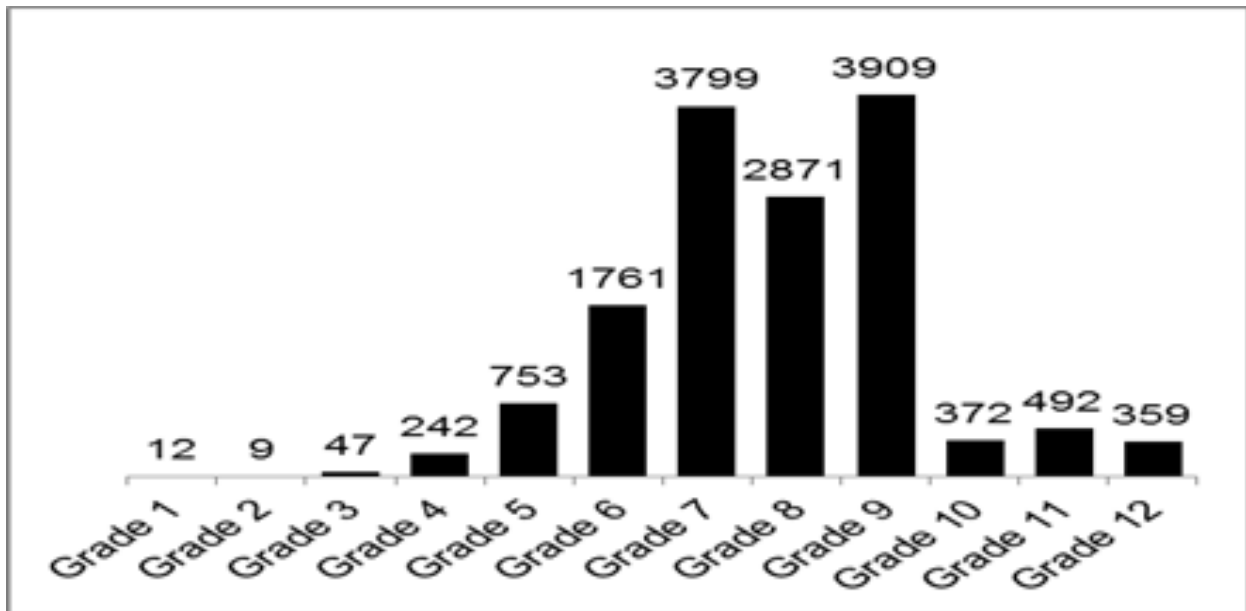
However, the big bang came in 1979 when Poland moved a motion at the United Nations for the Rights of the Child. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the General Assembly of the UN by its resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989. In 1995, the Convention had been ratified in Vienna (<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FactSheet10rev.1en.pdf>, viewed on 23/10/2021).

Despite the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by the General Assembly of the UN by its resolution 44/25

of 20 November 1989 and despite its ratification in 1995 in Vienna, yet boys and girls sometimes live in an environment that does not respect their rights. One of this axis of evil is the lack of knowledge by the children on matters of sexuality. That being the case, in 1996, a National Policy on Education called “Educating our Future” was written down in Zambia which said that “*Young people frequently experience problems arising from their developing sexuality. Many of those attending school have not been given the help they need in this area. The school has an obligation to compensate for the losses they may have experienced elsewhere by helping pupils to form an enlightened outlook on sexuality. This is all the more urgent today in view of the prevalence of HIV and AIDS. Because of this, the curriculum for each school will include an education programme in the areas of sexuality and interpersonal relationships, appropriate to the age and development of its pupils*”, (Sexuality and Interpersonal Relationships, 1996: 38). So between 2000 and 2015, a number of research studies were undertaken concerning sexuality and interpersonal relationships among pupils in schools and the findings were as follows:

- Data from Educational Statistical Bulletins, indicated high rate of school dropout due to pregnancy (ZESB, 2012).
- Zambia Demographic and Health Surveys revealed high prevalence of Sexually Transmitted Diseases including HIV among the 15 to 24 age group (ZDHS, 2007, 2013/2014).
- The 2007 ZDHS revealed that 12% girls and 16% boys experience sexual intercourse before the age of 15 (ZDHS, 2007).
- 2010 curriculum scan by UNESCO revealed gaps in knowledge on sexuality education (UNESCO, 2010).
- The 2010 SACMEQ Report revealed that 60% of Grade 6 learners showed inadequate knowledge on sexuality (SACMEQ, 2010).
- 28% of adolescent girls in Zambia become pregnant before the age of 18, (ZDHS, 2013/2014).
- Adolescent birth rate in Zambia stands at 146 births per 1000 women aged 15 to 19 years, (Census of Population and Housing, 2010).

### **School drop-out trends due to pregnancies-2010**



The research findings prompted the Ministry of General Education to start looking for ways to find a solution for this problem. After consultations with some Cooperating partners in Europe, the answer to this problem was Comprehensive Sexuality Education.

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) provides young people with opportunities to explore their values and attitudes and build skills so that they can make safe decisions; including reducing their risk of getting diseases such as HIV and AIDS, avoiding Child marriages and unintended pregnancies, Gender Based Violence, delay sexual debut and sexual abuse.

To this effect, in 2011, an Adolescent Health Strategy was put in place which started covering and providing interventions on the following Health issues for the adolescents and young people: unintended pregnancies; identity crisis, drugs and substance abuse; sexual relationships and experimentation; lack of decision

making skills and assertiveness; HIV & AIDS; lack of information and Gender Based Violence; lack of access to medical services e.g. contraception; negative cultural and religious practices; failure of parents to educate their children and lack of adherence to proper use of contraception. In order to provide these interventions, it was seen fit to introduce and infuse them in the school curriculum. In Zambia, this started in 2014 and was led by the Ministry of General Education and a consortium of other line Ministries and Civil Society Organisations according to their mandate.

**International Agreements surrounding Comprehensive Sexuality Education**

Governments world over understand the fact that the Educational sector has a responsibility to provide Reproductive Health Education which in essence is Comprehensive Sexuality Education. This is for the purposes of protecting and promoting the rights of adolescents to reproductive health education and that

information and care greatly reduce the number of adolescents' pregnancies." To this effect Zambia as a member of UNESCO and the United Nations whose guidelines notes Comprehensive Sexuality Education as scientifically accurate, culturally and age-appropriate, gender sensitive and life skills-based education moved forward to accept and start implementing Comprehensive Sexuality Education in schools. The Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Continental Policy Framework recognizes reproductive health as a flagship programme for the African Union Commission in addressing the continent's inadequate levels of knowledge about human sexuality and Reproductive Health information. Through this policy framework, governments established:

- The Continental Education Strategy for Africa: from 2016 to 2025 recognizes the responsibility of the education sector in addressing reproductive health and rights for adolescents and young people in Africa;
- East and Southern African (ESA) Commitment: Governments committed to providing Comprehensive Sexuality Education for young people in their countries;
- With 19 other countries in the ESA region, Zambia affirmed and endorsed a joint commitment to deliver Comprehensive Sexuality Education to its young people;
- The Maputo Protocol enjoins Zambia as State Party to ensure that the right to information and education on Sexual and Reproductive Health rights for women is respected and promoted – Article 14 (2);
- The Maputo Plan of Action provides for age appropriate, culturally sensitive comprehensive sexuality education so as to promote Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) and operationalize the continental sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) Policy framework;
- The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development obligates the Zambian State to develop policies, legislation and programmes promoting SRHR education – Art. 26 (2);

Through these international agreements, governments have recognized the fact that:

- there is need to protect and promote the right of adolescents and young people to Reproductive Health Education;
- the Reproductive health and human sexuality information is a major public concern affecting adolescents and young people;
- Comprehensive Sexuality Education should be availed to both in school and out of school adolescents.

### **Eastern and Southern African countries' commitment**

Since Zambia was not the only country which was affected by these issues, the implementation of this Comprehensive Sexuality Education programme was not only done in Zambia, but also in other countries in Eastern and Southern African (ESA) region. Thus, Zambia is one of the signatories of the ESA Commitment and the then Minister of Education, was one of the early champions of the Young People Today (YPT) campaign. The implementation was infused in the school curriculum for a national scale up of the Comprehensive Sexuality Education.

The Ministers of Education and Health from 20 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa gathered in Cape Town, South Africa on 7 December 2013, working towards a vision of young Africans who are global citizens of the future who are educated, healthy, resilient, socially responsible, informed decision-makers and with the capacity to contribute to their community, country and region. These Ministers committed themselves to strengthening HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) efforts in Eastern and Southern Africa by ensuring access to good quality, comprehensive, life skills-based HIV and sexuality education (CSE) and youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services for all adolescents and young people, recognizing each country's socio-cultural context.

### **Eastern and Southern African countries' commitment targets by the end of 2015**

The Ministers from these 20 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa hit the ground running with very ambitious targets which they wanted to achieve by 2015. The targets were as follows:

- A good quality CSE curriculum framework is in place and being implemented
- Pre and in-service SRH and CSE training for teachers, health and social workers
- Increase the number of schools and teacher training institutions that provide CSE to 75%.
- Eliminate child marriage
- Eliminate gender-based violence

### **Countries which have achieved targets**

As mentioned above, these 20 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa were very ambitious. So 2 major targets were embarked upon:

- Providing Comprehensive Sexuality Education or Life Skills to at least 40% of schools
- Comprehensive Sexuality Education training programmes for teachers

To this effect a few countries have achieved both commitments while some other countries have only achieved one commitment. Below are the countries which have achieved both commitments: South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Tanzania, Malawi, Swaziland, Lesotho, Uganda, Kenya and Burundi. Then the following countries have just achieved one commitment which is the second commitment (Comprehensive Sexuality Education training programmes for teachers). These countries are: Madagascar, Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Sudan and Mauritius.

### **Policies and Legal Frameworks**

The implementation of CSE in the Zambian schools is supported by a number of national policy and legal frameworks within and outside the ministry. In 2013, the Ministry of General Education came up with the Zambia Education Curriculum Framework, in which it reaffirmed the provision of cross cutting issues of Human rights, population and family life education (PopFLE), life skills, Reproductive Health and Sexuality and HIV and AIDS (2013: 24). In brief the framework says:

- *The school curriculum should be tailored in such a way that PopFLE is well integrated and implemented through CSE.*
- *Reproductive Health is essential in helping learners appreciate the functions of their bodies and knowing how to handle issues of sexuality.*
- *Learning institutions should incorporate HIV and AIDS education into their programmes to allow learners acquire knowledge, values and skills that they should use in their day to day lives.*

### **Stakeholders Engagement and Development Process**

The normal process of curriculum development is highly consultative. It requires stakeholder engagement at all levels. To this effect a number of stakeholders were engaged during this process:

- 2013: Various stakeholders at Sandys Creation - CSOs, Faith Based Organisations e.g CHAZ/CCZ, Zambia Interfaith Networking Group on HIV and AIDS (ZINGO), Zambia Network of Religious living with HIV (ZANARELA), House of Chiefs, Parliamentarians, Independent Churches of Zambia (ICOZ).
- 2015/2016: Religious leaders were sensitised through ZINGO in Ndola, Lusaka and Livingstone.
- 2016: meeting with Traditional leaders under the House of Chiefs in Kabwe.
- 2018: Sensitisation of Chiefs spouses (Lusaka), Civic leaders across Zambia (Lusaka), Religious leaders indaba hosted by Ministry of Health in Lusaka (Traditional Leaders Indaba, Lusaka).
- 2019: Meeting Religious leaders in Lusaka.
- 2019: Meeting 53 Traditional Leaders from Eastern Province in Chipata.
- 2020: Faith Based Organisations at Sandy's Creation in Lusaka.

### **The Development and Packaging of Comprehensive Content**

According to the Ministry of General Education:

- Sexuality education has always been taught in schools as part of the school curriculum.
- The 2003 school curriculum has content on Comprehensive Sexuality Education in a number of subjects.
- In 2006, the curriculum review process commenced & sexuality education was enhanced.
- In 2012, the Ministry of General Education identified and contextualised the thematic areas and topics on Comprehensive Sexuality Education into the Comprehensive Sexuality Education Framework for Zambia.
- Comprehensive Sexuality Education Framework for Zambia is said to be Responsive to the Zambian laws and policies, Responsive to Zambian cultural values (e.g. traditional values), Responsive to Zambian cultural religious values (e.g. Christian values), Age and grade level appropriate content, The Content on CSE is integrated in carrier subjects e.g Integrated Science, Biology, Religious Education, Home Economics, Social

Studies and Civic Education. Hence Comprehensive Sexuality Education is not a standalone subject. As can be observed, there are no learning areas or subject called Comprehensive Sexuality Education.

### **Lessons learnt from the pilot implementation**

In 2020, the Ministry of General Education reported that in 2013, a pilot project of the Comprehensive Sexuality Education Curriculum received positive feedback from stakeholders for implementation. One of the positive feedbacks was the fact that learners become more assertive and increase their perception of risks. This helps them to have positive behaviour change and improve academic performance. However, there were also some negativity which included lack of understanding of CSE which created a negative perception and misconception by society. Furthermore, although it had been reported that Zambia had achieved both targets, namely; Providing Comprehensive Sexuality Education or Life Skills to at least 40% of schools and providing Comprehensive Sexuality Education training programmes for teachers, in reality government had not yet started training teachers to deliver lessons that integrate CSE content appropriately.

### **Statement of the problem**

Comprehensive Sexuality Education is said to be a curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality. It aims to equip children and young people knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will empower them to:

- Realise their health, well-being and dignity
- Develop respectful relationships
- Consider how their choices affect their own wellbeing and that of others
- Understand and ensure the protection of their rights throughout their lives.

It is important that young people know Comprehensive Sexuality Education because in some parts of the world, two out of three girls reported having no idea of what was happening to them when they began menstruating. Comprehensive Sexuality Education assists young ladies to know that pregnancy and childbirth complications are the second cause of death among 15 to 19 year olds with approximately 70,000 adolescents affected annually and hence never to rush into intimate sexual affairs, but instead wait until they are mature enough. Through Comprehensive Sexuality Education, the girl-child is made alive to the fact that early and forced marriage is a risk factor – approximately 90 per cent of births to teenage mothers in developing countries occurs within marriage. Every year, an estimated 246 million children are subject to some form of gender-based violence (GBV), including mistreatment, bullying, psychological abuse and sexual harassment, in or on the way to school. It is a fact that around 120 million girls worldwide (slightly more than 1 in 10) have experienced forced intercourse or other forced sexual acts or any other form of intimate partner violence at some point in their lives. Then at global level, only 34 per cent of young people can demonstrate accurate knowledge about HIV prevention and transmission.

These are the hard facts of life. Therefore, Comprehensive Sexuality Education comes in as part of the solution to this bitter

pill. It offers a solution by preparing young people for a safe, productive, fulfilling life in a world where GBV, gender inequality, early and unintended pregnancies, HIV and other STIs pose serious risks to their health and well-being. CSE presents this solution by approaching sexuality with a positive response, emphasizing values such as respect, acceptance, tolerance, non-discrimination, equality, empathy, responsibility and reciprocity. CSE provides age-appropriate and phased education about human rights, gender equality, relationships, reproduction, sexual behaviours, risks and prevention of ill health.

However, people are alive to the fact that it is not everything that glitters which is gold. Is it true that CSE is as good in depth as it is presented at surface level? Aren't there some grey areas which need some special concern? Is it possible that what is good for some developed European countries is also good for Africa and especially the Zambian context? Is CSE meeting the Zambian cultural and religious taste? Indeed, this is the crux of the matter for which the researchers would wish to pin this research study to their intellectual microscope.

### **Objective of the study**

The objective of this research is to find out whether Comprehensive Sexuality Education is as good in depth as it is presented at surface level or there could be some grey areas which need some special attention before implementing, or if at all there is need to implement it in schools. In other words, the objective of this research is to critically analyse whether Comprehensive Sexuality Education has met the benchmarks needed for it to be taught to the youths in schools or elsewhere from the cultural, religious and moral point of view in the Zambian context. In order to realise the objective of the study, the researchers applied a qualitative method. In applying this method, the researchers used the Summative Content Analysis and Ethnographic Model.

### **Summative Content Analysis**

Typically, a study using a summative approach to qualitative content analysis starts with identifying and quantifying certain words or content in text with the purpose of understanding the contextual use of the words or content. This quantification is an attempt not to infer meaning but, rather, to explore usage. Analyzing for the appearance of a particular word or content in textual material is referred to as manifest content analysis (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). If the analysis stopped at this point, the analysis would be quantitative, focusing on counting the frequency of specific words or content (Kondracki & Wellman, 2002). A summative approach to qualitative content analysis goes beyond mere word counts to include latent content analysis. Latent content analysis refers to the process of interpretation of content (Holsti, 1969). In this analysis, the focus is on discovering underlying meanings of the words or the content (Babbie, 1992; Catanzaro, 1988; Morse & Field, 1995). Researchers report using content analysis from this approach in studies that analyse manuscript types in a particular journal or specific content in textbooks.

### **Ethnographic Analysis**

The ethnographic model instead immerses subjects in a culture. The goal is to learn and describe the culture's

characteristics much the same way anthropologists observe the cultural challenges and motivations that drive a group. This method often immerses the researcher as a subject for extended periods of time. Ethnography is one of the most popular methods of qualitative research which involves the researcher embedding himself or herself into the daily life and routine of the subject or subjects. Either as an active participant or as an observer, the researcher experiences their customs, traditions, mannerisms, reactions to situations etc. This anthropological approach to conducting qualitative research allows the researcher to embed oneself in the natural setting of the subject he or she tries to study.

The researchers, being Zambians and Christians, tried to evaluate Comprehensive Sexuality Education from the cultural and faith point of view. The instruments used in conducting this research study was the participant observation. This method for qualitative research entails the researcher embedding oneself in a group setting and observing intently to note down nuanced descriptions of the setting under study. This could be inclusive of the larger contextual settings, descriptions of individuals, the dynamics in a group, individual opinions, and the like. Being Zambians, researchers have been born and brought up in the Zambian culture and hence they understand the world of the people. Therefore, the choice of this tool was relevant as it helped to understand Comprehensive Sexuality Education from the point of view of Zambians.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study applied the curriculum implementation theory developed by Rogan and Grayson in 2008. The 'Rogan theory involves the curriculum profile that stands on three concepts of implementation, capacity to support innovation and support from outside agencies. This is because the current research holds culture as a cornerstone of every curriculum. That is why Offorma (2016) is quick to note that 'Culture is important in curriculum planning and drives the content of every curriculum'. This is the essence of education to transmit the cultural heritage of a society to the younger generation of society' (Offorma C. G., 2016).

In an earlier paper, Offorma (2014) defines curriculum as the document plan, or blue print for instructional guidance which is used for teaching and learning to bring about positive and desirable learner behaviour change. She sees the learning experiences of the learner being learner oriented, goal oriented and culture oriented (Offorma G. , 2014).

Another proponent of the Rogan theory, Anwuka (2001), is of the view that curriculum gives an education focused on the acquisition of pre-specified competencies. The competencies reflect the elements of the learners' culture which when imbibed by learners make them functional members of their society ( A.G. Anwuka, 2001).

Taba (1962), and Nicholls and Nicholls (1978) believe that situational analysis should be the first step in curriculum planning so as to understand the culture of the people and the available accumulated body of knowledge before embarking on selection of objectives. Even in the selection of objectives, one of the major considerations is the contemporary society which depicts the culture of the people. Therefore, any curriculum to be worthwhile, the planning must have its foundation on the culture of the society that owns the learners (Taba, 1962; Nicholls & Nicholls, 1978).

Curriculum must be a reflection of what people do, feel and believe. All these have cultural affiliation. Any society whose education is not founded on its culture is in danger of alienating the products of that system from their culture. A functional curriculum reflects the culture of the people and drives to make learners functional members of their society (Offorma C. G., 2016).

Therefore, riding on the propositions of the many researchers above, this study holds the Roganistic view on culture and the curriculum and adds that at no point should curriculum planning or curriculum change influence an education bended on producing citizens that are alien to their own culture.

Assumptions about learning, humanity and society clearly diverge from one another in different cultural contexts. Definitions, for example, what constitutes reality, goodness and logic familiar to educators in a given culture, are based upon premises unknown or unfamiliar to those grounded in other cultural heritages (LeSound, 1990). LeSound's conceptual framework called for 'cultural sensitivity' in curriculum development to be applied to facilitate the identification of culture in the curriculum development process (1990).

The relevance of contextual analysis and cultural understanding for successful curriculum development and implementation has been alluded to by several authors (Kealey et al., 2005; Rogan and Aldous, 2005; Chisolm and Leyendecker 2008; Gerverdink et al., 2013).

This research therefore upholds the views of the proponents of the Rogan theory and is in tandem with the other researchers because the education of a people should be for the advantage and benefit of that society.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### **The historical Background of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)**

The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) is the world's foremost voluntary non- governmental provider of sexual and reproductive health and rights, with 151 member Associations and millions of volunteers providing information and services in over 180 countries world-wide – particularly to those who are poor, under-served or marginalised. Although IPPF is not primarily an education body, it has a number of strengths which can be applied to promoting CSE and which complement the approaches of other international agencies. These include peer education, documenting and sharing best practices, developing collaborative partnerships between health services, NGOs, governments and education providers and undertaking advocacy for CSE and young people's rights.

IPPF has created a framework for CSE that seeks to promote a model of sexuality education that considers the various inter-related power dynamics that influence sexual choices and the resulting emotional, mental, physical and social impacts on each person's development. The approach includes an emphasis on sexual expression, sexual fulfilment and pleasure. This represents a shift from methodologies that focus exclusively on the reproductive aspect of adolescent sexuality.

There is increasing evidence to show that abstinence-only programmes are ineffective, although some governments and organisations still continue to promote them. IPPF strongly

discourages sexuality education programmes that solely focus on abstinence. IPPF believes that all young people have a right to be informed about their sexuality and their sexual and reproductive health and are entitled to make their own choices. IPPF believes that sexual taboos as a result of culture and religion are not insurmountable barriers to broadening the scope of sexuality education.

IPPF's Framework for Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) includes:

- the principles of good practice
- components of existing CSE programmes and guidelines
- describes the seven priority areas to cover in CSE
- focuses on the rights and needs of young people
- provides the basis of a new CSE curriculum

Sourced from IPPF, 2021.

### **Review of Empirical Research Studies in CSE**

Studies in Botswana, Nigeria and South Africa have shown that sexuality education may contribute to overcoming the adolescents sexual related health (SRH) challenges that Zambia and other countries face (Naezer M, 2017); (Helleve A, 2011); (Mhlauli MBb, 2015). Hence, riding on this, in 2014 Zambia rolled out an ambitious framework for CSE targeting children and adolescents enrolled in grades 5-12 in schools across the country supported by UNESCO. This aimed to address the unequal access to knowledge about SRH.

This article chose to review the research undertaken in Nyimba in Eastern province of Zambia because it highlighted a number of issues that referred to the Concept of Culture and the Curriculum. This research looked at teacher discretion in the implementation of CSE curriculum in schools.

The study findings reviewed that the lack of clarity in the CSE framework, on how to integrate CSE teaching into existing subjects coupled with contextual challenges, left teachers involved in CSE with great room for discretion. In this context, extensive use of discretion resulted in arbitrary and unequal management of the SCE curriculum in the district. In this study, some features of work setting that shaped the decision-making among teachers were socio-cultural factors. These factors included incompatibility of CSE with the local culture and religious ideals (Zulu JM, 2019). The study concluded that the implementation of the CSE curriculum in this setting was largely dependent on an individual teacher's decisions on what, how and when to teach. This was related to lack of guidance, lack of legitimacy of the curriculum and lack of local ownership of the agenda. The big space left for teacher discretion in sexuality education resulted in arbitrary teaching of CSE.

According to the study, the following gaps were identified in the implementation of the CSE curriculum:

- The framework offered very little guidance to the teachers; these choices were ultimately left to individual teacher's judgement on what to teach and what to leave out.
- Teachers wondered how they would integrate CSE into science, social studies, civic education home economics and religious education in a natural and appropriate manner without diverting the learners' attention from the core subjects, and without compromising learning outcomes in the core subjects.

- Some teachers withheld a few selected pieces of the CSE Curriculum, others would only agree to teach very limited fragments of it according to what they deemed to be appropriate for the learners. Teaching methods of prevention of pregnancy was deemed as counterproductive and teachers instead decided to teach one method, abstinence. The strong message of abstinence was put across in several ways.
- Some teachers dropped topics or defined sessions in the CSE altogether. Some substituted the whole CSE topic, which they were not comfortable teaching with other topics which they believed were more appropriate for learners. Interviews with teachers showed that teaching CSE was not done on a routine basis and in a standardised manner and that the CSE curriculum was treated haphazardly in the schools, and a few teachers admitted having stopped teaching CSE altogether.
- Teacher dilemmas in CSE teaching included incompatibility with the local culture of the people, teacher-parent role dilemma, concerns about the legitimacy of the CSE concept and practical challenges related to lack of training and access to manuals. Many teachers saw the CSE agenda as something that was externally driven with little relevance to local needs.

According to Zulu, if the CSE programme was to be successfully integrated and taught, there is a fundamental need to take local culture into account in terms of the curriculum content and teaching approaches, and to secure local ownership of the curriculum (2019).

### Integration of CSE in the Zambia’s School Curriculum

Prior to the formal CSE implementation, young people accessed information from nonspecific sexuality education material embedded in their education curriculum, from the internet, and from traditional and family sources. Traditional sources were at best detrimental and not up to date with contemporary teachings on sexuality, and internet sources were ungoverned and of wide-ranging quality and appropriateness. CSE would provide channels for appropriate information and would neutralise misinformation (wekesah, 2019).

According to Wekesah et al (2019), UNESCO led wide stakeholder engagement on CSE in Zambia. Advocacy meetings were held with policymakers within ministries, with parents and with young people and other stakeholders in the CSE. The Ministry of General Education (MoGE) appointed a coordinator within the Curriculum Development Center (CDC) to coordinate the CSE activities. To build the capacity of curriculum developers, an expert in sexuality education conducted an extensive training. A curriculum framework was then developed to outline content by grade level from grade 5 through grade 12. This process involved consultation meetings and local and international peer reviews. CSE content was adapted from UNESCO’s IRGSE adapted to align with Zambia’s national culture and values. During the modification, some non-aligning topic areas (e.g. on masturbation and homosexuality) were dropped or ‘silenced’ (wekesah, 2019). The integration of CSE curriculum in Zambia was officially rolled out in 2015. Considerations made when settling for integrating CSE into various subject areas and at different education levels

(e.g. social studies, biology, home economics, civic education, integrated science and religious education).

Table 1: *Integration of CSE in Carrier Subjects per school level*

PRIMARY LEVEL	JUNIOR SECONDARY LEVEL	SENIOR SECONDARY LEVEL
Integrated Science	Social Studies	Biology
Social studies	Integrated Science	Civics/ Civic Education
Home economics	Religious Education	Religious Education
	Home Economics	Home Economics

### III. RESEARCH FINDINGS

- i. **Involvement of the Catholic Church in Education:** An interview was undertaken with the National Education Secretary’s Office at the Catholic Secretariat in Lusaka because the Catholic Church is a key stakeholder in the provision of education in this country and whose voice cannot be silent. The National Education Secretary’s Office at the Catholic Secretariat is responsible for all the Catholic Schools in Zambia. Data from this office shows that Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops has over 353 schools, 20 special schools, over 20 skills centres, 5 teachers training colleges and 2 universities. According to the respondents, the Catholic Church in Zambia has been involved in education in this country for over 100 years and its role in providing excellent education speaks volumes. In providing quality education, the Catholic Church is guided by various church documents that form the foundation of the educational institutions. There are a lot of documents that guide the Catholic Church on Sexuality Education. Some of these documents include Fratteli Tutti, Catechism of the Catholic Church, Humane Vitae, Caritas Veritate etc. The Catholic Church believes that it is her inalienable right as well as her indispensable duty to watch over the entire education of her children, in all institutions, public or private, not merely with regards to the religious instruction they are given, but with regards to every other branch of learning and every regulation in so far as religion and morality are. (Fratteli Tutti 23,24).
- ii. **Non-engagement of major Stakeholders:** The Ministry of General Education and the Sponsors did not engage the Catholic Church as a major stakeholder in education at the beginning and only to engage them at an advanced level when they had already implemented the programme in some schools. It took the Education Department of the Catholic Secretariat to reach out to government after an outcry from the Catholic Schools when they



- received CSE materials that they considered inappropriate for the learners in the schools. Such a situation already created a form of mistrust. What were the Ministry and the sponsors hiding in CSE for which they were avoiding the Catholic Church to uncover if they were tagged along? From 2014, there was no material. When the material arrived in 2020, they took them straight to the schools by-passing the body in charge of schools so that government could short-cut the process and hence start teaching before the Church authority have an opportunity to examine the material closely and digest it fully thereby giving it an holistic overview. Therefore, being major stakeholders, the Catholic Church feels that it was not meaningfully engaged, and hence there is no sense of ownership of the curriculum.
- iii. **Emphasis on morals and character formation:** In the learning institutions of the Catholic Church, the emphasis is on morals and character formation. And because of that the number of unintended pregnancies is almost nil. According to CSE, the emphasis is on risk-reduction techniques as opposed to character based education that provides children with skills and tools that help avoid risks altogether. For example, one of the topics says, “Avoiding unintended pregnancy: Using condoms and Using other forms of contraceptives” Infact due to emphasis on risk reduction, it appears like there is no possibility of a child to stop sexual activity and control oneself through self- discipline. Is the assumption that when a child begins engaging into sexual activities they cannot stop? The issue of secondary virginity is missing.
- iv. **Resistance of CSE from the community and the teachers:** The CSE had limited legitimacy in the community and has been met with resistance from teachers. Hence the parent-teacher role dilemma must be taken into consideration. The message from Zulu’s research is loud and clear: the teacher discretion is quite high when it comes to teaching CSE. Some teach the components they are comfortable with others leave it out completely.
- v. **The Title needs to be addressed:** Comprehensive means ‘nothing is left out’. Culturally, people know what sexual material to off load to the children at which stage. For example, they know what material to teach them before puberty and what material to off load to them at puberty stage and finally when they are getting married. So comprehensive teaching of sexuality without leaving out anything might be scandalous and might even bring sexual materials which are inimical to the Zambian culture such as gay and lesbianism. CSE does not provide to care for the mental and immature levels of some of the learners. Our learners are ‘traumatized’ by some of the information given. The issue of ‘sexuality rights’ – the books say as long as the child gives ‘consent’. At what age should this child give consent?
- vi. **Exaggeration of the positive results scored by CSE:** According to their findings, they claim that SCE is significantly reducing the number of Unwanted Pregnancies and school dropouts. What about in the Catholic Schools? Is it SCE which has brought about zero or very minimum close to negligible results in terms of school girls not being pregnant? They cannot claim such successes within this short period of time. There could be other factors.
- vii. **Emphasis on sexuality than on Life Skills:** There is too much emphasis on Sexuality which dilutes the good content on Life skills.
- viii. **Marketing Language:** The language used is marketing language instead of important ‘evidence based’ and ‘scientific’. And the terminologies need clarity. Some books have no glossary terms at the back of the book to ensure clear understanding. Only the grade 10 learners’ books has it. Under the references, the teacher is allowed to refer to the internet. As everybody knows, the internet search has no limited scope for covering this topic. It is an endless sea over this issue. Thus what stops the teacher from bringing in matters found on the internet which refers to a different culture?
- ix. **Statistics provided only from one Province:** The evidence that has been provided are from Eastern Province alone. There are ten provinces in Zambia. What kind of research can claim to be representative enough which is one tenth? This falls far below par.
- x. **Contraceptives side effects:** The long-term effects of contraceptives are not highlighted. Everything presented about contraceptives is painted white as if there may not be any side effects.
- xi. **Diminishing Parental Role:** The role of the parent is not explicitly emphasised thereby taking away the parental influence and allowing children to be secretive.
- xii. **Reference to the Zambian Laws:** The learner’s books do not relate to the Zambian Laws sufficiently throughout the books especially in incorporating sexual behaviour.
- xiii. **Feedback from children:** The feedback from the children is missing. In whole of this exercise, the children are the most important and special stakeholders and yet their feedback is nowhere to be seen.

#### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Teachers be trained and get comfortable in delivering Course content
2. Stakeholders must be engaged throughout the process and not a one off thing
3. Terminologies which contradict with the Zambian cultural and religious set up be removed and replaced with more mild ones.

4. Guidance given by the UN bodies recommends that international and national laws must be taken into consideration
5. Can teaching on sexuality recognize the role of parents as the primary educators
6. Consider providing detailed information on the long term effects of contraceptives.
7. Is there a possibility of having comparisons from other provinces. E.g. what is the picture in the North-western province where boys go for initiation ceremonies
8. Provide statistics on both sides, not just CSE but on Abstinence as well. The public and the learners need to understand that there is a difference between sex education and sexuality education
9. The Scope and caveats must recognize the parameters which are being referred to. Remove the part that allows teachers to consult the internet.
10. Is there a possibility of watering down the emphasis on sexuality because it encourages risk reduction as opposed to character formation
11. All books must have a glossary list of terms to ensure that the same understanding is carried
12. There is need to take a multi sectoral approach to tackling these issues.
13. This paragraph should have been written with a lot of emphasis. Rather than with a sense of apology! Keeping their virginity as young people should not be as a desire but as a **set goal!**
14. Emphasis that the right place for sex is Marriage. Only those in marriage are free to indulge into sex. Contraceptives are methods of family planning in marriages. This could be the right place for abstinence and its emphasis.
15. Emphasis to be placed on values, abstinence as a sure way to avoid pregnancy. There is no alternative to abstinence! This is a corrective measure even for those who are sexually active.
16. The issue of rights needs to be handled properly and carefully
17. According to the findings, there are 12% of children that have had sex by the age of 15. So how can the 88% who have not engaged in sex and will not see condom use or contraception as a safeguard measure to start indulging in illicit sex be safeguarded? Therefore, there is a need to deliver the CSE in such a way that it enhances good morals and character and not just emphasizing on risk reduction.
18. Curriculum development requires experts to ensure that it is age appropriate, with appropriate wisdom, direction and guidance from parents and legal guardians.
19. What are the number of hours the children are spending in schools, what is pre occupying their time? Should some education policies change? Social and economic factors need to be addressed e.g. the issues of poverty, child headed homes, orphans and today there is Covid-19. All these issues were not taken into consideration when integrating CSE in the Zambian Curriculum. Instead the cultural aspects were ignored or considered as retrogressive and irrelevant to the current curriculum.

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