

**An Assessment of Teachers' Implementation of the Current Bible Knowledge Secondary
School Curriculum: A Case of Four Selected Schools in Northern Education Division
(NED)**

By

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STUDENT DECLARATION

I declare that “Assessing implementation of the current Bible Knowledge Secondary Curriculum” is my original work and that the sources used and the quotations have proper indication through complete references. As such, this thesis is being submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Education (Teacher Education) at Mzuzu University. This research has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any university

Name of student _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Name of supervisor _____

Signature _____

Date _____

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- In a very special way, the almighty God for His wisdom, encouragement and sufficient grace. To him be glory and honor.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my dear husband Reverend Ronald, my mother Dorothy, My daughter Wonder and my son Spurgeon. Be inspired!

ABSTRACT

The study aimed at assessing teacher's experiences in the implementation of the current Bible Knowledge (B/K) secondary school curriculum, implemented in 2015. Ten years have passed, since the implementation of the curriculum, yet the perceptions and experiences of teachers after adding contemporary issues is not known. Contemporary issues like climate change, human rights, marriage, governance, HIV and AIDS, environmental degradation, relationship between the church and the state, moral decay among others were added to the curriculum. The study was qualitative in nature and assessed the experiences of teachers in implementing the curriculum; analyzed the challenges teachers are facing and examined possible solutions to the challenges. The participants to the study were eight Bible Knowledge teachers and forty students in four selected secondary schools in NED, sampled purposively. For triangulation of data, three methods were employed namely: document analysis, observations and interviews. The collected data were analyzed thematically. The study established that there is a mixed perception by teachers who participated in this study over the change made to the B/K curriculum. The majority feel it is a good initiative and worth implementing because, it is relevant for human survival, assessment of learning outcomes and support for route system of education. Few teachers feel it is a waste of time due to curriculum overload and some content they perceive as conflicting. The recommendations made by the study are: adherence to Continuous Professional Development policy and other in- service trainings to help with collaboration for those teachers struggling to implement change; challenging stake holders, PTA and NGO's currently working with educational institutions to focus on resource mobilization and mingling contemporary issues in every topic to remove negative perception that they are less important.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

B/K	:	Bible Knowledge
CBAM:		Concerns Based Adoption Model
CPD	:	Continuous Professional Development
CRS	:	Christian Religious Studies
GNB	:	Good News Bibles
JICA	:	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JC	:	Junior Certificate
KJV	:	King James Version
MIE	:	Malawi Institute of Education
MoEST:		Ministry of Education Science and Technology
MoE	:	Ministry of Education
MSCE	:	Malawi School Certificate of Education
MANEB:		Malawi National Examination Board:
NESP	:	National Education Sector Plan
NED	:	Northern Education Division
OBE	:	Outcome Based Education
R/E	:	Religious Education
SWOT:		Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
SADC	:	Southern Africa Development Community
SA	:	South Africa
SSCAR:		Secondary School Curriculum Assessment Review
USA	:	United States of America
UK	:	United Kingdom

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Chapter Overview

This thesis presents a study on an assessment of teachers' implementation of the current Bible Knowledge Secondary Curriculum, which is a case study of four selected schools in Northern Education Division (NED). The study aimed at finding out teachers' experiences as they are implementing the changes made to the current Bible Knowledge curriculum. This chapter therefore presents the background of the study, the nature of the problem that led to this study and its significance. It further presents the research objectives and the theoretical framework that guided it.

1.1 Background of the study

To begin with, under the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, education is recognized as a basic human right to be attained by all school-going children (UNESCO, 2020). As such, no school-going children should be deprived of the opportunity to attain good and quality education. Concurring with UNESCO (2020) is the Malawi 2063 Agenda which stipulates that, Malawi shall have high knowledgeable people “with relevant quality education that incorporates a strong element of academic excellence, technical and vocational skills fit for the labor market, entrepreneurship and implementation of the Vision” (National Planning Commission, 2020, p. 37). The Malawi 2063 Agenda, further stipulates that, Malawi is geared to develop its human capital “the conductor of an orchestra” by channeling and using available resources for maximum productivity to achieve developmental outcomes. The greatest “source of wealth” for the nation is the youthful population in need of an education that is available, accessible, and of good quality so that “learning outcomes are equitable and the productive skills of the youth are developed” (National Planning Commission, 2020, p. 37).

In addition, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 of the United Nations (UN) stipulates that by 2030, all learners should acquire skills and knowledge through education, which are needed for sustainable development. The SDG 4 advocates for global citizenship, human rights, tolerance in cultural diversity, gender equality, promotion of non-violence and peace culture and sustainable lifestyles (UNESCO, 2020). To achieve sustainable lifestyles and the Malawi 2063 agenda, it requires corporate effort among all stakeholders, resilience and innovations that can instill values, knowledge and practical skills necessary for the world of work. In line of this, the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) which is responsible for curriculum development, in conjunction with the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) did a Secondary School Curriculum and Assessment Review (SSCAR) in 2015. The curriculum was implemented in 2017 and currently, a curriculum review is underway after ten years of implementation.

According to SSCAR (2015), Bible Knowledge was one of the subjects in which a major educational innovation was done by adding contemporary issues. The issues that were added to the current curriculum under review were climate change, human rights, marriage, governance, HIV and AIDS, environmental degradation, relationship between the church and the state and moral decay among others. Unfortunately, to most students in Malawi, attaining of secondary school education is “fatal” due to financial constraints and other related factors (MIE, 2013). The fact that most of them attain at least four years of secondary education is a plus. The rationale for adding new content to the current B/K curriculum was to equip students with appropriate knowledge, impart practical skills, values and attitudes that will enable them to function as productive and responsible citizens of society. It is argued for that the practical skills gained from the learning of B/K will help students deal with problems like violence and Juvenile delinquency, HIV and AIDS, STI’s, corruption, moral decay, environmental degradation, and drug and substance abuse (SSCAR, 2015). This innovation was reviewed and implemented in 2017, to enable students “develop into an adult with sound intellectual, moral, physical, and emotional abilities” (MIE, 2013, p. v). As such, the researcher wanted to find out teachers’ experiences and perceptions as they are implementing the educational innovation of teaching contemporary issues together with the Biblical content to achieve the learning outcomes.

1.2 Problem Statement

For the first time in the history of Malawi, Bible Knowledge curriculum has additional content. (Malawi Institute of Education, 2013). This implies that after teaching the usual Bible content, teachers now have an extra task of teaching contemporary issues as demanded by the curriculum. Contemporary issues like climate change, human rights, marriage, governance, HIV and AIDS, environmental degradation, relationship between the church and the state, moral decay among others were added to the curriculum (Secondary School Curriculum Assessment Review, 2015). The rationale for adding new content to the current B/K curriculum was to equip students with appropriate knowledge, impart practical skills, values and attitudes that will enable students function as productive and responsible citizens of society (MIE, 2013). This is quite an innovation, which risks some resistance to effect the change (Hall & Hord, 2020). Since the introduction of these contemporary issues in the Bible Knowledge curriculum, there has not been any comprehensive study to assess how the teachers are implementing these contemporary issues. The experiences and perceptions Bible Knowledge teachers are having as they are implementing this curriculum is therefore, not known. It is against this background of the information gap on the challenges faced by teachers in implementing the innovations that the researcher wanted to assess how teachers are implementing the changes made to the curriculum, the challenges they are encountering and possible solutions to the challenges.

1.3 Study Objectives

1.3.1 Main Objective

The main objective of this study was to find out teachers' experiences as they are implementing the changes made to the current Bible Knowledge curriculum.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The study specifically aimed to:

1. Assess the experiences of teachers in implementing the changes made in Bible Knowledge curriculum.
2. Analyze the challenges teachers are facing in implementing the changes made in the curriculum.

3. Examine possible solutions for solving the challenges teachers are facing in implementing the curriculum.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is significant in that it has been carried out at a right time when the Ministry of Education (MoE) through the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) is embarking on another curriculum and assessment review to be implemented in 2025. As such, through the findings of this study, the perceptions and experiences of some B/K teachers towards adding and the teaching of contemporary issues has been understood. In addition, as a serving teacher and through the findings of this research, the researcher shall be able to collaborate with cluster leaders through CPD's on areas that need improvement and the strategies teachers can apply to manage change to any educational innovation. Such knowledge can provide a basis for further research on how orientations and CPDs can offer support to teachers resisting change towards an important innovation.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The theory that guided the research was Concern Based Adoption Model (CBAM), which is the theory of curriculum implementation with a “fidelity orientation” specifically on the adoption of change or an innovation by teachers (Cho, 1998). Hall & Hord (2020) proposed CBAM theory, of which its main concern describes measures, explains and understands the experiences teachers have as they are implementing a new curriculum in their classrooms by developing effective strategies. As an implementation model, with a “fidelity orientation”, the theory was chosen and used by the researcher to study the performance of some teachers as well as collecting information on how they are using the innovation in their classroom as intended by innovators (Cho, 1998). The model also helped the researcher to understand the lived experiences and perceptions of teachers as individuals while managing change. Through classroom observations and interviews, the researcher understood how important it is to see, hear and listen to the perceptions and experiences of teachers towards the innovation (Gundy & Berger, 2016).

According to Sultana (2015), globally CBAM is one of the most widely used models because it explains the educational challenges in planning and executing any new educational innovation. An educational innovation is defined as coming up with better approaches to teaching and learning for behavior change in individual students (Ihan et al., 2016). There are three diagnostic tools of CBAM of which are Stages of Concern (SoC), Levels of Use (LoU) and Innovation Configuration (IC). The first diagnostic tool of an innovation is Stages of Concern, which explains individual concerns teachers have over an innovation. The individual concerns teachers have, are what the innovation is and the new skills and knowledge they might need to acquire, their ability to learn those skills, availability of the new materials, students' reaction to the new materials and how discipline and routine classroom practice will be disrupted by the innovation (Galvan et.al, 2010).

The second diagnostic tool is the Level of Use which highlights teachers' behavior or progress of implementation over an innovation, thus whether the innovation is being used or not (Non- Use or Use). Refer to Figure 1.1 which explains the variations of those teachers not using the innovation (Non-Use) and the behavior they portray against those teachers using the innovation (Use) and the behaviors they portray as well.

Levels of Use

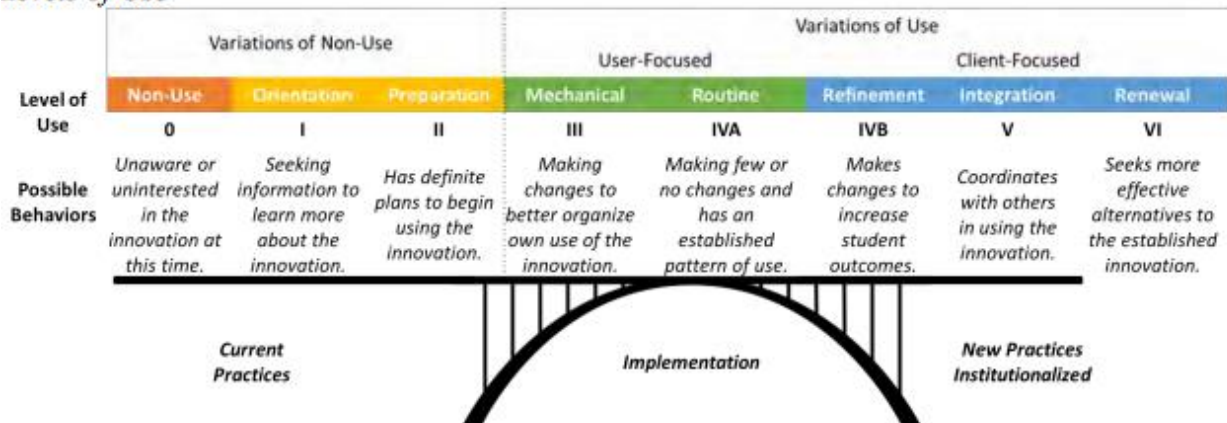


Figure 1.1 Level of Use of CBAM Model

Source: Adopted from Hall and Hord, (2020)

The third diagnostic tool is Innovation Configuration (IC), which explains how the teacher in a classroom set up is using the innovation. It also recognizes how different the innovation can look to innovators when used by individual teachers during classroom practice, availability of resources and the learning environment for implementation (Horsley & Loucks, 1996). IC addresses questions like what the innovators intended the innovation to look like when implemented. How the innovation would look like when it is put to effective use (Hall & Hord, 2020). Change is always difficult to accept especially if implementers do not understand what the desired change is and how it can be proved that the change has really occurred as intended by innovators. This result into teachers developing their own “versions of change”, a misinformation over the kind of resources to be provided to teachers and evaluators failing to assess the outcomes and the main impact of the innovation (Henry, 2020). That is why the diagnostic tools of CBAM are crucial and need to be relayed well by innovators to implementers in order to know what exactly need to be done and indicators that will show that the intended outcome has been achieved.

According to Horsley and Loucks (1996), there are five assumptions behind CBAM. Firstly, the change that occurs in an innovation should be considered as a process and not an event. In other words, practices and behaviors by educators are not transformed due to one event regardless of how powerful it is, rather, it requires time, determination and support to implement fully the desired change (Sweeney, 2003). Secondly, innovators should always remember that the process of change is a personal experience and not a group experience therefore; individuals will experience the change differently. Thirdly, since every teacher experience change differently, and processes things in a unique way, there is no need for comparison. Instead, teachers should be understood and be helped in areas they are slow in understanding. Fourthly, before effecting change in schools and school systems, individual teachers must change in their perception towards the change. Lastly, the necessary change in teachers is a developmental process, which does not occur only in use of skills and knowledge, but also in growth and in development of a set of personal feelings towards the innovation (Horsley & Loucks, 1996). The perceptions and attitudes of teachers towards change remains the center of effective implementation of any educational innovation and should always be put in check. Good innovations can fail or prosper in the hands of implementers if not properly handled or if their concerns are not heard or addressed.

Further, Bagby (2007) concurs with Horsley & Loucks (1996) by asserting that there are seven stages of concerns by teachers towards an educational innovation. These stages are designed bottom up of which are: awareness, information, personal concerns, management, consequence, collaboration and refocusing. Although the seven areas of concern are, addressed bottom up, they are very helpful to innovators for them to understand the heart of a teacher whenever an innovation has been done in the educational system. By taking to task these concerns, innovators will save themselves from the frustration that comes whenever a good program has failed to materialize at any stage of implementation, simply because the information was not disseminated properly or concerns of implementers were not addressed.

Sweeny (2003) linked the Stages of Concern of CBAM to a “Bridge” which describes the order in which implementers of any innovation should put in practice what they have learnt in training. It also explains the need for mentoring throughout the implementation process. The “Bridge” is compared to the Stages of Concern in CBAM in that the “self-oriented questions” or the first four stages of CBAM (lower Stages of Concern) namely awareness, information, personal and management occurs at the training side of the “Bridge” (Horsley & Loucks, 1996). Thus, the in-service training, orientations and CPD’s at both cluster and school level play vital role in addressing any unrelated concerns which will affect the level of use of an innovation. There is need of great support for implementers to cross to the other side of the bridge in order to put into classroom practice the new knowledge, skills and strategies learnt in training. Failure to support them leads to being stuck at one level of use, being overwhelmed with challenges, discarding innovative practice and copying poor strategies of implementation (Horsley & Loucks, 1996).

In addition, the behavior of teachers during classroom practice needs to be checked to ensure what Cho (1998) calls “the fidelity of the implementation.” That is the ability to implement the designed content as intended by innovator or how well, the teachers are putting into practice the necessary activities and strategies for the success of the innovation. This “fidelity” could be checked by using the six Levels of Use (a component of CBAM model) that describes teachers’ behavior in their classrooms. According to Hall & Hord (2020) renewal or re-evaluation of the quality of the innovation in use is the first level of checking the Level of Use.

Integration is another level of checking how teachers are combining personal effort with related activities of colleagues for collective impact and routine and refinement upon an innovation that has stabilized but need few changes. The behavior of teachers can also be checked by Mechanical use of implementation, which focuses much on the daily use of the innovation with very little time of reflection. Preparation, of teachers, which occurs if the teacher is using the innovation for the first time, should also be checked, and lastly, orientation of teachers should be properly done to help teachers gain perspective of the innovation and its demands on them during classroom practice (Hall & Hord, 2020). This implies that teachers should be supported up until they are comfortable with the new content before focusing on students.

According to Roy (2005), there are interventions that can be done to help teachers not be stuck at any stage of implementation. Some of the interventions are: the need to acknowledge valid concerns made by teachers, timely distributions of learning materials, explaining difficult content and collaborating with others for support and exchange of knowledge.

However, according to Gundy and Berger (2016) CBAM theory has received criticism on how difficult it is to integrate data that is provided by three diagnostic tools thus, Stages of Concern, Levels of Use, and Innovation Configuration. Another criticism of CBAM is that there is a problem with the pattern used for the model by researchers in that they only use the first diagnostic tool, Stages of Concern about a change. Very few research uses second diagnostic tool, Levels of Use. The third diagnostic tool, which is Innovation of Configuration, is rarely used especially in integration of technology. This is because technology innovation is unstructured and poses a challenge as it keeps changing making it difficult for teachers to have stability and diffusion (Slough & Chamblee, 2007). As such, CBAM is effective in well-structured innovation because there is a possibility of stability in this innovation.

CBM has also has been criticized for its lack of empirical research on the modification of higher-level concerns but the lower ones and that the duration of the research is always short (Slough & Chamblee, 2007). Another criticism of CBAM is on the validity and reliability of quantitative results obtained through the model. The results have been questioned especially when a large number of participants is showing that they are not in favor of the innovation (Hall & Loucks, 2007).

Despite criticisms, the model was chosen, modified and used in this qualitative study by developing a rubric on lesson observation form and teacher interviews for triangulation of data. This adds to credibility, and trustworthiness of the findings of this research (Gundy & Berger, 2016). The study was well structured and the seven stages or areas of concerns asserted by the model were used as concepts that helped to understand and explore the perceptions and lived experiences of some individual teachers. Through interviews with these individual teachers, the model helped to collect information, explore and understand the Stages of Concern and the Levels of Use (the first and second diagnostic tools) of the innovation by some B/K teachers (Bagby, 2007). The understanding of perceptions and experiences of individual teachers was in line with the objective of the study. The model also helped to study the performance of Bible Knowledge teachers in a classroom set up while using the innovation. It also enabled the researcher to collect first-hand information from the teachers as well as observing students' behavior during implementation. Finally, the model provided a description of "developmental progression in acquiring new skills" (the bottom-up stages of the model) by teachers while using the innovation (Gundy & Berger, 2016).

1.6. Limitation of the Study

The researcher controlled the interview, which made participants provide responses that would be easily accepted by the researcher (Creswell, 2014). In addition, some teachers refused to be observed even after prior arrangement with school administrators because they felt uncomfortable to have a stranger observing their classroom practice. It was also difficult to find B/K MANEB past papers in most schools because students as well as teachers checked them out of the school library and were never returned. Finally, data was collected in four schools (two in the urban and two from the rural) which made it difficult to reach them geographically. These limitations are part of research studies (Creswell, 2014).

1.7 Operational Definitions of Terms

Curriculum implementation- a method whereby teachers put into practice what needs to be taught to the students in a classroom set up (Chirwa et.al, 2013).

Outcome Based Education (OBE) “clearly focusing and organizing everything in an educational system around what is essential for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experiences” (Spady, 1994, p.12)

Continuous assessment- an assessment that is conducted on a continuous basis throughout the learning experience, which includes formative and summative assessment opportunities (Killen, 2007).

Educational innovation: coming up with better approaches to teaching and learning for behavior change in individual students (Ilhan et al., 2016).

1.8. Summary of the Chapter

This chapter described, background and the problem statement of the study. The purpose of the study, the three research objectives, significance of the study, the theoretical framework of the study limitation of the study and the structure of the thesis, which has five chapters and have been divided as follows:

Chapter one is the introduction of the thesis, which begins, with the introduction of the study, which is followed by the background of the study. Next is the statement of the problem, the research objectives, the significance of the study and lastly the theoretical framework.

Chapter two comprise the literature review on the studies that were done of Outcome Based education, the challenges of curriculum implementation in the countries practicing Outcome Based education in other countries as well as Malawi. The literature also included studies that were done on the challenges affecting curriculum implementation of other subjects in Malawi which was narrowed down to the challenges affecting the teaching of Bible Knowledge in other countries and lastly in Malawi.

Chapter three explains the research methodology, which includes the research paradigm, the research design, research approach, the study site, study population, sample size, sampling technique, data collection methods, data collection tools and data analysis procedure.

Chapter four presents the findings of this study and the discussion of the results in accordance with the study objectives. The analysis has been done in view of the theoretical framework and the studies reviewed in literature (chapter 2).

Chapter five presents the summary, the conclusion and implications made from the findings of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discussed what has been published, studied and researched in the area of my interest also known as literature review. Creswell (2014) explains that in research, literature review is very important in that, it is the result of other studies that are closely related which are shared, filled in the gaps of an ongoing dialogue and provides a benchmark in which results for other studies and findings are matched. This study focused on teachers' experiences, as they are implementing the changes made on B/K curriculum, which is Outcome Based Curriculum (OBE). Therefore, in line of the research problem, objectives, and the understanding of the innovators mind, the reviewed literature explains what OBE is all about, its learning domains, characteristics, challenges affecting effective implementation of Religious Education and B/K in countries practicing OBE. There is a gap in literature that needs to be filled pertaining to the perceptions and experiences of B/K teachers in Malawi as they are implementing the changes made to the/K OBE curriculum.

2.1 Outcome Based Education (OBE)

William Spady (1994) who developed the idea of Outcome Based Education, defines OBE as “clearly focusing and organizing everything in an educational system around what is essential for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experiences” (p.12). According to Plessis (2015) OBE is described as an inclusive learning approach that organizes and operates a curriculum in a way that at the end of learning, students can demonstrate what they have actually learned. Rae (2019) defines OBE as a system of education, which gives priority to ends, purpose of learning, and accomplishments that can be attained because of learning. All these three definitions of OBE, portrays education as “catalyst for socio-economic development, industrial growth and empowerment of the poor, weak and the voiceless” (SSCAR, 2015, p. 8). This indicates that a well-structured learning gives students the ability to put in practice the skills and knowledge they would not have done earlier before attaining education.

Concurring with Spady is Plessis (2015) who explains that, the greatest success of OBE is the outcome of learning portrayed in the lives of learners especially when they are able to leave the education system fully prepared for work and can withstand the world's challenges and experiences. Spady (1994) argues that these learning outcomes are not grades, labels, scores or percentages that are attached to students work to demonstrate that learning has really occurred. Rather, outcomes are the "observable action verbs like describe, explain, design, or produce rather than vague or hidden non demonstration processes like know, understand, believe, and think" (p.13). To learners, this implies their ability to demonstrate and applying skills and knowledge gained in real life experiences. According to MIE (2013) the current B/K curriculum is OBE, which focuses much on students' achievement through learner-centered approaches. Further, MIE (2013) argues that for effective implementation of B/K curriculum, new knowledge, attitudes, skills and values must be introduced to students within the context of existing knowledge, attitudes and values so that students should develop an understanding that is deeper while learning how to apply the knowledge.

According to Killen (2009) OBE differs a lot from the other approaches of curriculum development such as content -based and experience-based. With OBE, learning outcomes are identified first, followed by deciding what content will help student achieve the learning outcomes and the learning experiences that will bring out the learning outcomes or practical skills. Concurring with Killen (2009) is SSCAR (2015) which explains that the final product of learning is the "outcomes, that is, what students are expected to achieve in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, which must be clearly stated before teaching and learning begin" (p. 14). This seems to be a realistic approach to education whereby students are expected to portray certain abilities towards the end of a lesson or their level of education to show that learning has really occurred (Rao, 2019). Something is supposed to change in the life of learners after attaining skills, knowledge and values expected from their learning experiences.

Further, these contemporary issues are a huge challenge to contemporary world and are greatly affecting every living being in one way or the other. Thus, the knowledge attained through the learning of B/K should be transferred into practical skills and be applied in real life situations confronting the youth and society.

Gandhi (2012) explains that outcomes in learning are clear results that learners are expected to demonstrate at the end of learning experiences or what learners can really do with what they know from what they have learnt. Thus, the primary goal of OBE is to bring about desired changes, within the learners through the increase of knowledge and skill development, which in turn influences their values, attitudes and judgment.

2.2 Learning Domains in OBE

According to Spady (1994) there are five domains of total learning of which are: competent learning; creative learning; conscious learning; collaborative learning and constructive learning. Competent learning implies that students are meant to learn useful things and learn to do them well. Creative learning means that learners should be developed to a level that they are creative enough to think outside the box and can come up with imaginations that are critical and can confront issues and situations. Conscious learning is about helping learners to be mindful of learning, through personal identity and awareness of their potential and gifts. Collaborative learning means that, as learners are being mindful of learning they should also develop and sustain important personal and cultural relationships. Constructive learning implies that through learning experiences, learners should provide useful services and strive to make the world a better place. If B/K teachers understood and are able to applying these five domains of learning, the changes in the new curriculum would work to their advantage, as learners are able to show what they have learnt in practical ways as responsible citizens.

2.3 Characteristics of Outcome Based Education

According to Plessis (2015) there are several characteristics of OBE. These characteristics are freedom and flexibility of allowing learners to work at their own pace; being a learner-centered approach with teachers acting as facilitator in providing opportunities and time for each learner to maximize his or her potential. Another characteristic OBE is helping learners focus on what is expected of them right away.

Learners are expected to attain outcomes of learning, learners being accountable for their learning and providing time and opportunities for learners to maximize their potential. Concurring with Plessis (2015) is Spady (1994) who describes ten Characteristics of OBE worth mentioning in this study.

The ten characteristics are clarity of focus, designing down and delivering up, expanded opportunity, high expectations, learner centeredness, inclusiveness, integration of knowledge, criterion referenced diversity of culture and authentic assessment.

Commenting on the characteristics of OBE, Wezzie et.al. (2012) explains that clarity of focus is needed in each lesson to ensure focus amongst the teacher on important learning areas rather than wasting their time on objectives that will not enable students portray certain values and skills. In addition, OBE also requires designing down and delivering up, implying that learners should demonstrate expected behavior to show that learning has really occurred by the time they finish secondary education. Learning is expected to bring about change in the life of learners. OBE also advocates for teachers to have high expectations of their learners. This is where very challenging work is prepared for learners all the time to challenge their mental development and thinking capacity. Wezzie et al. (2012) further explains that extended time of learning is another important element to an OBE curriculum, which makes learning a lifelong experience. Further in an OBE, it requires learner centered methods rather than teacher centered methods such as case studies, brainstorming, drama, poetry, field visits, projects, storytelling, group discussion, panel discussion debate, posters, recitals panel discussion, songs (Tanzania Institute of Education, 2023).

On inclusiveness and diversity of culture, OBE teachers accommodate students of differing challenges and learning abilities by modifying teaching methodologies such as the visual impaired and the deaf (MIE, 2013). OBE also advocates for integration of knowledge whereby teachers will consider team teaching in those subjects not conversant with or bringing in a resource person. Finally, OBE advocates for assessment that is realistic and criterion referenced, whereby students are assessed on different methods not just theoretical knowledge but also practical skills (Spady, 1994; Maree & Fraser, 2012)

This will give equal opportunities to learners for each learner is unique, can learn and produce wonders if given equal opportunity. These ten characteristics were applied to the new B/K curriculum as MIE and MoEST developed it. The characteristics are not beyond teachers' expectations rather, they help them to keep the main thing, the main thing in a classroom.

Learner centered methods makes the students to remain active throughout contact time while inclusiveness helps students of different learning abilities interact well with one another.

2.4 Curriculum Implementation

Chaudhry (2015) defines curriculum implementation as the way the official prescribed courses of study, subjects and syllabuses are put into practice. According to Chirwa et.al. (2013) curriculum implementation also known as “curriculum dissemination” or “curriculum diffusion” is a method whereby teachers put into practice what needs to be taught to the students in a classroom set up. Bediako (2019) explains that teachers are expected to deliver a curriculum with fidelity by being faithful and keeping in step with the purpose and the reason for designing. Thus, once a curriculum has been officially developed, or innovated, it falls in the hands of teachers for implementation. The nature of the concerns teachers has over an innovation can lead to acceptance of an integration or a refusal of any innovation especially when they are not comfortable with the material thereby sticking to old ways of educational systems. There are usually challenges and different perceptions and experiences by teachers whenever a curriculum has been changed.

2.5 Challenges of Curriculum Implementation

In general, several factors affect curriculum implementation whenever a new curriculum has been developed. Firstly, insufficient consultation to curriculum implementers by government entities responsible for curriculum development (Chirwa, 2013). This practice is very common in Malawi where top officials feel the need for curriculum innovations and teachers are just on the receiving end (Chirwa, 2013). As a result, teachers meet innovations with great resistance because they are not comfortable with the content. Mahlangu (2000) and Okafor (2001) all agree that teachers implement changes in a curriculum that they feel comfortable to teach, tally with their personal beliefs and are familiar to their years of teaching practice. Those activities they find difficult and are not comfortable to teach are either altered or dropped.

This could be the case with B/K teachers especially those who might feel like some of the topics added to the curriculum are in conflict with personal convictions and beliefs. Some educators might consider some of the new content added to the curriculum, not that important to teach them together with biblical content.

An analysis done by the Malawi Education Sector (2019) concurs with Jansen and Ratsatsi (2005) by asserting, that “curricular relevance relates both to the connection of subject matter to students’ surrounding environment and the mission of secondary schooling itself. Many teachers do not believe that their instructional subject matter reflects the current knowledge and standards in their field” (p.55). This perception of teachers affects advancement of educational innovations in that no matter how well the good intentions of innovators are, implementers can easily render them useless.

Secondly, curriculum implementation is affected by extra workload. Instructors or educators feel the load because new curriculum tend to change in methodology and in content. As such, teachers are not willing to take in extra load of work at the same salary. Such was the case in Malaysia, where the reception of OBE was received poorly because it demanded extra effort by implementers, which did not please the teachers (Damit et al., 2021). Thirdly, curriculum implementation is affected by the professional development of implementers. Implementers need thoroughly orientation to gain the competency and skills to handle effectively a new curriculum. Usually, the model used for training teachers when rolling out a new curriculum is called cascade model.

Jansen (1998) argues that the cascade model was not effective in South Africa because it dilutes information. Few teachers and top administrators are trained to train others for a few days. Due to the passing on of information from one teacher to the other, by the time the content reaches implementers at grassroots level, the content is distorted. The last factor that affects effective curriculum implementation is the social context of the curriculum. According to Cronbleth (1990) the social context implies the environment through which the curriculum is implemented. These include, but not limited to the priorities and demands of different groups of people with influence on education activities, the political, economic, social and demographic conditions.

Whitaker (1993) argues that learners bring to the school environment difficulties and challenges emerging from the social conditions of their homes, which affects the way, they perceive things.

Here in Malawi, educators themselves have to take into consideration the social- cultural influence of that society, the literacy levels of the parents to support fully their children’s education (Lowe, 2008). This is very true that culture of society affects the way a new curriculum is perceived and implementation can face resistance if the new content is against the norms of society.

2.6 Challenges in Curriculum Implementation in Countries Practicing OBE

Several education systems in the world are practicing OBE while others the curriculum has been abandoned. This paper would like to explore the challenges encountered as they are implementing OBE in South Africa (SA), Malaysia, Australia, Canada, United States of America (USA) and United Kingdom (UK). In South Africa, according to Ngobeni et al. (2023) South OBE curriculum was implemented in 1998. The government abolished policies made by apartheid government such as education for the Bantu’s, socio-economic and settlement curriculum, which was an attempt to heal the racial and ethnic differences. Ngobeni et al. (2023) explains that C2005 was abolished because it failed to align with assessment policies, improper training and orientation of teachers, which was done in two days. It was also abolished due to inadequate teaching and learning resources, over designing of the curriculum, lack of specification of “disciplinary forms of knowledge including no conceptual sequence and hence no learning progression path” (p. 6). Chirwa & Naidoo (2014) explains that Malawi adopted OBE curriculum from the first major post-apartheid curriculum of South Africa also known as Curriculum 2005(C2005) which was Outcome based. Chisholm (2000) argued that the C2005 was poorly designed, had many jargons which were confusing, the language used was difficult to understand and it was overcrowded by having eight learning areas which left no time for development of important skills like numeracy, reading, and writing.

In Malaysia, Damit et al. (2021) made his study on issues and challenges of OBE at teachers’ vocational school. Malaysia has adopted OBE from primary level, secondary as well as tertiary level. This was done upon realizing that 70% of its college student graduates were unemployed in 2006. The cause of such high unemployment rate was because students lacked competent skills to suit industrial needs. As a result, OBE was adopted to ensure that students are competent enough to produce practical skills in their area of specialization.

Results from the study conducted by Damit et al. (2021) showed that there are still more challenges hindering OBE implementation in Malaysian Vocational Colleges. The problems are that there is a system of implementation, which is not stable, lack of support from school administrators, implementation of the curriculum being perceived poorly and teachers' attitudes towards the curriculum due to workloads.

In Australia, teachers adopted OBE in the 1990s but was abandoned after sharp criticisms by communities. Donnelly (2000) argued that in Australia OBE has flawed conceptually because it is difficult to implement, it is superficial and is substandard in comparison with the models of curriculum development or other syllabuses. OBE in Australia has also failed to deal with subjects relating disciplines; it has vague statements, which are difficult to comprehend and to measure successes. Marsh (1994) further argued that OBE in Australia was difficult to implement because it lacked clarity on what needs to be taught, what students are supposed to achieve, it poorly defined important learning and it poorly guided teachers on what is supposed to be taught.

In England, teachers heavily criticized OBE by calling it “unwieldy and cumbersome” because it was difficult to implement in a way that is balanced and effective (Donnelly, 2007). In Canada, teachers were also not in favor of OBE and criticized it of being “frustrating and difficult” to implement. While in USA, OBE, which was also termed as subject area standards, was implemented in the 90's. It was criticized that it lacked evidence from research to support its practices, it is time consuming, and it “advanced curriculum descriptors that were vague and ambiguous” (Hargreaves & Moore, 1999, p. 7). It was also argued that, it was difficult to measure success and it was low in academic content (Hargreaves & Moore, 1999). This implies that other countries have abolished OBE curriculum while other countries though with some challenges are still advancing in innovations and are implementing it for instance Malaysia, Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania and Malawi.

In Nigeria, Njoku (2015) did a survey in Ebonyi State on factors affecting implementation of Christian Religious Studies (CRS), which includes Bible knowledge. The survey focused on teachers only, teaching Christian Religious Studies in Ebonyi State.

The gap in literature exists in that the study conducted by the researcher on Bible Knowledge as it is called here in Malawi, focused much on the teaching and learning of Christian Religious Studies (B/K) at classroom level. As such, both teachers and learners were a case study whose lived experiences helped to understand the challenges being faced for effective implementation of contemporary issues.

Njoku (2015) concluded his survey by establishing a number of challenges affecting implementation of CRS. Among others, it was established that few periods have been allocated to the subject on the timetable, the curriculum and the syllabus is too long and that teachers' personal beliefs affected mode of delivery of the content. CRS was also affected by shortage of instructional materials, lack of understanding of theological aims of the subject and pedagogical strategies for teaching the subject. Lastly, Njoku (2015) also discovered that CRS in Nigeria was affected by moral indecency influenced by negative comments on the media and internet among others. Ndarwa (2007) argues that students in Nigeria are experiencing "spiritual dwarfism" whereby very little attention is being paid to their inner growth morally. Njoku (2015) also argues that the Nigerian government is focusing on making students become "intellectual giants" in science and technology while neglecting subjects that will help them conform morally.

In Ghana, Mensah (2022) conducted a quantitative study on teacher's curriculum knowledge on Christian Religious Studies (CRS) among Senior High School in Accra. He focused much on teachers only. The study concluded that teachers are implementing well the teaching of Christian Religious Studies at high school level. However, teacher training colleges should include the training of teachers in aims, "philosophy and logic" of the curriculum of the subject. The understanding of the "philosophy and logic" will fully equip instructors to have full knowledge on the rationale and the aims of teaching this subject. It was established though the study that most teachers in Ghana had knowledge on the aims and rationale of teaching CRS. There was still need for universities and teacher training colleges to put more emphasis on curriculum studies. The rationale for teaching CRS is to help students understand the role of the Bible in the lives of students as a source of guidance and counseling and direction in response to day-to-day challenges (Mensa, 2022).

There is need to help teachers understand the philosophy and the logic of the curriculum of each subject through teacher training colleges and universities. A lack of understanding of the rationale for developing the curriculum affects the way it is implemented.

Concurring with the findings of Mensah is Curriculum Research and Development Division (2010) which argues that the Bible being the backbone of CRS acts as a “framework for handing a good deal of teaching about personal and social values essential for individual and societal growth and development” (p. 127). It is therefore argued for that “the understanding, appropriation and actualization of biblical deals, virtues and concepts in the lives of student are prime motives for this subject” (p. 127). As such, it is very important that universities in Malawi as well as teacher training colleges produce graduates specialized in this area of Theology and Religious Studies (TRS) who fully understand the developmental goals and outcomes of the subject.

2.8 Challenges in Curriculum Implementation in Malawi

Malawi has its own model for curriculum implementation known as the “Multiplier Effect Scheme” which has been put in place to disseminate information to teachers and other relevant stakeholders on the changes made to the new curriculum and ways of implementing it (Banda, 2022; Chirwa & Naidoo, 2014). The scheme uses orientating workshops through cascade model, as a main means of disseminating information. The cascade model has been faulted for diluting and distorting the content since only, few personnel are trained to train others (Rembe, 2005). In this regard, as the content is being passed on from one person to the other, the outcomes of learning are never the same. Currently a review is on the way on of current OBE curriculum, which has seen MIE doing a National Symposium on Schools and College Curricula and assessment procedure. The current review is seeking to “prepare the citizens of a rapid growing global landscape by equipping the citizens with essential knowledge, skills, values and attitudes” (MIE, 2024, p. 1 “press release”).

The upcoming educational innovation is good development as argued by National Education sector plan (2017) that “in an evolving and changing world of education, there is no way basic education can be taken as a complete transformer of our society when the world at large is getting more complex and sophisticated” (p.10). This is what the study would like to assess how the learning of OBE curriculum is shaping their day-to-day experiences of learners.

In addition, as the nation of Malawi is waiting for commencement of this new curriculum, the Northern Education Division (NED) has developed a strategic plan (2023-2026) to improve the quality of education in the Division. For the next three years, the strategic plan of NED has four thematic areas of which are Leadership and Management, Teaching and Learning; Behavior of Students and Use of Resources to support Teaching and Learning (NED, 2023). The creativity that has been shown in developing these four thematic areas especially on monitoring of teaching and learning as well as the behavior of students will help to assess if the learning outcomes of the current curriculum are being achieved.

Several researchers conducted research on the current OBE curriculum implementation in Malawi due to be phased out soon. Mchawa (2023) conducted a study in Dowa district to find out how teachers are implementing OBE history curriculum at secondary school level. The findings of his research were that there is need for clarity of the curriculum, refusal by teachers to take in extra load of work for instance to administer remedial classes to those students with learning difficulties; lack of supervision by the head teacher to check if at all the curriculum is being followed and shortage of learning materials.

Banda (2022) did a study on challenges facing school managers in the implementation of the revised secondary school History curriculum in four secondary schools in Lilongwe districts. In her conclusion, she outlines several factors affecting curriculum implementation such as lack of in-service training for teachers, lack of teaching and learning resources, inadequate supervision and advisory support by inspectors, and inadequate capacity for schools to implement the successful teaching of some subjects e.g. social studies. The essence of a better education lies in the quality of that education and the material inputs necessary for the achievement of desired goals.

Selemani (2018) also did his study to evaluate how prepared teachers are as they are implementing OBE Geography Curriculum. He concluded that teachers in secondary schools are not equipped enough to successfully implement OBE curriculum in Geography. This has resulted the traditional methods of teaching, which are teacher centered, a lack of continuous assessment as a practice necessary for OBE, inadequate resources and a lack of understanding to the requirements of OBE.

Chirwa et al. (2022) did his study in Lilongwe on factors affecting implementation of the new secondary school curriculum (OBE) in nature. He came up with his findings that are similar to the findings of other researchers of which are shortage of learning and teaching materials, inadequate learning infrastructure, the absence of inspection by ministry officials and improper orientation of teachers and managers before the curriculum was rolled out and thereafter. By looking at four studies whose conclusion and findings are similar, it can be suggested that OBE curriculum has not been fully implemented as it is supposed to be. There is still some resistance from teachers as well as managers to old tradition of teaching which is teacher centered.

On Religious Education in Malawi, Salanjira (2009) explored how ideology is affecting the dual mode curriculum policy of secondary school education in Malawi. He concluded that there is a conflict in ideologies between “Mono- faith (B/K) and multi-faith (RE) which is creating a contradiction for the new policy to be introduced effectively. In addition, Matemba (2022) argues that there are five challenges affecting effective implementation of the religious education here in Malawi. Since the introduction of dual mode of curriculum that is, Religious Education (RE) and Bible Knowledge (BK) there are still problems affecting implementation of the curriculum. Such problems include but not limited to biasness of teachers during instruction done consciously or unconscious, “inter and intra-religious exclusion,” conflicts in value and “mischaracterisation” of religion among others (Matemba, 2022). None of these studies was done to assess how Bible Knowledge OBE curriculum is being implemented after contemporary issues were added. Through the review of this literature, a knowledge gap has been identified to assess the perception and experiences of teachers as they are implementing the changes made to the B/K curriculum.

2.9 Chapter Summary

The literature review in this chapter has described what OBE because the current Bible Knowledge curriculum is Outcome Based. In addition, the chapter discussed the types of OBE, the characteristics of OBE, the challenges being encountered during implementation, the countries practicing OBE, studies that have been done here in Malawi and the challenges being encountered as far as the curriculum is being implemented.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlined the research paradigm, research design, research approach, the target population, sampling techniques, sample size, research instruments, trustworthiness and ethical consideration.

3.1 Research Paradigm

The research paradigm for this research was constructivist or interpretivist. This is because, the researcher was able to understand, observe and interpret things in their natural settings or contexts that are very specific in order to understand the cultural and historical settings in which Bible Knowledge teachers work (Creswell, 2009). Through this research, the researcher was able to understand the strategies teachers are using to implement the current BK curriculum, and assess teachers experiences as they are implementing the current curriculum, which is outcome based. The constructivism paradigm best applied to this research in that it gave the chance to the researcher to interact with participants in their natural setting. Through semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to understand the lived experiences though realities are perceived differently (Creswell, 2014). The researcher has also the chance to adopt the meaning of the results, and acknowledgement of researchers' values.

3.2 Research Approach and Design

The research approach for this study was qualitative because data for the research was collected at the very site of participants' experiences by talking directly to the participants and seeing participants' acts and behavior in their social context (Creswell, 2014). The assumption behind this qualitative research is that basing on what the individual teachers perceives as reality or as a group), lived experiences of B/K teachers and learners will be developed in their classrooms and their school environment, as individuals and collectively through classroom interactions (Mac Millan & Schumacher, 1993. This made teachers as well as students to interpret, transform adapt to the curriculum in ways that would suite their environment. Qualitative research is naturalistic and interpretive in approach, which enables the collection of data for construction of meaning be collected in the natural settings of participants (Denzil & Lincoln, 2000; Creswell, 2014).

Being a qualitative research, case study was chosen as a research design because it focused on perceptions and experiences of participants and their lived experiences. It also allowed the collection of data from multiple sources and not from a single source thereby adding to credibility and trustworthiness of the findings of this study (Creswell, 2014). In this study, a case of four schools in the Northern Education Division was assessed on how Bible Knowledge teachers are implementing the current curriculum where contemporary issues were added. The collected data has been coded thematically (Creswell, 2009).

3.3 Study Site

The study took place in Northern Education Division due to convenience since the researcher lives within the vicinity of NED. Four secondary schools that are offering Bible Knowledge were selected purposively, conveniently and homogeneously. The similar traits of offering Bible Knowledge made the researcher to collect data in these schools. The Officers from NED helped the researcher to identify these schools since Bible Knowledge is an elective subject, hence other schools are not offering it. Out of the four schools, two were from the rural setting, while the other was from the urban setting. Rural schools were included in this study because schools in Malawi are of two categories namely urban and rural schools. The rural schools in particular gave a researcher insights as for as implementation of the curriculum is concerned.

3.4 Study Population

The target population for this research were Bible Knowledge teachers and learners from four selected secondary schools in NED. The teachers were chosen because they are the main curriculum implementers and can best articulate their experiences and perceptions on how they are implementing the additional content added to the curriculum. Bible Knowledge Students were incorporated to take part in this study as a way of getting feedback as to how they understand the additional content and the impact it is making in their daily living.

3.5 Sample Size

Four schools from NED were sampled purposively. The specific group from which the researcher collected data was eight Bible Knowledge teachers and forty learners (ten students at each school) from four secondary school in NED.

The teachers and learners were sampled homogenously because they have similar traits of being Bible Knowledge teachers and learners, though data was collected up to saturation point. No new information was being given so saturation point reached at eight for teachers and forty for students

Table 3.1: Demographics of teachers

Name	Gender	Age Range	Qualifications	Years of experience
A	Female	47	BA theology	10
B	Female	35	BA theology	5
C	Female	30	BA history	5
D	Female	45	BA history	13
E	Female	32	Diploma theology	12
F	Male	26	Diploma theology	2
G	Female	53	BA theology	20
H	Female	25	BA theology	2

These Bible Knowledge teachers were capable of providing enough information to understand the phenomenon under study though data was collected up to saturation point.

Table 3.2: Demographics of students

Name of School	Gender	Age Range	Class
1	5 females and 5 males	15-22	Form 3 and 4
2	5 females and 5 males	14-24	Form 2 and 4
3	6 females and 4 males	15 and 21	3 and 4
4	5 males and 5 females	14 and 22	2 and 4

The total number of student participants were forty from junior and senior section. The data was corrected up to saturation point as well.

3.6 Sampling Technique

In this qualitative research, eight Bible Knowledge teachers were involved in the study from schools sampled purposively. Forty students were sampled through a type of purposive sampling called homogeneous sampling where by a group of similar people or with similar traits is selected to be studied (Creswell, 2014). In this regard, Bible Knowledge teachers and Students were selected to be interviewed and observed in their natural settings (Homogeneously) due to the same traits or characteristics and experience they are having of teaching and learning of Bible Knowledge (Cohen et al., 2018). Through homogeneous sampling, Heads of Department for humanity subjects, helped to sample teachers using simple random technique. For the sampling of students, a list comprising ten students taking Bible Knowledge some from junior and some from the senior section was drawn at each school by copying from the teachers register book. The first ten students that were appearing in the register book of the B/K teacher were the ones that were sampled. Through this technique, forty students from four schools in NED were selected. The number 10 in particular is the advocated principle of focus group interviews (Cohen et. al., 2018). As such, the focus groups were the sole reason the researcher sought 10 students at each school. The information of which schools in the city and in the rural set up are offering B/K was sought from NED because it is an elective subject and other schools are not offering it.

3.7 Data Collection Methods

Three methods of data collecting were used in the research of which are observation, interview and document analysis. These three methods provided a reliable and credible way of data triangulation and were in line with methods of data collection of qualitative research approach (Creswell, 2009). The methods also helped to cover the weaknesses of collecting data from single source, which in return compromises the credibility of the whole research. The multiple sources of data collection used in this study were examining official documents like syllabus, MANEB examination papers, Schemes and Records of work. Literature or the writings of others, which included studies done by other researchers on curriculum implementation, was also reviewed. Apart from examining documents, another source of data collection method were interviews and observation (Cohen et. al., 2018).

The interviews and observations were done in settings that were natural to the participants in order to understand the social problem “of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply presenting them with abstract theories or principles” (Cohen, 2018 p. 181).

3.7.1 Observation

Eight lessons were observed of eight Bible knowledge teachers, four at junior section and the other four at senior section using two tools namely voice recording through an audio recorder and completing a classroom lesson observation form. The observation form took into consideration the planning and implementation process. The planning process considered preparation for teaching and learning. This included availability of updated Schemes and Records of Work, the nature of the Schemes of Work (if contemporary issues were included), availability of a lesson plan that incorporated contemporary issues, clarity of the success criteria, teaching and learning resources if the success criteria for the lesson was clear. It also considered teaching and learning resources, developmental steps and evaluation procedures.

On implementation process, the observation form took into consideration of the introduction, activities, challenging content, assessment methods, and use of resources, interaction and conclusion. As a non-participant observer, the observation form was preferred to checklist because it enabled the researcher to remain objective and write down some comments on what was going on during classroom practice. A checklist would only show if an aspect is available or not. The recordings were transcribed verbatim.

To avoid negative aspects of observation, such as being seen as an “intrusive,” the sharing of any private information that was observed, the researcher explained and assured the participants adherence to all ethical issues (Creswell, 2009). Being a natural setting of participants, the ongoing behavior was easily discerned and participants were less reactive than any other type of data collection method (Cohen et al., 2018). Lessons were observed in a classroom set up to gain first hand “experiences” of real people in real life situations doing classroom practice (Cohen et al., 2018). Any unusual behavior causing disruptions to classroom practice was “easily discerned” and was discussed with the teacher after the lesson (Cohen, 2018 et al., 2018).

3.7.2 Interviews

A face-to-face interview was conducted with eight Bible Knowledge teachers in four schools and a focus group interview was done with students. Both interviews had semi-structured and open-ended questions. This worked to the advantage of the researcher in that the researcher was in full control over what questions to ask to get the views and opinions of participants. The advantage of having semi-structured questions and open-ended question is that the researcher has flexibility and could probe deeply, clear up misunderstandings right away, the respondent's knowledge was tested, cooperation was encouraged and rapport was easily established (Cohen, et al.). This in return brought out a true assessment of the respondents believes and experiences. More and more insights were also gained through follow up questions depending on the responses of the participants. To avoid biasness due to the presence of the researcher, the interviews were done in three phases:

(i) Pre-observation interviews and Post-observation interviews

The pre-observation interviews and post observation interviews were done to check on the quality of preparation of the teachers, which affects what transpires in the classroom practice. The pre-observation interviews were also done for familiarization with the teachers, to learn more about classroom activities of that particular day such as the topic of the day, lesson plan, resources, the ability of learners, the teaching methodologies and any relevant information the teacher was willing to share. Refer to Appendix VI (Sections B and C, p. 86) for a pre- observational interview and post- observation interviews. This was also the time right time where the researcher asked the teacher's permission to record while the teaching and learning session was in progress. The teachers were also assured that the recordings will be used solely for this research and they will be discarded after transcribing the data that they will be identified by pseudo names (Creswell, 2009).

A one-on-one post lesson - observation interview was done with individual teachers for 30 to 40 minutes. This acted as a follow up procedure of any issues noted during the teaching and learning processes. This brought in more understanding of teachers' behavior because it also gave a chance to the interviewer to ask for clarification of any behavior observed in class and for the participants to directly share their realities. Lastly, the interviews provide access to what is "inside a person's head" which helps "to measure what a person knows, likes and dislikes" and "what the persons thinks" thus, the right information, their preferences, knowledge, beliefs and the necessary information. (Cohen et.al 2018 p. 268). The hand written notes were coded and the recorded audios were transcribed verbatim proved very useful in understanding the lived experiences of participants (Creswell, 2014).

(ii) *Focus group interviews*

Forty students from junior and senior classes participated in a focus group interview using a focus group interview guide. This is a qualitative method whereby small groups of six to ten students which is the advocated principle of focus groups, were asked structured and open-ended questions which "intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants" (Creswell, 2009 p. 181). The purpose for focus group interviews was to get "subjective experiences of the people who have been exposed to the situation" (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 290). In this regard, students that have been learning Bible Knowledge were able to interact and share their experiences after learning contemporary issues.

3.7.3 Document Analysis

As a qualitative study, qualitative documents were collected that helped to provide some insights over the subject matter (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative documents that were analyzed were in form of public documents or official documents in relation to Bible Knowledge curriculum. These include, Bible Knowledge Syllabus, Schemes and Records of work, lesson plans, continuous assessment files, Malawi School Certificate (MSCE) past papers from 2017 to 2024 produced by Malawi National Examination Board (MANEB). The MSCE past papers in particular produced by MANEB provided insights to the researcher on how much content is being examined yearly and the total marks allocated to the examined question.

The advantage of analyzing these official documents was a representation of data that is well thoughtful, it was convenient, not expensive, not time consuming for the researcher and there was no interaction with the data to influence its behavior or “unobtrusive source of information” (Creswell, 2009, p.180). However, some documents were hard to find such as MANEB past papers because students and teachers checked them out and they never returned them. Some documents were not as “authentic and accurate “as they were supposed to be (Creswell, 2009, p.180). Such documents include but not limited to Continuous Assessment test, that were found pasted on the chalkboard, Schemes and Records of Work, lesson plan books in which it was discovered that evaluations were not properly done at the end of each lesson to check if the success criteria have been achieved.

Denscombe (2013) describes three steps of qualitative thematic analysis for analyzing data of which were used in analyzing the document. The first step was to choose an appropriate sample of the text of which in this regard were B/K syllabus, Core textbooks, Records and Schemes of work, lesson plans and continuous assessment files. The second step was to examine the texts to have an impression “hypothesis” of what they actually convey. In this regard, the texts contained the content of the changes made to Bible Knowledge curriculum, prescribed methods of teaching B/K (learner centered approaches), and prescribed teaching and learning resources. The aim was to match these elements with what was happening to the actual teaching of B/K as prescribed by the texts. All these contained information that explains whether the content of which were to form a hypothesis of the texts of which were those text containing information.

The final step was coding of the text in relation to the inclusion of contemporary issues in the schemes of work, the actual work done as indicated in the records of work accompanied by lessons plans indicating the actual content taught on contemporary issues. These documents, served as the primary source of information indicating whether the teaching of contemporary issues is being fully taught or what teachers said was just a word of mouth. Also, throughout the study, for triangulation of data, the findings of this research have been matched with the notes collected from the analyzed documents.

3.8 Data Collection Tools

The data collection tools for this research were lesson observation form, one on one interview guide with teachers, interview guide for focus groups with students and audio recorder. “An optical scanning for computer entries” was used for scanning important documents that were used in the text of the transcribed data (Creswell, 2009 p.180).

3.8.1 Lesson Observation form

A lesson observation form was used to collect data for teachers’ classroom observations during lesson presentation. An observation form acted as a guide as to what teachers were supposed to be assessed during classroom practice. The guide had specifications, assessed how the objective of that particular lesson was achieved. With an observation form, the researcher collected field notes on the behavior and activities of individual teachers and learners in a classroom set up (Creswell 2014). In particular, the form was used to record information on how learning outcomes and objectives of the particular lesson were achieved (Cohen et al., 2018). All these tools were necessary for this research, as they have helped in triangulation of data as well as observing participants in their natural settings as deemed by case study.

3.8.2 Interview Guide

Teachers and students were interviewed using a guide that were formulated simply to guide the proceedings of the interviews. The guide had both structured as well as unstructured questions to give chance to the respondents to freely share their perceptions and experiences. The researcher had a greater chance of asking participants follow up questions depending on their responses (Creswell, 2009; Cohen et al., 2018).

3.8.3 Recordings

Audio materials are described as “unobtrusive method of collecting data” thus, the collected data that has no influence over its behavior (Creswell, 2009. p.180). Voice recording of face-to-face interviews, focus group interviews and voice recordings of teacher’s classroom practice was captured as a way of data triangulation in case other important information was missed during document analysis and classroom observation.

Through these recordings, useful information of participants' reality or lived experiences that was missed during observation and document analysis were captured and directly shared (Creswell, 2014). The recordings were transcribed verbatim and the data was coded and provided more insights to come up with the findings of this study.

3.9 Data management

After collecting data, it was stored safely, transcribed and coded thematically. The researcher made field notes after analyzing all the documentary sources that have been used in this study, which includes all the official documents, Records and Schemes of work and lesson plans, focus group interviews, face-to-face interviews, and lesson observation. The data was coded and stored safely in form of transcripts and field notes. The field notes also included data that has been coded from all the information collected during data familiarization, generation of codes, generation of themes and interpretation of it, which has formed the key findings of this study.

3.10 Data Analysis

These six steps of analyzing data were applied as argued by Braun and Clarke, (2013) of which were: firstly, being familiar with the collected data by reading and re-reading the interview scripts and any relevant data, and jotting down some notes or any early impressions. This included transcribing audios into readable notes. Secondly, generating initial codes by reducing data into small chunks of meaning that have relevant information to the research objectives. Thirdly, searching for themes or a "pattern that captures something significant interesting about the data and/or research question" (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, p. 3356). Fourthly, reviewing the themes that is checking if the coded data is making sense, modifying it where necessary, and putting together all the data that is relevant to the theme. Fifthly, defining the themes or analyzing "the essence of each of them, how the coded themes relate to the each other" and with main themes (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, p. 3351).

Finally, writing up a full report on the findings or discussion segment that concludes the whole research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this regard, all the recordings from focus group interviews and face-to-face interviews were transcribed verbatim or word for word. The collected data from lesson observation was coded thematically. The collected data has been used for no other purpose except for this research.

3.11 Issues of Trustworthiness

To ensure that data collected was accurate, credible and trustworthy, three methods of data triangulation were employed namely interviews, document analysis and classroom observation. The sources where each data was collected was examined and its evidence was used to “build a coherent justification for themes” (Creswell, 2009, p. 193). For accuracy check, the final draft of this thesis was taken back to participants to check for accuracy and feedback “member checking” in case there are parts they feel misrepresented (Creswell, 2009, p. 192). As a way of enhancing accuracy, peer debriefed of the account was identified in the form of the researcher’s supervisor who reviewed and asked questions about the study. Lastly, an external examiner reviewed the entire project to provide an objective assessment of the entire project (Creswell, 2009; Cohen et al., 2018).

3.12 Ethical Issues

The researcher sought approval of MZUNIREC to give ethical clearance for the research, which was granted. The MZUNIREC is a legal framework of research policies or ethical clearance issues. Permission was asked from relevant authorities from NED before entry into school and a letter of authorization was given. The head teachers were consulted and letters of introduction and authorization was given to them, which were stamped to show their approval. The researcher explained to all participants about the importance of the research as a way of seeking their consent and participant filled consent forms. Participation was on voluntary basis, which was done conveniently to their schedules, and all the names of participants and sites were represented by pseudonyms (Creswell, 2009; Creswell, 2014; Cohen et al., 2018)

3.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the research paradigm, which was constructivism or interpretivist. The research design was case study and the research approach was qualitative. It also outlined the target population of four secondary schools in NED, the sampling techniques that was purposive; the sample size of eight teachers were identified using simple random technique. The research instruments for triangulation of data were document analysis, interviews and classroom observations.

The issues of credibility and trustworthiness of the instruments were achieved through triangulation of data. For ethical consideration, MZUNIREC cleared the research and the materials used to collect data was burnt and deleted after analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents, analyses and discusses the findings of the study, in relation to the three objectives. The objectives are as follows: Assess the experiences of teachers in implementing the changes made to Bible Knowledge curriculum; analyze the challenges, which teachers are facing in implementing the changes made in the curriculum; and examine possible solutions for solving the challenges teachers are facing in implementing the curriculum. These three objectives have been converted to three sub-headings. The sub -headings has been organized under sub-themes as well to be presented as follows:

4.1 The Experiences of Teachers in Implementing the Changes Made in Bible Knowledge Curriculum

The study identified five experiences teachers are having as they are implementing the changes made to the current Bible Knowledge curriculum of which are relevance for human survival, assessment of learning outcomes, offering of support for schools practicing the route system of education, curriculum overload and conflicting content.

4.1.1 Relevance for human survival

The study found out that the majority of the teachers involved in the study view the changes made in the Bible Knowledge or the new topics included in B/K syllabus as important for human survival. In other words, the topics are adding relevance to global issues confronting the youth in this contemporary world by giving them practical skills and knowledge that is being applied in real life situations. For instance, six of the eight teachers involved in the study indicated that the topics such as HIV and AIDS, circumcision, marriage, human right issues among others are important as they are clearing out misconceptions regarding the contraction of HIV, which used to be viewed as punishment from God.

Teacher D. (October 25, 2024) explained that,

... The government has done it so well by adding to the curriculum contemporary issues like circumcision, human rights, HIV and AIDS among others. I am fully implementing it. The content itself is clearing out some misconceptions and stigma associated with people living with HIV and AIDs among others. I know students learning right here living with HIV in need of an advocate of which I am. With the coming in of these topics, it has brought hope, confidence; the much-needed behavior change, clear out misconceptions and the stigma on people living with HIV and AIDS. Previously, being HIV positive was considered a curse from God but now some students are born with it. The lessons I am teaching from contemporary issues is providing a platform to address the stigma, promote love, and care for infected students.

Even the excerpt from Teacher D’s Schemes and Record of work that was captured during official document analysis proved that the teacher perceives the new content as being relevant and worth implementing. The excerpt from the official document indicates that the teacher planned to teach in week five of the school term the issues of circumcision and naming ceremony as a human right. The excerpt from the Records of Work indicates that the content was actually taught from the contemporary perspective as to why the government of Malawi is encouraging male circumcision. Refer to the excerpt below:

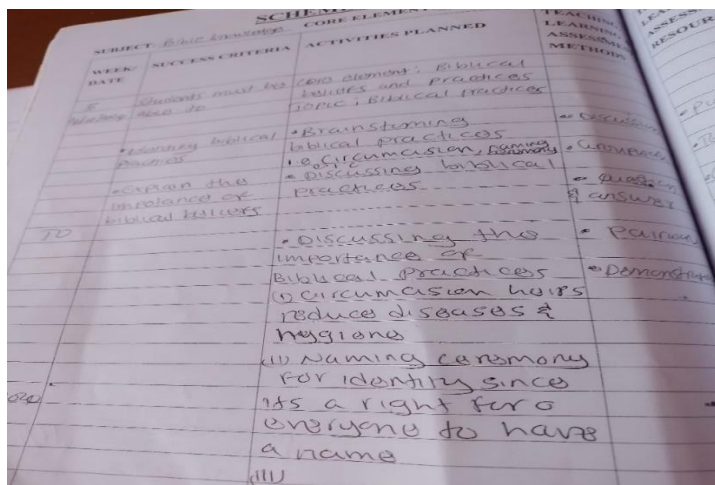


Figure 4.1: Excerpt from Schemes and Records of Work

Concurring with teacher D on circumcision is student 18 on focus group interview 2 from school 2 (November 8, 2024) who explained that:

.... the learning of circumcision has really opened my eyes as to why the government is encouraging it today. It is for hygienic purposes and preventing the spread of cervical cancer. I only thought it applied to the Old Testament patriarchs and that it was outdated with no relevance to today's society.

On the importance of having a name, the teacher had to help students understand that it is a fundamental human right for a person to have a name as it brings in a sense of belonging and identity. As a fundamental human right, B/K is being linked to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which recognizes the right to have a name as one of the basic human rights to be attained by all school-going children (UNESCO, 2020).

Concurring with the perception of teacher D, is Hall and Hord (2020) in the CBAM who calls teacher's attitudes, values and beliefs towards educational changes as Levels of Use for effective implementation of the curriculum. From the data that was coded from lesson observation, pre-observation interviews and post observations interviews, it can be argued for that the teacher has passed successfully all the three stages of the CBAM model namely Stages of Concern, Levels of Use and Innovation Configurations. Once an innovation has been put to effective use teachers become more and more creative and seeks better ways of fully establishing it. Hall & Hold (2020) in CBAM explains the importance of dealing with three important areas of curriculum implementation for it to achieve "optimal implementation strategies". During a one-on-one interview with the teacher, it was clearly shown that she had fully configured the innovation and the areas of concerns have been addressed and now the level of use of the innovation is soon reaching optimal stage.

This finding is in agreement with the findings of the study done by Mensah (2022) in Ghana and Damit et al. (2021) in Malaysia. Mensah (2022) asserted that when students apply the moral and religious lessons learnt in Christian Religious Studies, they are enabled to solve issues of immorality as they are learning to adopt skills, concepts and attitude in a healthy way on how they are influencing their society.

Damit et al. (2021) argues that, in Malaysia, the implementation of OBE curriculum has existed in the past 50 years and is proving relevant in that it is innovative, output driven, holistic, comprehensive and organized. Hence, the changes made to B/K curriculum are worth implementing.

4.1.2 Assessment of learning outcomes.

Another experience that was identified through this study was that it is easy to access the learning outcomes in B/K through the administering of Continuous Assessment (CA). All the eight teachers that participated in the study confirmed this finding through classroom observation and interviews. They all had assessment files that showed that the policy is being implemented well. Teacher I November 8, 2024 from school 4 explained in a pre-observational interview that:

.....Sorry Madam! I am not teaching today. I will be administering second assessment. However, you are still welcome to observe. Ha! Ha!

The teacher explained in a pre-observation interview that she would be administering second assessment in that particular term and each paper will be graded out of 20 marks. The researcher was made to understand through one-on-one interviews with all the teachers that a rule has been made by school administrators in all the schools the researcher visited to administer CA twice within the term. The assessment file of the teacher showed some lower as well as higher order questions formulated for CA to be administered on that particular day. The formulated questions for CA filed by her were then transferred to a chart, which was the main teaching and learning resource of that lesson. The teacher had a lesson plan and its main success criteria was to get feedback on how the learning outcomes have been achieved in the past few weeks of contact time.

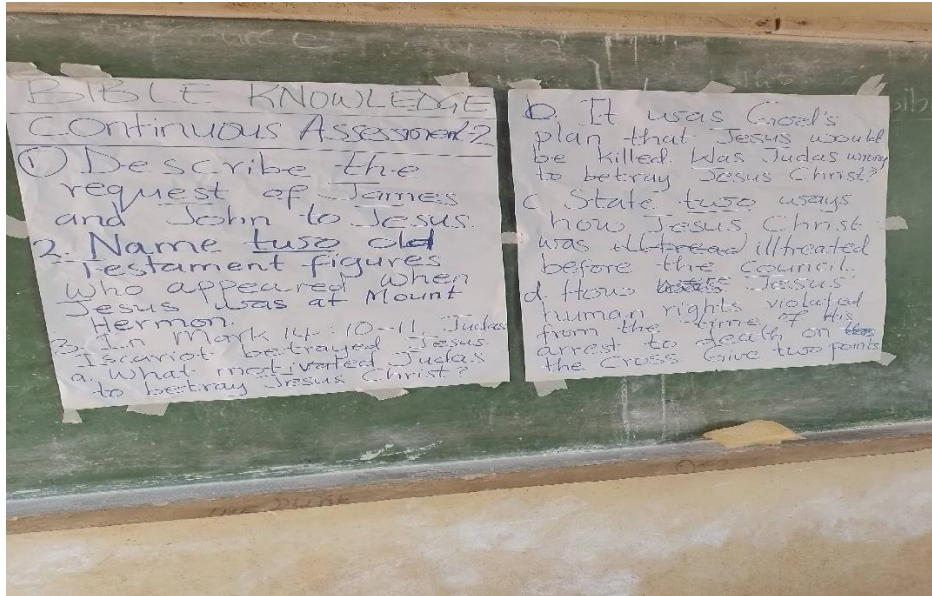


Figure 4.2: Excerpt from chalkboard of Continuous Assessment 2

As seen from the above excerpt, the issue of human right is contemporary to the teaching of Bible Knowledge. Teacher I (November 8, 2024) explained that:

.....My major is theology and I am excited to teach Bible Knowledge at a level where students are able to apply the biblical content to their daily lives. I do not mind administering Continuous Assessment twice a term as instructed school administrators and the requirements of the current curriculum. As the curriculum is bringing in relevance, my students are in turn developing critical and analytical skills.

By looking at the above excerpt on CA assessment, the response that the teacher gave during post observation interviews confirms that the teaching and learning methods she is using are reinforcing acquisition of knowledge, skills and positive attitudes even as she is teaching specific topic in the Bible-Knowledge Syllabus (MIE, 2013). The critical and analytical skills in learners were also proven by the responses students wrote on question 2d of which learners were to explain how Jesus' rights were violated from the time he was arrested up to being sentenced to death. The responses as well indicated that the content is challenging enough to allow students to think outside the box.

In a focus group interview of group 3 on question D, (November 8, 2024), the students portrayed that the learning outcomes are being achieved through the response that:

...Jesus right to fair trial and the right to be protected was violated. He was never given a chance to bring in witnesses or defend himself. He was bitten and spit on and then sentenced to death over the accusations he never did. If I were Jesus, I would appeal to a higher court of law.

By administering Continuous Assessment 2 or formative assessment in B/K, the teacher needs to be commended for enforcing this important component in an OBE curriculum. Teachers need not to be slacking in administering formative assessments as it is in supportive of learning, non-judgmental, provides feedback and constructive criticism to both the teacher and the students (Maree & Fraser, 2008). The current B/K curriculum is outcome based, which requires learners to remember and apply the skills, values, and knowledge gained outside contact time that is long after learning is done (Maree & Fraser, 2008).

As Teacher I and teacher, D proved to have passed the Level of Use as asserted by the CBAM model they agree to the assumption of CBAM that the process of change towards an educational innovation is not an event but a process, which is experienced differently by individual teachers. The necessary change in teachers is a developmental process, which does not occur only in use of skills and knowledge, but also in growth and in development of a set of personal feelings towards the innovation (Horsley & Loucks, 1996). These teachers have developed a positive personal feeling towards the change in B/K no wonder they are implementing very well.

The findings of this study are in agreement with MIE (2013) and the findings of Damit (2021) who concluded his study by asserting that the “teaching, learning, and assessment methods implemented through the experience and creativity of teacher further strengthen student achievement based on the learning outcomes set in the program” (p. 209). As such, the majority of the teachers who participated in the study strongly agree that the policy of CA be fully implemented to continue monitoring the learning process.

4.1.3 Support for schools practicing route system of education

Another experience that the study found was that the adding of contemporary issues is offering support to those schools that are practicing the route system of education. For instance, the majority of the students who participated in a focus groups interview mentioned some topics they feel they are not missing. Such topics include HIV and AIDS, Drug and Substance abuse, Corruption and Marriage among others, which are found in Life Skills and Social studies subjects. These topics have been added to the current Bible Knowledge curriculum.

In a focus group interview Student 4 from school 1 (October 23, 2024) confirmed this finding:

..... I am glad they added issues like HIV and AIDS, Marriage, drug and substance abuse to Bible Knowledge. I have dropped Social and Life skills where these topics are taught. I still have the chance of learning the same topics in B/K of which I thought I would miss out.

Agreeing to this finding is Secondary School Curriculum Assessment Review (2015); MIE (2013) and Banda (2022) that Bible knowledge is an elective subject of which the subject matrix, classifies it as Set C, or Select Some. The adding of contemporary issues, to B/K curriculum seems to be working to the advantage of students who have dropped other subjects in Set C but have preferred B/K. To students who have preferred B/K to Social and Life Skills, the route system or select some system is enabling them gain skills and knowledge similarly as they would have acquired in other similar subjects like Life Skills. The students seem not to be missing on anything as far as crosscutting issues are concerned. The remarks made by the teachers above, demonstrates that the majority of teachers who participated in the study feel that the topics added to the B/K curriculum are necessary. Therefore, the changes in the B/K syllabus are worthwhile. However, other teachers who participated in the study had a different perception and cited curriculum overload and conflicting content as part of their experiences.

4.1.4 Curriculum overload

Some teachers mentioned curriculum overload as part of their experiences during post lesson observation interviews. For instance, two out of the eight teachers mentioned that in the B/K curriculum, the content is now too much, which makes it practically impossible to fully cover the entire content on time.

During face-to-face interviews, done after lesson observation, Teacher B (October 24, 2024) explained that:

It would have been better if they had reduced the teaching of Biblical content and then add contemporary issues not with what they have done. It takes forever to finish the teaching of Isaiah, Luke and Acts in the senior section. Now with the adding of contemporary issues, the content is too much. I do not bother teaching up to contemporary issues because I know that students have accumulated enough knowledge on the same topics from other subjects enough to apply in any exam.

During lesson observation, the Teacher was observed using traditional way of teaching of telling stories, memorizing, discussing during classroom practice. Apart from teacher B, teacher H was also observed using teacher-centered methods than learner centered approached as advocated by OBE curriculum (Spady, 1994). The learner-centered approaches include case studies, brainstorming, drama, poetry, field visits, projects, storytelling, group discussion, panel discussion debate, posters, recitals panel discussion and songs (Tanzania Institute of Education, 2023). Asking Teacher H during a one-on-one post observational interview, as to why she preferred teacher centered methods as opposed to learner centered methods,

Teacher H (November 8, 2024) explained that:

.....Madam, you cannot finish the teaching of Bible Knowledge curriculum with learner-centered methods. I need to finish the teaching of the Book of Isaiah within this term. I have two more books waiting for me to teach on top of contemporary issues. Some of these methodologies are just for head knowledge.

The level of use of CBAM model and the advocacy of OBE curriculum by Spady (1994) were designed to support such teachers like Teacher H and B to help them understand that the world is getting complex and that learners are not empty tins. They bring in classroom some experiences on which existing knowledge can be refined by new knowledge. Educational innovations will keep coming demanding a positive attitude to effect change.

Concurring with the finding of this study is Njoku (2015); Damit (2021) and Mchawa (2023) who identified workload of teachers as one of the challenges affecting implementation of OBE curriculum. They all agree that teachers are not willing most of the times to take in extra workloads on the same pay. In most cases curriculum innovations demand changes in approach, content and the use of resources and assessment procedures. The current B/K curriculum is outcome based, which demands learner-centered methods to guide teaching and learning and to transfer the learning content to the learners. As such, most teachers prefer the traditional way of teaching of telling stories; memorization and discussion, of which most teachers feel they quickly rush through without focusing much on the needs of learners and formation of moral character (Okafor, 2001; Njoku 2015). In view of this experience, it can be asserted that not all teachers are advancing towards full implementation of the changes made to B/K curriculum. They still need to be understood and be helped at the point of their need.

4.1.5 Conflicting content

Another experience that the study found out from some of the B/K teachers who participated in the study was a perception that the content in the curriculum is in conflict with the content in other subjects. Three out of the eight teachers feel that they are failing to identify the right stand from which some topics can be taught. For instance, it was cited by Teacher G that abstinence as advocated by B/K over the use of condoms is somehow in conflict in the way it is advocated in Life Skills.

Teacher G (November 6, 2024) argued that,

... I do not know which stand to take for I feel like the content is conflicting, as I have to teach from two different perspective in Life Skills and B/K. I teach both subjects in the same class. In Life Skills, I advocate for the use of condoms as a way of preventing HIV by the youth of which in B/K, we advocate for total abstinence. I feel like with the way the society is Student need to be equipped on the use of condoms than the other way round.

Looking critically at Teacher G's perception, it clearly portrays that the teacher is still in the first stage of curriculum implementation, thus according to the CBAM which describes it as level of individual concern. The individual concern is that some of the topics added to the B/K curriculum are in conflict with personal convictions and beliefs as advocated by CBAM that change is personal and it takes a long time to accept the desired change. The dilemma that Teacher G is having indicates that she needs to be supported to have a right stand, which can be gained through the understanding of the rationale of B/K and Life Skills. Otherwise, failure in having a right stand will result into biasness and teaching to what is contrary to the innovators mind.

Students 11 from focus group 2 (October 25) also confirms this finding by asserting that:

.....I learnt Life Skills in form 1 where condoms were taught as a way of preventing the Contraction of HIV and AIDS. It feels conflicting because B/K advocates for total abstinence.

There is need for clarity on such conflicting content, which can be easily done by teachers who understand the content better that has been written in the B/K curriculum. Mahlangu (2000) rightly argues that educators need to change their traditional practices, attitudes and roles if they were to attest high levels of competency. For most educators react to a curriculum that makes them feel insecure, contrary to their beliefs and makes them feel incompetent. The assumption CBAM asserts is in agreement with what Teacher G is facing "change is a process and not an event" and it is a personal experience, which takes time (Hall & Hord, 2020). The Teacher needs to personally look into the curriculum, appreciate the innovations made, and acknowledge that they are worth implementing.

This personal experience alone would be adequate to change the mindset of the teacher towards the content and desire to implement it. This finding agrees with the findings of Njoku (2015); Hall & Hord (2020) and Matemba (2022) who both agree that the teaching of such subjects like B/K demands competency, excellence, and manipulation of instructional materials to achieve the desired impact.

4.2 The Challenges Teachers are Facing in Implementing the Current Bible Knowledge Curriculum

The study also sought to analyze the challenge that teachers are facing in implementing the current Bible Knowledge curriculum. The study found the following as the challenges, which are being faced as the curriculum is being implemented: students' perception towards the subject; teachers own ideological understanding on emerging issues; a repetition of topics, inadequate teaching and learning resource; unequal distribution of teaching personnel in rural areas and exam-oriented mindset.

4.2.1. Student's perception towards the subject

The researcher was made to understand through focus group interviews that some students that are not taking B/K have a wrong perception towards the learning outcome of the subject. The misconception is that those students taking Bible knowledge are aspiring to be church ministers or pastors nothing else. This finding came up in all four focus group interviews with students.

Student 21 on focus group interview 4 (November 6, 2024) explained that:

... We are jeered by our friends each time we walk in and out of classroom as being pastors or reverends and that the subject will take us nowhere. At first, it used to bother me very much but now I am used.

Concurring with student 21 is Teacher G (November 6, 2024) during a post classroom observation interview and asserted that:

...Students have a wrong perception over B/K. In my experience of teaching Bible Knowledge for 10 years, I have never enrolled more than 40 students in my class. Right now, out of 100 students, I only have 30. This is pathetic and there is need for sensitization to clear out this misconception. Little do they know that it is a stepping-stone to a wide range of career choices.

To validate the assertion by teacher G that the school does not enroll many students, the data on the number of students taking Bible Knowledge in the 4 schools was collected. Table 4.2.1 explains how low the enrollment is at MSCE level.

Table 4.2.: number of students enrolled for B/K at MSCE level

Name of school	Number of students taking B/K at MSCE level
School 1	50 out of 200 students
School 2	10 out of 200 students
School 3	50 out of 300 students
School 4	30 out of 250 students

By looking at the table above, it can be asserted that very few students enroll for the B/K subject. One of the reasons could be not knowing the relevance of the subject and the career opportunities it can offer. Very few of them understand the rationale of learning the subject.

Student 28 on focus group interview 6 (November 6, 2024) argued that:

It is very unfortunate that students shun away from the learning of B/K. I do not take Life Skills and Social Studies and I thought I would miss out on topics that deal with issues affecting the youth today. I am very excited that I can learn those important topics in BK as well.

This finding agrees with MIE (2013); Damit (2021); Mensah (2022) by asserting that the adding of contemporary issues to the subject has brought some practical skills and knowledge that can help shape their moral behavior on top of the biblical content. Now students cannot just learn and memorize the Biblical stories. Rather, the subject has now concern over global issues for development of ethical behavior and moral values, which is very important for them to function as global citizens (Njoku, 2015). There is a great need of sensitization in these schools to clear out misconceptions as B/K brings in a positive impact to the moral life of students. Students are also challenged to live in harmony with both the spiritual and physical world (MIE, 2013). Those students whose preference is not Social and Life Skills and have preferred B/K, have now the chance to learn topics like climate change, human rights, marriage, governance, HIV and AIDS, environmental degradation, relationship between the church and the state and moral decay among others. The adding of these global issues is not a minor achievement as the curriculum is now relevant to global issues as well as empowering students practically.

4.2.3. Teacher's individual ideological understanding on emerging issues

Another challenge that was identified through this study is teacher's own individual understanding on arising issues. For instance, three out of eight teachers that participated in this study wish some of the B/K content could be well articulated, clarified and modified. Some of the content they wish could be clarified are human rights, HIV/ AIDS prevention, gender roles and sexuality. Sexuality is not taught as a stand-alone topic as it has been done in subjects like Life Skills, but it has been mingled with other topics.

Teacher A (October 24, 2024) explained that:

... I find it difficult to teach the topics of gender roles and human rights, sexuality without being biased. Some of the topics and content contradicts with my personal beliefs and values. I find it very conflicting to teach about human rights, gender roles in B/K without being biased. I am afraid. The content sparks a very hot debate in my class.

Jansen (1998); Ratsatsi (2005); Chirwa (2013) and Matemba (2022) agrees to this finding by acknowledging the dilemma that occurs in teachers whenever they feel that the curriculum is confronting their ideologies. They all agree that teachers implement changes in a curriculum they feel comfortable to teach, tally with their personal beliefs and are familiar to their years of teaching practice. Any content they feel crossing their line of thought, they easily shun it. Teacher A has been caught up in between the seven stages or levels of concern leading to acceptance of an innovation according to CBAM model. When a teacher is caught in between awareness, information and personal concern, it is difficult to reach the final levels of concern of which are Management, consequence, collaboration and refocusing (Hall & Hord, 2015). Whenever a teacher reaches these four final levels it means the implementation process is reaching its optimal level. According to CBAM model, the Teacher needs further orientation at cluster level for collaboration with other professionals in the same field who are now refocusing.

4.2.4 Exam Oriented Mindset

Exam oriented mindset was also identified as another challenge affecting effective implementation of the current B/K curriculum. Two out of the eight teachers that were observed and interviewed confessed that they are tempted to skip the teaching of contemporary issues because MANEB is inconsistent in examining them.

Teacher B October 24, 2024 explained that:

.... Iam mostly exam oriented and my main focus is to spend most of my contact time on the content that is frequently examined and is awarded more marks. MANEB is very inconsistent. Even if you check on some of its past papers especially from 2017 to 2024 you will discover that in some of the papers, no single question was asked form contemporay issues. You can imagine the pain of labouring in vain. That is why sometimes I skip the content knowing that my student will apply the knowledge they have gained from other subjects on the same content.

Further, it was argued for, by the Teacher that it seems insignificant to finish the teaching of the entire B/K curriculum up to contemporary issues, only to discover on MANEB papers that not even a single question from contemporary issues has been asked.

With this mindset of being exam oriented, it can be suggested that this teacher has jumped to the last stage of CBAM model called “Refocusing” and “renewal” of the Levels of Use without implementing the change. The teacher seems to seek the new version of the innovation yet the perception towards the change that was made to the current curriculum seems not right (Loucks & Horsley, 1996). Those that are at the last stage of CBAM model of Refocusing and Renewal, it simply implies that they fully dealt with the crucial issues and challenges that rose at all stages of implementation, implemented the innovation successfully and are now “re-evaluating their use” (Hall & Hord, 2020).

In addition, the Teacher could also be put in the category of mechanical use of an innovation or considered “disjointed” and “superficial” under CBAM model (Hall & Hord, 2020). When teachers are considered “disjointed” and “superficial” it implies that their main focus and effort is placed on making innovation changes that will benefit themselves other than students. This is because they try to master the required task as demanded by the innovation while teaching with no time of reflection, preparation and orientation (Hall & Hord, 2020). Teacher B needs a time of reflection on how best the needs of students can be met other than using the innovation in a mechanical way

In a focus group interview of group 1, (October 23, 2024), Student 2 confirms this finding by asserting that:

.....As we are preparing for the national exams, we have been told to focus on the content on Isaiah, Luke and Acts which is found in the three prescribed text books. The content that has been placed at the end of the syllabus is mostly not examined.

Concurring with Teacher B and Student 2 is Teacher G who asserts that it feels like a waste of time teaching the whole content in the curriculum only to discover that no or few questions have been asked from contemporary issues.

Teacher G November 6, 2024 during post observation interviews asserts that:

...Take a look at the MANEB past papers, you will agree with me that not much is being examined from contemporary issues. I strive to finish the entire content, though I still wonder the essence of teaching the entire curriculum. It feels like a wast of time somethimes.

Concurring with this finding is the official document that was analyzed of MANEB past papers, from 2017 to 2024 in which some of them not a single question was asked by MANEB from contemporary issues. For instance 2018 and 2022(Refer to Table 4.2, p. 52). Even in those years that few questions were asked from the content no substantial marks were awarded. This is because, the focus of MANEB is not examinations, rather imparting skills, values, knowledge and attitudes neccesally for behavior change. The rationale and the learning outcomes of each subject should be the driving force behind teaching and learning (Malawi Sector Analysis, 2019).

Table 4.3.: MANEB Examined question 2017-2024

Year	No. of examinable questions	Marks Awarded
2017	Five questions	A total of 5 marks were awarded on MSCE
2018		No question was asked on MSCE
2019	Five questions	A total of 5 marks were awarded on MSCE
2020		No questioned was asked on MSCE
2021	One question	A total of 8 marks were awarded on MSCE
2022	No question was asked	No marks awarded
2023	5 questions were asked	A total of 10 marks were awarded to the questions asked on MSCE
2024	8 questions were asked	A total of 21 marks were awarded on MSCE

As shown by Table 4.2. Teacher B and G could argue that there is inconsistency by MANEB in asking some question in some years. For instance in the year 2018 and 2022 where no question was asked. However, as explained already, the inconsistency by MANEB could simply imply that their main focus as far as contemporary issues are concerned is not for examinations, but imparting skills and knowledge in learners. Disagreeing with the thought pattern of these teachers, is a comment made by the chief examiners report.

MANEB (2024, p. 8) Chief examiners report explains that:

Question 38 in the item, candidates were asked to choose what the Church must do in order to maintain a cordial relationship with the state. Performance was below average. The correct answer was C (not interfere in state affairs). Most candidates opted for either A (fully fund all state projects) or B (not participate in any state development activities). This showed that some teachers do not cover Contemporary Issues in the syllabus.

The above comments asserted by the Chief Examiners Report (MANEB, 2024) clearly down plays the exam oriented mind. The fact that most students performed below average as cited by the chief examiners report indicates that some teachers (like Teacher B and G) are not covering the curriculum up to the teaching of contemporary issues which has been placed at the very end of the syllabus. The performance of their students in B/K should raise an alarm to school administrators to monitor how teachers are implementing educational innovations. MANEB as well, should continue examining as many questions as they can. This does not mean that they want to instill exam oriented spirit in teachers, but to make teachers teach for the benefit of students in acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge as intended by innovators.

SSCAR, (2015 p. 22) explains:

Bible knowledge aims at equipping the student with the appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable them function as responsible and productive citizen in the society. The knowledge, skills and attitudes gained will help the student to solve challenges such as environmental degradation, moral decay, corruption, drug and substance abuse, HIV and AIDS, STIs, violence and juvenile delinquency. It will also help the student to develop high moral standards of conduct and sound judgement.

From the official document analysis of the MANEB past papers (2017-2024), it was discovered that a lot of topics from contemporary issues have been examined. The topics include but not limited to: the relationship between the State and the Church, HIV and AIDS, drug and substance abuse, marriage and moral decay. On the 2024 MANEB examinations, 21 marks were awarded to the eight questions which were examined. This seems to be a very good development that needs to continue for the impartation of practical skills and knowledge in students. As identified from the official documents of 2017-2024 MANEB past papers, and as a way of monitoring how the curriculum is being implemented, it can be acknowledged that MANEB is trying its level best to check the implementation of contemporary issues

4.2.5. A Repetition of the Topics Added to the Curriculum

Repetition of the topics was also identified as another challenge to effective implementation of the B/K syllabus. This was confirmed by three of the eight teachers that were observed and interviewed. One of the teachers, Teacher A, explained that topics like HIV and AIDS, drug and substance abuse, corruption, moral decay, environmental degradation, marriage, violence and juvenile delinquency are found almost in every subject.

Teacher A, (October 24, 2024) argued that:

...I observed some resistance by my B/K students when I wrote on the chalk board, HIV and AIDs. My students literally booed!!! Others immediately objected by raising their hand asking why they were learning HIV and AIDS in Bible Knowledge class. This is because they have learnt about HIV and AIDs almost in every subject. I had to spend some minutes explaining about the new curriculum and why they had added such topics.

This indicates that the educational innovation done to the B/K curriculum is quite a new phenomenon to Teacher A and the students that is definitely met with some resistance. Taking a closer look at the current curriculum of secondary schools, the topics that have been added to the curriculum are global issues. This is what is making the teaching of B/K relevant to contemporary world.

Further, the Secondary School Curriculum Assessment Review, (2015 p. 14) one of the official documents analyzed explained that:

...The curriculum focuses on student's achievement. To achieve the outcomes, students must be introduced to new knowledge, skills, attitudes and values in the context of their existing knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, so that they develop a deeper understanding as they learn and apply the concepts.

Teacher G (November 6, 2024) during face-to-face interview after lesson, observation explained that:

... I teach B/K and Life Skills in the same class of which I feel like sometimes I am just repeating the same content. I wish the topics were different...

This kind of perception by teacher be can be classified as wishful thinking for by doing so, Bible Knowledge would be made as a stand-alone subject with no connection of developing global citizens. Though the existence of such topics in Bible Knowledge seems like a repetition of topics, some students that are not taking Life Skills but have opted B/K are being challenged morally.

4.2.6. Inadequate Teaching and Learning Resource

Inadequate teaching and learning resources such as Good News Bibles and B/K textbooks were also identified as one of the challenges affecting implementation of the B/K curriculum (Refer to table 4.3, p.60). This finding was confirmed by both students and teachers during interviews as well as classroom observation.

In a focus group interview 5 at school 4, (November 6, 2024) students explained that:

... The entire school has nine Bibles and very few text books for Bible knowledge. We hardly have a hands on experience through these text. This is quite a challenge!

Bible Knowledge is a hands on subject which requires a lot of reading of actual Biblical text as demanded by the syllabus. MANEB has recommended the Good News Version of the Bible as the required teaching and learning resource every students must have. In most schools, the Good News Bible is the most scarce resource and quite expensive for an average student to purchase.

In a pre- observational interview of classroom practice Teacher E (October 25, 2024) explained:

...Sorry madam! Psychologically, let me prepare you in advance that I will be passing around this Bible as the lesson is in progress on to my students. The senior class is having a B/K lesson as well so they are given preference.

Further, being a hands on subject requiring a lot of reading, it works better if the students are able to own their learning by internalizing the stories other than just being told from the heart by teachers. It was observed at school 2 that in a classroom of 50 students, teacher E was the only one holding a Bible that was passed around whenever the teacher called a student to read a Biblical text. Boredom could be shown on the faces of students during classroom observation whom the teacher kept calling out for attentiveness especially when the reading of the passage was in progress. The Malawi Sector Analysis (2019) concurs with this finding by acknowledging that the low learning outcomes in most of the schools in Malawi is a result of inadequate textbooks with the learner textbook ratio per subject reaching as high as 10:1 in some schools.

Teacher E October 25, 2024 explained during pre- observational interviews that:

....two Bible Knowledge classes are happening concurrently, and the school has only ten Bibles and I have given preference to the senior class and I only got one Bible as a teaching and learning resource.

Concurring with this finding is Damit (2021, p. 207) who concluded his study by asserting that:

.....teaching and learning problems, involving teaching equipment should be addressed immediately to provide support and motivation to a teacher in implementing better quality education. Without adequate teaching aids and equipment, the implementation of teaching and learning will be disrupted.

Concurring with Teacher E and the findings of Damit (2021) is Table 4.3 (p.61), which indicates the number of Bibles in four schools that data was collected as well as students from all the focus group interviews. The students were challenged in a focus group interview to consider buying their own Bibles as a way of being resourcefulness.

Student 40 (November 8, 2024) responds to the challenge in a focus group interview that:

I need Mk 22,000 to buy one Good News Bible from Book stores in town which is quite expensive and I cannot afford.

During classroom observation, students were crowding around one Bible especially in those scenarios where two classes were having B/K concurrently as it was the case at school 1, and 4.

This confirms the finding that there is acute shortage of teaching and learning materials in most of the schools. No textbook was seen in the hands of students except the one the teacher was using as a teaching resource accompanying a lesson plan. Mostly, the junior class had to give up the right of equal sharing of GNB, to the senior class. As explained earlier, in those scenarios where two classes were having B/K concurrently (at school 1 and 4). Teachers had to divide the Bibles amongst themselves for the very reason of having at least 1 or two Bibles as a teaching resource. Asking the reason why the time table has been scheduled like that, instead of separating them Teacher F (November 6, 2024) who happen to be in the Time Table committee explained during pre- observational interview that:

On the school time table, two or three classes are scheduled to have B/K concurrently due to timetable congestion. School administrators have permitted such kind of practice as a way of making students be at school by 7:30 a.m and stick around until knock off time. Otherwise if subjects like B/K are placed in the first period or the last period a handful of students are found around the school. This makes it difficult to disseminate information on any arising issues or to deal with discipline cases as students end up showing to school at their own time other than the mandatory one.

Such being the case, the B/K periods are congested in the middle part of school session making it difficult to create free spaces for each class. With such congestion teachers have resorted to sharing the little Bibles they have amongst themselves. It was observed in some classes, that students were crowding around one Bible which made it difficult to control the noise as students scramble to take turns in reading. The need could be eased if students are encouraged to buy their own Bibles or to bring a Bible from home.

The challenge is that MANEB recommends Good News version of the Bible which is not found in many homes. Selemani (2018); Chirwa et al. (2022); Damit (2021) all agree to this finding that there is acute shortage of teaching and learning materials. This is affecting teaching and learning especially for teachers to implement learner centred approaches, extend periods of learning and to give students a hands on experience as advocated by OBE curriculum .

4.3 Possible Solutions to the Challenges Teachers are facing in implementing the Curriculum

Several ways have been suggested as possible solutions to the challenges teachers are facing such as: mindset change over the objectives of teaching and learning, resource mobilization to support teaching and learning, monitoring the deployment of teaching personnel, and curriculum review.

4.3.1 Reorientation of Teachers

Reorientation of teachers was one of the possible solutions suggested by teachers. For instance, from the demographics of teachers that was collected (Refer to figure 3.1, p. 27) five out of the eight teachers were not in the educational system the time the curriculum was rolled out. The B/K curriculum was implemented in 2015 and none of them have attended any in- service or CPD relating the changes made to Bible Knowledge curriculum.

Teacher B of School C (October 25, 2024), agrees to this finding by explaining that:

My teaching experience is only 5 years. The curriculum was incepted when I was still teaching at primary school. I have just been promoted to secondary school the previous year. I surely need to be orientation on the content, methodologies and assessment of this curriculum. Otherwise, I am not doing justice to it.

The majority of them were open enough to admit that they were never oriented on how to implement the “philosophy and the logic” of the B/K curriculum which is greatly needed so that instructors should be equipped with full knowledge on the rationale and the aims of teaching B/K (Mensah, 2022).

From the demographics of teachers, it can be suggested that from the time the curriculum was rolled out to date, most of them were not part of the trainings that were done through cascade model. The cascade model of training few individuals who will in turn train others has been faulted for diluting information. It can be argued for that cascade model dilutes information, is substandard and is difficult to determine effectiveness, because few teachers are trained to train others. This depends on the skills and competence of those who were trained to efficiently orient and equip other teachers with practical skills (Rembe, 2006; Chirwa & Naidoo, 2014; Banda, 2022).

Further, it can be suggested that the knowledge some of these teachers are using to implement the curriculum has to do with what they learnt from universities and their training colleges, which needs reorientation. This is because, what was learnt in college can be very difficult to implement in real classroom practice. Agreeing to the need for reorientation of teachers is the CBAM model. As part of the diagnostic tool, the Level of Use of CBAM model explains the importance of orientation of teachers as a way of acquiring and exploring values, knowledge and the demands of the innovation in their classroom practice (Hall & Hord, 2020). This is very crucial especially in those scenarios where some teachers are not interested or are not using (Non- Use) the innovation due to very little or lack of knowledge just like (Teacher B and G). Both of them had knowledge on what the innovation in B/K is all about but chose not to implement it. Now that they are out of college, the best platform to address their concerns is during orientations of a new curriculum or through CPD.

As a government policy on implementation of CPD's, SSCAR (2015 p. 12) explained that:

CPD shall be prioritized to educate and continually develop the teachers as professionals so that they effectively and efficiently deliver high quality and relevant education at both levels of secondary school education to meet the needs of the nation.

Again, the five assumptions of the CBAM model are worth applying to Teacher B and G for they highlight some of the perceptions and attitudes of teachers towards change. Sweeney (2003) explains that accepting change in life is a process not an event that takes a long time to be affected. Different teachers experience change differently because it is a personal experience. Therefore, teachers should not be compared because each individual is unique and process things differently.

Instead, in those areas, innovators observe that they are not implementing innovations as it was intended, they should be understood and be helped. It can be concluded that the changing of individual teachers in perception and attitude (Teacher B and G) will make the changing of classroom practice easy (Sweeney, 2003). Lastly, the necessary change in teachers is a developmental process, which does not occur only in use of skills and knowledge, but also in growth and in development of a set of personal feelings towards the innovation (Horsley & Loucks, 1996).

4.3.2 Resource Mobilization to Support Teaching and Learning

Another possible solution to the challenge that was identified through post lesson observation interviews was resource mobilization in schools to support teaching and learning. All the eight teachers who participated in the survey confirmed the finding of this research. They all agreed that most schools could easily mobilize teaching and learning resources like Bibles. Different Stakeholders in partnership with the government as well as the community at large often visit schools in NED. These could be ideal sources and key players in mobilizing Bibles and textbooks.

Teacher A of school 1 (October 2024) explained that:

.... I am a patron of a Christian organization at this school. I am intending to speak to a certain organization that normally visits our school to consider providing the prescribed version and text of the B/K curriculum.

Concurring with Teacher A is Loucks & Horsley (1996), who assert that resource mobilization, can be placed in the third tool of CBAM model of managing change known as Innovation Configuration (IC). In a classroom setup, Innovation Configuration “might include a number of factors such as: the necessary resources and conditions to implement the innovation” (p. 20). Here in Malawi, scarcity of resources for teaching and learning is quite a challenge both at primary, secondary and even in Teacher Training Colleges (Malawi Sector Analysis Report, 2019). What is lacking is collaborating with the right stakeholders and other international organization to help in mobilizing resources for teaching and learning. In the teaching and learning of B/K, the Gideon’s international serves as one of the key stakeholders in the provision of the Bible as a teaching and learning resource. On the academic part, the challenge is on distributing the Right version of the Bible (Refer to figure 4.3 p. 60).

Such is the environment, in which important innovations are configured which makes it very difficult to measure the success of the learning outcomes by making the necessary changes of classroom practice as demanded by the innovation.

On the importance of teaching and learning materials, Yildirim (2008 p. 306) explained that:

... The Use of materials in teaching can be identified best as the use of supporting elements, which enrich the education and teaching setting, facilitate learning and concretize addressing the sense organs of the learner.

Having enough learning materials, serves as way of enriching the teaching and education setting thereby making it conducive for learning.

Table 4.3. Number of students against number of Bibles per school

Name. of school	No of student	Number of Good News Bibles	Remarks
1	200 JC; 50 MSCE	10	As a hands-on subject, in need of more reading, there is a great need of GNB
2	200 JC; 20 MSCE	10	At JC level the challenge is great
3	250 JC; 50 MSCE	9	Need more supply of GNB
4	200 JC; 30 MSCE	9	Need more GNB

The way out to this challenge is already there that could be materialized if NED leaders and school administrators could appeal to stake holders to up at heart the need to textbooks and other learning resources.

4.3.3 A Follow Up on Teacher's Deployment

A follow up on teachers' deployment was suggested as a possible solution to mis-deployment of teachers between urban and rural schools. For instance, the majority of the teachers mentioned during face-to-face interview that mis-deployment of teachers is threatening the extinction of some elective subjects like B/K.

Teacher C (October 25) post observational interviews explained that:

.....Madam! You are lucky that our school in this rural setting is still offering B/K as a subject. Our neighboring schools have stopped due to understaffing

Concurring with this finding is NED (2023-2026) strategic plan SWOT analysis; Mchawa (2023) and Sabola (2017). The strategic plan acknowledges as a weakness the lack of follow up on teacher deployment with schools that are overstaffed against those that are understaffed.

The rural schools, especially those situated in areas that are hard to reach, are the ones that are greatly affected by understaffing leading to failure of offering all the subjects as required by the curriculum. This threat of diminishing of some subjects in rural schools will be combated if division manager will monitor deployment of staff by ensuring that time limits that are set for reporting after postings are adhered to other than rescinding them (NED, 2023).

The Malawi Sector Analysis report (2019 p.57) also acknowledges that:

There are major problems in recruitment, training, incentives, and retention of teachers, especially qualified and female teachers. Deployment is carried out in various ways and for various reasons; but this often results in mis-deployment in terms of potential reductions in Pupil-Teacher Ratio; under deployment of teachers in rural schools.

This result into what CBAM model, describes as Non-use of the innovation "where the teachers have little or no knowledge of the innovation, no involvement with the innovation and are doing nothing toward becoming involved." (Gundy & Berger, 2016, p. 234). With workloads that occurs because of understaffing, some subjects cease to be offered because teachers are overwhelmed.

4.3.4 Mindset Change Over the Goal of Teaching and Learning

Another solution that was identified was a mindset change over the goal of teaching and learning. Seven of the eight teachers confirm this finding through post observational interviews.

Teacher G of school 3 (November 6, 2024) explained that:

..... I know it is wrong to teach for exams. I am equally guilty as well of the same tendency of skipping some information I feel less important. I think I need a mindset change. Ha-ha!

Agreeing to this finding is MANEB (2020) which explains that the goal of the B/K examination is to “assess students’ biblical knowledge, skills and attitudes that shall enable them to be responsible and productive citizens in the contemporary world” (p. 36). The skills and attitudes assessed by MANEB is a result of continuous effort made by teachers to master the content of the teaching syllabus and investing their time and energy into imparting skills and knowledge to achieve the outcomes of learning. This was proven by the just ended 2024 examinations where more content was examined implying that substantial marks were awarded to the examined questions. Those students whose syllabus coverage did not reach to the very end failed.

It also implied that the good intentions of innovators by adding contemporary issues for imparting skills and knowledge also failed. The way MANEB is valuing contemporary issues will help teachers to start asking important questions asked by implementers of educational innovation. The question is categorized by CBAM, as management (how can the skills be master and fit in) consequences (is this innovation working? Is it worth implementing) and collaboration (the innovation is working fine, but how are others doing it) (Hall & Hord, 2020). When teachers start asking these types of questions especially when they realize that others are implementing the innovation very well, and it is being proven by the behavior of students and their attitude changes for the betterment of students.

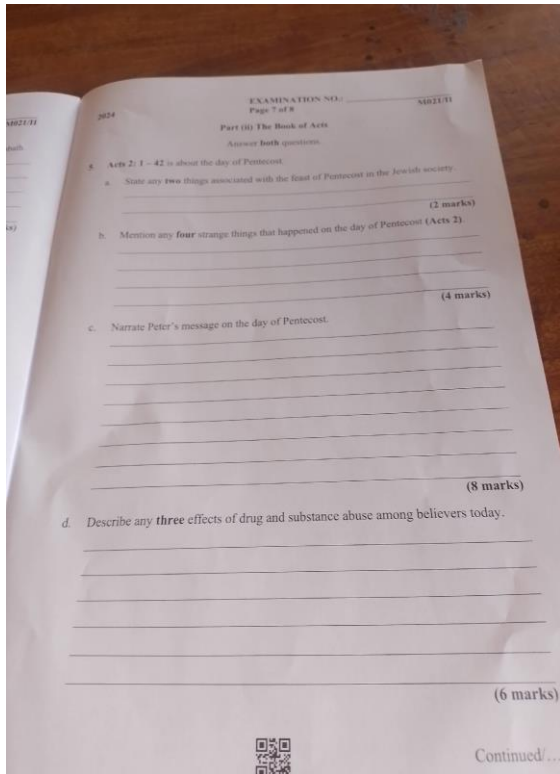


Figure: 4.4: Excerpt from MANEB, (2017)

Looking at this excerpt, at least one question was asked where six marks were awarded from the topic of Drug and Substance abuse. Should this practice continue, the act of skipping the teaching of these topics would be curbed. This will also refute the arguments made by some teachers who claimed that they are not implementing the teaching of the additional content because not much is asked and not significant marks are awarded to the questions.

Agreeing to the importance of the mind set change are the official documents that were analyzed. In a press release of 2024 MSCE results by MANEB, Bible Knowledge was rated number four in the top ten of those subjects with the highest distinctions at a percentage of 17.84 nationwide (MANEB, 2024). Even the MANEB Chief Examiners report of 2024 on Bible Knowledge (M021 /I & II) acknowledges that: “Many candidates performed better in questions on Contemporary issues compared to the other components of the syllabus.” (p. 1). The better performance of the students to the questions asked from contemporary issues has helped to rank the subject in top ten. This report will challenge teachers who skip the teaching of contemporary issues to finish teaching the entire curriculum.

Should this continue to happen with B/K, it could build a rapport for students to understand that the subject is of greater significance for acquisition of knowledge and skills.

4.3.6 Curriculum Review

The last suggestion that was mentioned as a solution to effective curriculum implementation of B/K is a curriculum review. This was confirmed during focus group interview that thirty-two students mention a list of contemporary issues they wish to be added to the curriculum (refer to Table 4.4, p.65). Eight out of the forty students felt the curriculum is okay and there is no need for review. The table indicates the topics; thirty-two students are aspiring to learn and to be added to the current curriculum under review. This implies that the idea of adding issues affecting society to the Bible Knowledge curriculum has been welcomed by most students taking B/K. Only Eight students were the ones who felt satisfied with the content in the current curriculum and feel there is no need for review.

Responding to the suggestions that were made by thirty-two students of curriculum review is” (MIE, 2024 “press release”). A new curriculum has been scheduled to be rolled out shortly in the 2025 academic year beginning with form one and three. The review is an alignment to the Malawi 2063 Agenda aiming to “prepare the citizens of a rapid growing global landscape by equipping the citizens with essential knowledge, skills, values and attitudes” (MIE, 2024, p. 1 “press release”). However, looking critically at the suggested topics, most of them have already been incorporated in other subjects for instance: corruption, sexuality, peaceful co-existence, entrepreneurship, and budgeting and conflict resolution are taught in Social Studies and Life skills. Technology as a topic has been incorporated in most science subjects (MIE, 2013). It is only in Bible Knowledge that such content is not taught as stand-alone topics just like in these other subjects. Possibly, due to electives, students feel they are missing out on what others are learning in Life Skills and Social Studies. Students suggested two interesting topics to be incorporated in the curriculum namely entrepreneurship skills and mental health. Entrepreneurship skills will shape students into becoming self-reliant, critical thinkers and productive citizens.

The adding of mental health to the curriculum will help students understand the value of life and gain practical ways of dealing with underlying personal issue other than committing suicide. Bible knowledge is one of the core subjects that would be ideal to apply biblical principles over mental issues confronting the youth and are leading to suicide. This is because biblical principles could help students to learn how to interact well with both the physical as well as the spiritual aspect of life (MIE, 2013). In addition, the issues of abortion if incorporated in the curriculum would help learners make better personal choices on their health.

Table 4.4.: Demographics of suggested topics

No of students	Male	Female	Suggested Topic
5	2	3	Abortion
3	1	2	Entrepreneurship
6	2	4	Mental health
5	2	3	Peaceful-coexistence
7	2	5	Sexuality
1	0	1	Corruption
4	3	1	Academic excellency
1	0	1	Technology
1	0	1	Budgeting
3	1	2	Conflict resolution
4	2	2	No change

By demographics Table 4.4. indicates that issues on sex and sexuality rated the highest followed by issues relating to mental health then lastly issues on peaceful co-existence.

According to SSCAR (2015) the issues of Sex and Sexuality aims at equipping young adults with values, proper attitudes, skills and knowledge which enable them to “make informed decisions about their personal health and demonstrate health-seeking behavior in the community and wider environment, with particular attention to hygiene, sanitation, and prevalent diseases” (p. 37). As such adding the issues of sex and sexuality to Bible Knowledge curriculum as it is taught in other subjects like Life skills cannot be a minor achievement.

4.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented, analyzed and discussed the findings of the study that assessed the perception and experiences of teachers as they are implementing the current Bible Knowledge curriculum with contemporary issues added to it. This was done in relation to the three objectives, of which were assessing the experiences of teachers in implementing the changes made to Bible Knowledge curriculum; analyzing the challenges which teachers are facing in implementing the changes made in the curriculum and examining possible solutions for solving the challenges teachers are facing in implementing the curriculum. The findings indicates that some teachers are implementing very well the teaching of contemporary issues as it is adding relevance to global issues, easy to assess learning outcomes and wishes more relevant topics could be added to the curriculum such as mental health, abortion and entrepreneurship among others. Others feel it is a waste of time. However, the initiative should continue for relevance and moral development of students' behavior.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter is the conclusion of the whole thesis on how teachers are implementing the changes made to the current Bible Knowledge secondary school curriculum where contemporary issues have been added. The summary of the findings of this research will be presented at first to be followed by recommendations made by the study and lastly the areas for further study.

5.1 Summary of Major Study Findings

The study had three objectives of which its major findings are as follows:

The experiences teachers are having as they are implementing the Bible Knowledge curriculum indicates that there is a mixed perception towards the adding of contemporary issues. The majority of the teachers who participated in the study feel it is a good initiative as it is relevant for human survival, the route system of education is getting support and the learning outcomes are easily assessed. Few teachers who participated in the study feel there is curriculum overload and the topics are conflicting. However, the study established that the initiative is good and the curriculum should be reviewed further for the alignment to the goals of Malawi 2063 Agenda which aims at creating a landscape for global citizenship, developing entrepreneurship skills for the growing labor market, support for the route system of education and responding to the needs of learners and society in dealing with global issues.

However, the study has found that there are challenges teachers are experiencing towards the effective implementation of the curriculum. The following are the challenges that the study has uncovered: students' perception towards the subject; teachers own ideological understanding on emerging issues; inadequate teaching and learning resource; unequal distribution of teaching personnel in rural areas; and exam-oriented mindset.

After identifying the challenges, the study sought to establish possible solutions to the challenges. The study has unveiled the following as the possible solutions to the challenges identified a mindset change by teachers to focus on the objectives of teaching and learning, resource mobilization to support teaching and learning, monitoring the deployment of teaching personnel, and curriculum review.

5.2 Conclusion

The experiences and perception of some teachers towards the adding of contemporary issues to the Bible Knowledge curriculum have been known. It indicates that the initiative is very good and should be reviewed further. The study established that the majority of teachers feel the change is worthy because the initiative is relevant for human survival, assessment of learning outcomes, and offering of support for schools practicing the route system of education. Few teachers feel there is curriculum overload and perceives the content as conflicting. The teaching of Biblical content cannot be isolated to global issues. As such, to add relevance to the B/K curriculum, further review should be done to align it to the Malawi 2063 Agenda, to support schools practicing the route system of education and the development of ethical behavior for global citizenship in learners. Therefore, the changes made to the Bible Knowledge curriculum by adding contemporary issues is worth implementing and the initiative should continue.

5.3 Recommendations

The implications of this study are as follows:

- Cluster and school based CPD's should focus on helping teachers and school administrators adhere to the rationale of educational innovations. As a government policy, the adherence to Continuous Professional Development and other in- service trainings would help with collaboration for those teachers struggling to implement change due to educational innovations
- As part of resource mobilization cluster leaders, school administrators, school committees, Parents Teacher Associations and NGO is working with educational institutions should put their focus on resource mobilization to supplement government efforts in providing adequate teaching and learning resources.

Curriculum developers should consider integrate contemporary issues into every topic than placing them to the very end to remove the negative perception that they are insignificant.

5.4 Areas for Further Study

The study focuses on how Bible Knowledge teachers are implementing the current Bible Knowledge curriculum with additional content added to it. Even so, there can be further studies pertaining to Bible Knowledge curriculum by:

- Investigating how best teacher training colleges and universities can approach the teaching of B/K to achieve the Malawi 2063 Agenda.
- Analyze the possibility of reviewing the B/K curriculum to the level that the workload of biblical content is reduced to accommodate more topics on global issues.
- Assess the approaches innovators can employ to help teachers understand educational innovations better, implement the changes effectively as intended by innovators, which in return will achieve learning outcomes.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Letter of Introduction from NED

Telephone: +265 1 312 144

Fax:



Communications should be addressed to
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
EDUCATION DIVISION MANAGER (NORTH)
P.O. BOX 133

Ref No: 1/1

17th October 2024

To Whom It May Concern

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: Letter of Introduction: Ulemu Chimzimu

This letter serves to introduce Ulemu Chimzimu who is pursuing a Master of Education Teacher Education Programme at Mzuzu University.

She would like to collect data in selected schools in Mzimba North and Mzuzu City Districts for research purposes on the topic of her Master's Degree studies titled '**An Assessment of how Bible Knowledge Teachers are implementing the changes made to the outcome based Bible Knowledge curriculum in secondary schools in Malawi**'

The research findings will be solely used for education purposes only.

Please assist her accordingly.

Yours sincerely,



Sam-Hobbie Tembo

For: Education Division Manager (NED)



Appendix II: Research Ethics Approval Letter



MZUZU UNIVERSITY

DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH

Mzuzu University
Private Bag 201
Luwinga
Mzuzu 2
MALAWI
TEL: 01 320 722
FAX: 01 320 648

Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (Mzunirec)

Ref No: MZUNIREC/DOR/24/164

11/10/2024.

Ulemu Chimzimu,
Mzuzu University,
P/Bag 201,
Luwinga,
Mzuzu 2.

Email:
maibusa@gmail.com

Dear Ulemu,

**RESEARCH ETHICS AND REGULATORY APPROVAL AND PERMIT
FOR PROTOCOL REF NO: NO. MZUNIREC/DOR/24/164:
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CURRENT BIBLE KNOWLEDGE
SECONDARY CURRICULUM: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED SCHOOLS
IN NORTHERN EDUCATION DIVISION (NED)**

Having satisfied all the relevant ethical and regulatory requirements, I am pleased to inform you that the above referred research protocol has officially been approved. You are now permitted to proceed with its implementation. Should there be any amendments to the approved protocol in the course of implementing it, you shall be required to seek approval of such amendments before implementation of the same.

This approval is valid for one year from the date of issuance of this approval. If the study goes beyond one year, an annual approval for continuation shall be required to be sought from the Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) in a format that is available at the Secretariat. Once the study is finalized, you are required to furnish the Committee with a final report of the study.

The Committee reserves the right to carry out compliance inspection of this approved protocol at any time as may be deemed by it. As such, you are expected to properly maintain all study documents including consent forms.

Wishing you a successful implementation of your study.

Yours Sincerely,



Wanangwa K. Msowoya

MZUNIREC Secretariat

FOR: MZUNIREC

CHAIRPERSON



Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee

Directorate of Research

Mzuzu

University

P/Bag 201

Luwinga

Mzuzu 2

Email: mzunirec@mzuni.ac.mw

Appendix III: Request for data collection from Division

Mzuzu University
Private Bag 201
Luwinga, Mzuzu.
15 May 2024

The Education Division Manager
Northern Education Division
Post office Box 133
MZUZU

Dear Sir,

REQUESTING FOR DATA COLLECTION OF A RESEARCH

I am Ulemu Chimzimu, a Master of Education (Med) in Teacher Education student of Mzuzu University. My registration number is MEDTE 0322. As a partial fulfilment for the award of a Master of Education degree in Teacher Education, I am expected to conduct research. The topic of the research is; **An Assessment of how Bible Knowledge teachers are implementing the changes made to the Outcome Based Bible Knowledge Curriculum** in secondary schools in Malawi. The study will engage secondary school subject teachers and students of Bible Knowledge. May I kindly request your office to allow me to collect research data from some of the Community Day Secondary Schools within Northern Education Division in Mzimba district. I will be patiently waiting for your reply.

I shall be grateful if my letter meets your favorable consideration.

Yours faithfully,



Ulemu Chimzimu (Knee Mandevu)

Appendix IV: Request for data collection from schools

FROM: Ulemu Chimzimu, Mzuzu University, Private Bag 201, Luwinga, Mzuzu.

TO: The Head teacher, _____.

A REQUEST TO COLLECT DATA AT YOUR SCHOOL

I am ULEMU CHIMZIMU a postgraduate student at Mzuzu University pursuing a Master of Education in Teacher Education. I am carrying out a research study titled: **An assessment of how Bible Knowledge teachers have been implementing the changes made to the outcome-based Bible Knowledge curriculum in secondary schools in Malawi** as a partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award of the Master's Degree. I would like to ask for permission to conduct this research among Bible Knowledge teachers and students at your school. The study will be guided by the following objectives: Find out if teachers are implementing the changes made in B/K curriculum; Identify possible reasons why teachers are not implementing the changes made in the curriculum; Establish possible ways of helping teachers to implement the changes in B/K curriculum.

I would like to observe a lesson from a Bible Knowledge teacher, conduct interviews with the Bible Knowledge teacher and there after conduct a focus group discussion with students studying Bible Knowledge at your school. The proceeding of the interviews will be voice-recorded. My research study will benefit your school in the sense that, the responses from the Bible Knowledge teachers and students will contribute to an understanding of how the implementation of the additional content added to the Bible Knowledge outcome-based curriculum is taking place, find mitigation measures to minimize the challenges facing the implementation to improve teaching and learning for better academic results. If you allow your school to take part in the study, I would like to make it clear that your participation is voluntary, no negative consequences will result from your participation and all information will be treated with confidentiality. In order to protect your confidentiality, all names will be fictions. I will provide you a summary of my research results upon completing if you wish to. If you may require further information about my research study, you may contact my supervisor.

Attached are letters of introduction from Mzuzu University, Research Ethics Committee and Northern Education Division (NED).

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ulemu Chimzimu', is placed over a light blue rectangular background.

Ulemu Chimzimu

Cell No: 0998523700/ 0888378132

Maibusa@gmail.com

Appendix V: Informed consent for Bible Knowledge Teachers

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I,, consent to participate in this study conducted by Ulemu Chimzimu, on assessing how Bible Knowledge teachers have been implementing the additional content added on an outcome-based Bible Knowledge curriculum in Malawi secondary schools. I realize that no negative consequence will arise from my participation in this study, and that the study is being conducted for purposes of improving the teaching and learning of Bible Knowledge. I give permission for the material to be used for research only. I participate voluntarily and understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time. I further consent to be interviewed and observed while teaching Bible Knowledge in class as part of the study. I also understand that I have the right to review the notes made during before these are used for analysis if I choose so. I can delete or amend any material or retract or revise any of my remarks. Everything I say will be kept confidential by the interviewer. I will only be identified by a pseudonym in the research report. In addition, any person I refer to in the interview and the name of the school will be kept confidential. Signature: _____ Date:

Appendix: VI

INSTRUMENT 1:

LESSON OBSERVATION FORM FOR BIBLE-KNOWLEDGE LESSONS

SECTION A: Demographic data

School:

Teacher's name (Optional)

Gender:

Teaching Experience:

Class: Number of learners in class.....

Subject:

Lesson duration: From.....to:

Date of lesson observation:

SECTION B: Planning and preparation

Item	Comment
1. Availability of schemes and records of work (detailed and up to date)	
2. Nature of the schemes and records of work (incorporated the additional content added in the Bible-Knowledge Syllabus)	
3. Availability of lesson plan (detailed with all necessary components, easy to follow, lesson topic related to topics in the scheme of work)	
4. Nature of the lesson plan (incorporated the additional content added in the Bible-Knowledge Syllabus)	
5. Success criteria in the Lesson plan (clear and SMART)	
6. teaching and learning resources in the lesson plan (relevant, legible, visible to all students, interesting and arousing students' interest, big enough for every student to see)	
7. developmental steps in the lesson plan (logical sequence, corresponding with success criteria, reflecting the methods suggested in the activities of the specific topic in the Bible-Knowledge Syllabus)	
8. evaluation procedures (questions relevant to the topic, related to daily lives, ask students	

what they know in relation to the new content taught)	
---	--

SECTION C: Lesson Presentation

Question/Item	Comments
Introduction	
9. introduction of the lesson (relevant to the lesson topic, brief, interesting, lesson outcomes highlighted)	
Developmental Steps	
10. Activities of the lesson (instructions for the activities clear, related and relevant to the lesson topic. Addressing critical issues in the subject, sequenced simple to complex)	
11. Content (challenging enough to enable the students interact well with the physical world, incorporate the additional content added to the Bible-Knowledge Syllabus)	
12. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods (participatory, appropriate, varied, effective, motivating, reinforcing acquisition of knowledge, skills and positive attitudes)	
13. Availability of teaching and learning resources (adequate, effectively used, promoting learning, appropriately used and promoting learning)	
14. Classroom interaction (students' participation in group, pair and class activities)	
15. Assessment strategies (practical, students applying what they have learnt to their everyday lives, used to improve learning)	
16. Conclusion (summarizes the lesson, assesses the attainment of the lesson outcomes, promotes further learning of topics in Bible Knowledge)	

General Comment:

Appendix: VII

INSTRUMENT 3: FOLLOW- UP POST-LESSON OBSERVATION TEACHER INTERVIEW

Section A: Demographic data

School:.....Class..... Number of learners:.....

Class.....

Teacher's name:Gender:.....

Teaching Experience:

Teaching experience in Bible-Knowledge:

Examples of probing questions to be asked to establish what teachers 'actually do' in the lesson observed

1. I want to get a clearer picture of your lesson you have just taught your learners. Please tell me about it, what was happening in the lesson?
2. Tell me how you addressed the new content in the Bible-Knowledge Syllabus following in your lesson?
3. Please explain how you used your teaching and learning materials and resources in your lesson, how did they help you to teach the lesson and your learners to learn what you wanted them to?
4. Let us talk about the teaching and learning method that you used in the lesson.
 - (a) What teaching method did you use in the lesson?
 - (b) Why did you use those methods?
 - (c) How did those methods help your learners to learn what you wanted them to?
5. How did you know if learners understood what you taught them in the lesson?
6. Would you say that you reached the objectives of the lesson? Explain.
7. What are the things you liked about your lesson and the things you did not like about it.
8. Any other comment on your lesson which you taught today?

Thank you for your time and thoughts about the lesson.

Appendix: VIII - INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR BIBLE KNOWLEDGE TEACHER - PRE-OBSERVATION INTEVIEW

My name is Ulemu Chimzimu. I am a Master of education student in teacher education (MEDTE) at Mzuzu University, Mzuzu, Malawi. As a requirement of this course, I am undertaking a research project to assess how Bible Knowledge teachers are implementing the additional content added to an outcome-based history curriculum in Malawi secondary schools. Please feel free to answer the questions as frankly as possible. Responses to these questions will be treated confidentially. Do not write your name anywhere on this paper. Name of the school.....

• Section A: (biographical data)

Date: _____

District: _____

Qualification: _____

Experience: _____

School: _____

Pseudonym: _____

Sex: _____

Section B

1. What are the notable changes introduced to the B/K Curriculum?
2. What is your view on the changes introduced to the B/K Curriculum?
3. Of these changes, which of them have you been implementing and why?
4. Why have you not implemented the other changes?
5. The reason why the changes were made to the curriculum was to meet the needs of society. Do you think the curriculum has achieved this objective? Please explain your answer
6. What do you think can be done further to improve the curriculum to meet the needs of society?

7. What challenges do you face when implementing the new curriculum?

Appendix: X--Interview Guide for Bible Knowledge Students (Focus group interviews)

My name is Ulemu Chimzimu. I am a Master of education student in teacher education (MEDTE) at Mzuzu University, Mzuzu, Malawi. As a requirement of this course, I am undertaking a research project to assess how Bible Knowledge teachers are implementing the additional content added to an outcome-based history curriculum in Malawi secondary schools. Please feel free to answer the questions as frankly as possible. Responses to these questions will be treated confidentially. Do not write your name anywhere on this paper. Name of the school.....

- Interview guide on an assessment of how Bible Knowledge teachers have been implementing the additional content added to the Bible Knowledge outcome-based curriculum

- Section A. (biographical data)

Date: _____

District: _____

School: _____

Pseudonym: _____

Sex: _____

Section B

1. Are you aware that the additional content has been added to your curriculum? (if the answer is Yes go to question...)
2. How did you come to realize that new content has been added?
3. The new syllabus has added the following topics: Environmental degradation, moral decay, corruption, drug and substance abuse, HIV and AIDS, STIs, violence and juvenile delinquency. Which of these topics has your teacher taught so far? (if the answer is no go to questions...)

4. The topics that you have learnt so far, how would you describe them?
5. What do you think is the importance of having them in the syllabus?

Section C: Please answer your questions in the spaces provided

6. How have the adding of the biblical content been helpful to you in dealing with daily challenges?

7. Which of the listed topics influenced your life most? (Please explain your answer)

- a. Environmental Degradation
- b. Moral decay
- c. Corruption
- d. Drug and substance abuse
- e. HIV and AIDS, STIs
- f. Violence and juvenile delinquency

8. Which of this additional content has been examined during examinations?

- a. Environmental degradation
- b. Moral decay
- c. Corruption
- d. Drug and substance abuse
- e. HIV and AIDS, STIs
- f. Violence and juvenile delinquency

9. Do you have any burning issues you would wish to be added to the curriculum to meet the needs of the youth in society? (Please explain your answer)

Appendix: IX: Malawi School Certificate Examination (MSCE)

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED FROM THE ADDITIONAL CONTENT	REMARKS
2017		
2018		
2019		
2020		
2021		
2022		
2023		
2024		