

“To Serve and not to be Served”: The Mission of the Catholic Church through Education in Zambian Church History: A Narrative of James Spaita in the Public Sphere, 1960–2014

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Abstract

This article revisits Zambian church history in order to show the interconnectedness of the mission of the Catholic Church through education and individual narratives of the clergy in the public sphere. This is done through the example of James Spaita. Informed by an interpretative phenomenological study that drew on interviews and content analysis, and in conversation with the Catholic Social Teachings (CST), the article advances that the contributions of James Spaita to church history were largely through education, advocacy and social justice—as shaped by his positionality as an indigenous priest, educator and church leader, and therefore a product of the Catholic Church’s context. Spaita’s narrative also signifies the growing public role and the mission of the Catholic Church in post-independence Zambia, as underpinned by social teachings of the Catholic Church. While discourses of Catholic Church history in Zambia were preoccupied with historicising missionary work and Catholic education (as part of the mission of the church) at the structural level, the article argues that the mission of the Catholic Church through education was also largely shaped by trajectories of the clergy in postcolonial and modern times.

Keywords: Catholic Church history; mission; Catholic education; Catholic social teachings; public sphere; James Spaita

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Introduction

In this article, the following research question is explored: How did James Spaita contribute to the mission of the Catholic Church through education in Zambian church history in the public sphere? The research question was premised on the fact that, despite the provision of education being at the centre of the mission of the Catholic Church, and the popularity of Catholic education in Zambia, individual trajectories of the actors in this history were neglected in scholarship. For example, Cardinal Pengo observed that the main task of the Catholic Church in Africa since inception has been preaching the Gospel, with the quest for deeper evangelisation becoming the foci in the recent past (Pengo 2011). This has been accompanied by the emphasis and realisation that the most important resource in evangelisation after the grace of Christ, is the people (Pengo 2011). In fulfilling this mission, the Catholic Church in Africa adopted numerous strategies, the provision of education being the widely popularised tool of conversion.

In Zambia, the school was part of the evangelising mission of the Catholic Church since the very arrival of the Christian missionaries. For example, Carmody (2001) observed that at the commencement of missionary work in Zambia, the Jesuits in their Zambezi Mission attributed a very significant role to the school in the conversion process. Other scholars like Henkel (1989) also acknowledged the prominent role of the school in the mission of the Catholic Church. Since then, the Catholic Church came to be associated with the quality provision of education and considered as a longstanding partner of the state in the country (Carmody 2015). Despite this, the focus of Zambian Catholic history has been on the church and the missionary groups (Hinfelaar 2004; Murphy 2003) while scholarship on the mission of the Catholic Church through education has been preoccupied with historicising the involvement of the Catholic Church in education provision (Carmody 2015), including the Catholic Church's recent expansion of educational provision to higher education (Mwale and Simuchimba 2018). The result of this has been the growing popularity of scholarship on Zambian church history that has tended to focus on the structural level of the Catholic Church's engagement, to the neglect of the individual actors in the mission of the Catholic Church through education. For example, while Catholic Church history was closely associated with quality education provision, the individual contributions to this narrative were a neglected aspect. This has entailed a gap in the ways the mission of the Catholic Church through education in Zambia had been shaped by personal contributions.

This article, therefore, tracks the contributions of a Catholic priest, teacher and advocate for education in the mission of the Catholic Church as exemplified in James Mwewa Spaita's narrative in the public sphere. The article argues that while discourses of church history in Zambia were preoccupied with historicising missionary work and Catholic education, the mission of the Catholic Church through education was also largely shaped by trajectories of the clergy in post-colonial and modern times. By so doing, the article adds the perspective of the contributions of individual Catholic clergy to shaping the country's church history.

By focusing on Spaita, the article does not claim that he was the only one who contributed to the mission of the Catholic Church through education, as other personalities such as Archbishop Merdado Mazombwe, Fr. Peter Lwaminda and Bishop Paul Duffy, among others, were identified as having shaped Catholic education in Zambia. The article focuses on James Spaita for purposes of exemplifying how individual trajectories revealed the broader struggles and successes in the mission of the Catholic Church in and through education in postcolonial times. Spaita's narrative was also deemed significant because he was among the first few Zambians to be ordained to the priesthood and consequently the first to join the education department of the Catholic Church. He was, therefore, an example of the indigenisation and public role interface of the mission of the Catholic Church in postcolonial Zambia. Additionally, Spaita was largely renowned for social justice in other domains within the public sphere, to the exclusion of his contributions in the mission of the Catholic Church through education. For example, in 2012, he was awarded a medal of distinguished service and a Freedom Fighters' Independence Medal during the country's Golden Jubilee celebrations. As such, his contributions to the mission of the Catholic Church through education remained obscured in the general discourses of social justice. The article unfolds by highlighting the analytical lens, methods and the context, before delving into Spaita's biography and making meaning of his contributions to the mission of the Catholic Church from a Catholic Social Teachings (CST) perspective.

Analytical Framework

The article is broadly informed by Derrick Layder's adaptive theory (1998) that provided for learning from existing theories and generating insights from the emerging field data. As such, the discourse of James Spaita's contributions to the mission of the Catholic Church through education in the public sphere in Zambian Church history is framed in the broader social teachings of the Catholic Church. As noted by Himchak (2005, 2), social justice is at the heart of the social teachings and social services in the Catholic Church. By this, the Catholic Church has used teachings on social justice as an essential framework for the implementation of its social ministries throughout the world. The CST is understood as representing the teachings of the Old and New Testament and the traditions of the Catholic Church (DeBerri et al. 2003). The social teachings of the Catholic Church consist of seven major themes, which include: the life and dignity of the human person; call to family; community and participation; rights and responsibilities; option for the poor, the vulnerable and people at risks; the dignity of work and the rights of workers; and solidarity and care for God's creation (Pope John Paul II, Catechism of the Catholic Church 1994; Komakoma 2003).

Although the roots of CST could be traced to the writings of Catholic thinkers such as St Thomas Aquinas and St Augustine of Hippo, its foundations are widely considered to have been laid by Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum* (Rights and Duties of Capital and Labour), which defended the rights of workers and condemned both capitalism and socialism (MacBriain 1987, 434). Therefore, the

principles of CST, though in most cases far older in origin, first began to be combined together into a system in the late nineteenth century and were continually developed through observation, analysis and action to guide Catholics and Christians in the responses to social problems (Kizito and Juma 2015). Popes after Leo XIII have added to and developed the Catholic Church's body of social teaching, principally through the medium of encyclical letters. As such, modern CST embody social principles and moral teachings that are articulated in the papal, conciliar, and other official documents issued since the late nineteenth century, and deal with the economic, political, and social order. As Henriot (2001) noted, CST form the body of the social wisdom, about human individuals in society and about the structures of that society that enable humanity to come to its fullness, that can be found in scripture, writings of theologians, documents of churches, and witness of just persons and communities. CST became the lens through which to understand and explain the contributions of Spaita because the Catholic identity could not be detached from his public engagement in the mission of the Catholic Church through education. In addition, the mission of the Catholic Church through education was largely premised on CST.

Methods

The article is informed by insights from a study that was situated in the interpretivist tradition and adopted qualitative methods (Bryman 2004; Creswell 2007). In particular, the study adopted an interpretive phenomenological approach (Moustakas 1994; Padilla-Díaz 2015; Van Manen 1990) in which the unit of analysis was purposively chosen based on its relevance to the study (Mason 2002). The study aimed to provide an in-depth self-understanding on the growth of the Catholic education system in postcolonial Zambia, by also paying attention to biographical contributions of the Catholic clergy to the mission of the Catholic Church through education in the country's Catholic Church history. The inquiry was ignited by the recent growth of the mission of the Catholic Church through education, specifically the expansion of the Catholic education system evidenced by the establishment of the Zambia Catholic University (ZCU) in postcolonial times.

The study drew on interviews with purposively chosen Catholic Church and Catholic education representatives at the Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops (ZCCB) Secretariat and Zambia Catholic University (ZCU) management and student representatives. Based on Polkinghorne's (1989) recommendation that researchers interview five to 25 individuals in phenomenological research, eight participants from the Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops' (ZCCB) education department and ZCU were included in the study for face-to-face interviews. These included the ZCCB education department representative, the ZCU management representatives, longest serving lecturers at ZCU, and student representatives, herein identified with letters of the Alphabet from H to O.

The interviews were conducted at two sites (ZCCB in Lusaka and ZCU in Kalulushi, on the Copperbelt) over a period of three months in 2018 (August, September, and

October). The last interviews were conducted between May and June in 2019. The ZCCB education department was targeted because it acts as a liaison between the Ministries of Higher Education and General Education and Catholic educational facilities, represents the ZCCB on all educational fora, promotes Catholic ethos in the learning institutions and coordinates the Catholic Church's commitment to providing quality education based on gospel values (ZCCB 2016). ZCU was chosen not only because it was a symbol of the expanded mission of the Catholic Church in education, but also an institution of higher learning that was operated by the ZCCB and collectively owned by the Catholics.

The interviews were supplemented by document analysis. Documents such as Catholic educational policies and archival material in the form of minutes of plenary Bishop Conference meetings, pastoral letters on education, correspondences, annual reports, photos and newspaper articles in the ZCCB archives were analysed. The guidelines on quality control formulated by Scott (1990) for handling documentary sources (authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning) also informed the use of documents, which were chosen on the basis of availability.

Data were inductively analysed through the description of the phenomenon and significant statements, horizontalisation and the development of clusters of meaning through textural and structural descriptions of Spaita's contributions to the Catholic education system (Creswell 2007). This involved the generation and application of codes to the data and the identification, analysis, and reporting of patterns. The descriptions and themes were then interpreted in light of the CST and in turn constructed into patterns of meaning on the mission of the Catholic Church through education in Zambian church history in postcolonial times.

Ethical considerations were also taken into account. For example, approval and ethical clearance were obtained from the University of Zambia (the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee). Permission from the ZCCB and ZCU was also sought for purposes of gaining access to their institutions and conducting the study. Suffice to note that ethical issues around privacy, informed consent, anonymity, secrecy, being truthful and the desirability of the research issues (Blaxter, Hughes, and Tight 2006, 158) were adhered to.

Contextualisation of the Mission of the Catholic Church through Education in Zambia

The contributions of Spaita to the mission of the Catholic Church through education were situated within a particular context. The core mandate of the Catholic Church is to evangelise and bring the Good news to the people of Zambia and the whole of humanity (ZCCB 2016). Through the provision of education, the mission of the Catholic Church is to foster the integral development of the whole person as spelt out in the Second Vatican Council document "Declaration on Christian Education" (Zambia Episcopal

Conference [ZEC] 2004). By this, Catholic education was about bringing the gospel of Jesus Christ into the lives of the people. According to the Zambian Catholic bishops, education in a very special way is a concern for the Catholic Church; hence the Catholic Church's involvement in education goes back to the beginning of its history (ZEC 2004). Thus, in the 125 years of Catholic existence in Zambia, the Catholic Church had endeavoured to offer a value-based education (Kabeta 2017) and made an indelible footprint on Zambia's spiritual, social, cultural, economic and political development through the provision of education, health and vocational services among the people (ZCCB 2016). Despite these gains, the Catholic Church was aware of various challenges pertaining to illiteracy, poverty, child labour, child marriages, girl child early pregnancies, as well as child sexual abuse that continued to characterise the Zambian society (Kabeta 2017).

The mission of the Catholic Church in education was informed by Catholic principles on education as enshrined in the Catholic policy documents such as the 1965 *Gravissimum Educationis* (Pope P. VI. 1965, Declaration on Christian Education) that spells out Catholic principles on education; the 1990 *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (*Ecclesiae E Corde*. 1990) which provides an overview for Catholic universities, and the 2015 World Congress on Catholic education that gives new stimulus to the Catholic Church's involvement in the field of education.

Apart from Catholic Church policy documents, the mission of the Catholic Church through education was also largely shaped by the existing state educational policies and regulations in addition to the country's constitution and international treaties and protocols to which the country is a signatory. "In our education system, we align ourselves more with the policies of the Ministry of Education" (Participant H). The major national educational policies include the 1977 *Educational Reforms*, whose focus was on the development of the whole person (Kelly 1999). At independence, the country's educational aspirations were centred on overhauling the whole system to meet the needs of the newly independent Zambia.

The 1977 educational reform policies were replaced by the policies of the 1990s. These were "Focus on Learning" (1992) and "Educating our Future" (1996), based on relevance, diversity and flexibility and Zambia's liberal democratic values, respectively (Ministry of Education 1996, 1). In 2013, the government developed a new school curriculum, the *Zambia Education Curriculum Framework*, to enable learners to choose a career path and guide the country on the preferred type of education for the nation (*Zambia National Information Service News*, 13 February 2013). The new education curriculum framework mainly focuses on areas such as the incorporation of current areas of social, economic, and technological developments in the curriculum and the opening of two career pathways at secondary school level (academic and vocational pathways).

The Catholic Church was also guided by other national policy documents such as the Vision 2030 and the national development plans, including the Higher Education Act (Act No. 4 of 2013), which until 2013 was the University Act of 1999, that regulates university education, stipulates the procedures and regulations of private higher education institutions and highlights the functions of providers of higher education (Higher Education Act, No. 4 of 2013, 106–7). Vision 2030 (2006–2030) is Zambia’s first ever long-term plan expressing the country’s aspirations of being a prosperous middle-income country by the year 2030. It embodies values of socio-economic justice underpinned by the principles of gender-responsive sustainable development, democracy, respect for human rights, good traditional and family values, positive attitude towards work, peaceful co-existence, and private-public partnerships (GRZ 2006, 7).

The international policies and pieces of legislation relating to education included article 26 of the Universal Declaration on Human rights that states that “everyone has a right to education and it shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” (ZEC 2004). The Catholic Church was also informed by the ideals of the Dakar 2000 World education forum and the millennium development goals anchored on “ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, had access to complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality and achieved universal primary education by 2015 respectively” (ZEC 2004). At the same time, the Catholic Church reaffirmed the vision of the Jometien 1990 world declaration on education for all, supported by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the Convention of the Rights of the Child that all children, young people and adults had the right to benefit from an education that met their basic learning needs in the best and fullest sense of the term (ZEC 2004). It was, therefore, in this context that Spaita’s contributions to the mission of the Catholic Church through education were made in Zambia.

The Making of Spaita as an Indigenous Priest, Educator and Church leader in Zambian Catholic Church History

James Mwewa Spaita¹ was born on 8 April 1934 in Bombwe village in the Samfya district, Luapula Province. His father, Cryprian Mweni Mponda, and mother, Margaret Muleba Wansenga, had eight children. Spaita was the second-born child and had six brothers and one sister. In a context where tradition assigned gender roles, Spaita and his brothers could assist their mother with drawing water, cleaning dishes and cooking. His father was recruited to work in the mines under the migrant labour system (in which

1 This account of Spaita’s life was retrieved from his autobiography and supplemented by archival materials from the Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops archives in Lusaka and interviews.

he went to work in the mines every six months) and only quit when his children were old enough to go school (Spaita 2012).

The nearest mission station to Spaita's village was Lubwe (St Joseph's) that was founded in 1905 by the White Fathers. Lubwe Mission also had a community of the missionary sisters of Our Lady of Africa (White Sisters). At the age of eight years, Spaita became an altar boy and enrolled as a catechumen at Lubwe Mission. It was during these years of catechumen that the idea of becoming a priest began and became stronger after baptism (when he chose the name of *Yakobo* [James]) in 1942. He also enrolled in Sub A (an equivalent of pre-school) that was run by the White Sisters. After two years of schooling in Sub A, he moved to standard one to the school ran by the White Fathers.

He went to Lubushi Minor Seminary for his upper primary education. Hinfelaar (2004, 118) notes that the White Fathers opened a seminary in 1910 at Chilubula Mission with the aim of selecting and preparing young men for the priesthood and by 1927, the institution had reached the secondary level and transferred to Lubushi in 1928. Lubushi became a minor seminary in 1930 and was the only place in Bangweulu Vicariate that served boys who intended to become priests. Spaita's departure for Lubushi from Lubwe was on 16 October 1946.

My Father said: "My son, you have decided to go to the seminary and to become a priest, you go with my blessing. If you decide to come back, you are welcome. If you die while there, you were going to die even here at home. We shall not complain ... '*Cafwa mu kwenda, cafwa pa bwikele*'." (Spaita 2012, 59)

Fr. Frederick Reuter and the parish community prepared the big metal boat (commonly known as St Joseph) with six paddlers to take Spaita, together with Ignatio Mwanambale, Thomas Kalasa, Stephen Nkoma Panshi, Benedicto Matafwali and Clavero Mulesu from the shore of Lake Chifunabuli (in front of Spaita's father house) to Lubushi.

From Lubushi Minor Seminary, Spaita proceeded to Kachebere Major Seminary in Malawi in 1953 and was ordained as a priest on 9 September 1962 (Hinfelaar 2004). The ordination took place in the open at Lubwe Boy's School, now Chifunabuli, and was attended by chiefs such as Mwewa, Chitembo, Mwansakombe, Mbulu, Mulongwe, Kasoma Bangweulu and government officials from the then Fort Rosebery.

After ordination, Spaita's first appointment was to Lufubu Mission (one of the old missions opened in 1930).

The first high mass at Bombwe village took place at the very place where our new home is. One of my special joys was the presence of my parents. Both of them were sickly and I was worried they might not be there for my ordination. They were there and they

lived on till they saw me as Bishop and Archbishop. My father died at the age of 92 and my mother at the age of 87. (Spaita 2012, 62)

After nine months at Lufubu, Spaita was appointed as a teacher at Charles Lwanga Seminary at Bahati where he taught from 1963 to 1965 (Zambia Church Press Release 1974). Charles Lwanga Seminary began as a primary school and became a secondary school some years later. “As a teacher, he [Spaita] was offering English, Mathematics and Geography. ... He was also the Bursar of the school and during weekends, he used to say mass in the surrounding centres” (Participant I). It was also while at Bahati Minor Seminary that Spaita was sent to Ireland (University College Dublin) to follow a diploma course in education that was offered by the Irish Government to countries like Zambia, whose focus was on training secondary school teachers and lecturers in colleges. “My bishop had in mind to prepare a Zambian to take over as education secretary in the diocese” (Spaita 2012, 65).

Upon completion of the course, Spaita did some pastoral work in Brixton, London before his return to Mansa to begin work as education secretary.

During this time, Fathers O’Riodan and Flynn were at the Catholic Secretariat running both the secretariat and the department of Education while Fathers Emile Carrier and Piere Gouin were in charge of the Education Department in Mansa. I was therefore the first Zambian priest to join this important field of education. (Spaita 2012, 66)

One participant also remarked that:

He [Spaita] was the first Zambian priest to join the education department because at that time the department had no Zambian priest and in terms of orientation to education, he was passionate about that. ... Education was always part of his conversations. (Participant H)

In 1974, Spaita was appointed Bishop of Mansa and consecrated bishop on 28 April when Bishop Elias Mutale (the then Bishop of Mansa) was appointed Archbishop of Kasama (Zambia Church Press Release 1974). “During his tenure of office, the Bishop promoted local vocations to priesthood and religious life and the religious congregation called the Sisters of Mercy is directly linked to him” (Participant I). For example, when the Congo pedicle road was no longer safe and the Luapula River overflowed its banks, seminarians were flown to ensure their safety. With the shortage of sisters in the diocese, as nearly all the sisters in the missionary congregations were getting old and few in number, Spaita advocated looking for vocations within the diocese. The result was the recruitment of girls for a diocesan congregation giving birth to Sisters of Mercy and the initiation of the charisma “compassion” for the Sisters of Mercy (Diocese of Mansa Communication Office 2017, 6). He also started the development of the Lutanda Catholic radio station that was opened on 24 May 2016.

In December 1990, Pope Paul II appointed Spaita as the Archbishop of Kasama, taking over from Archbishop Elias Mutale who died in a road traffic accident in February 1990 in Lusaka (Zambia News Agency 1990, 1). Seven years later (1997), Spaita developed diabetes that was only controlled after seven years to enable him to resume work. His most difficult years of life were the last six years before retirement.

These were years of trials and difficulties. I was attacked by various people through public media and letters that were written in very bad language. I began to suffer from a terrible headache. For several days, I thought I was going to collapse and die. Several months before the canonical age of retirement (75 years), I wrote to the Pope tendering my resignation as Archbishop of Kasama. The resignation was accepted, and Mgr. Ignatius Mwebe was appointed apostolic administrator to take over from me. (Spaita 2012, 87–88)

Spaita chose to retire at Chilubula parish, the place where the first Bishop (Joseph Dupont) is buried and where the first Zambian priest in Bangweulu Vicariate came from.

On 30 May 2009, the priests, sisters and the faithful of Chilubula gave me a thunderous welcome. They carried me on a *machila*. I was ceremoniously taken to my new home, the former convent of the White Sisters. Very symbolic, I began with them as a little boy at Sub A and was taught by them how to serve mass in Latin. Here I am in their former home as an old man. They have been my parents all my life. (Spaita 2012, 88)

After settling, Spaita offered to be the curate in the parish, Chaplain at St Fidelis hospital and the Noviate of the Sisters of the Child Jesus.

He died in 2014 at the age of 80 after suffering a stroke. A year after his burial, Paramount Chief Chitimukulu of the Bemba-speaking people and Kasama's Archbishop, Ignatius Chama, celebrated the life of Archbishop Spaita in a traditional ceremony that resonated with the indigenisation and inculturation of the faith in Zambia. In Bemba indigenous culture, the death of a chief is characterised by elaborate funeral procedures whose cultural and traditional significance spanned centuries (Mwewa 1997). Thus, following the long Bemba tradition, the funeral rite of Archbishop Spaita was held by the act of traditional, religious and political leaders returning to his original diocese in Mansa, where they held a special mass characterised by traditional dances and poems performed by Chief Mwamba's Royal singers and orators (Kamwenda 2015). This ceremony was traced to the period when the then first bishop of Bangweulu Vicariate, Bishop Joseph Dupont, temporarily reigned as a regent and protector of the kingdom that resulted in all consequent Catholic bishops being traditionally regarded as co-operators of the Bemba chiefs through giving advice and counsel when called upon (Kamwenda 2015).

Spaita's Contributions to the Mission of the Catholic Church through Education in Zambian Church History

All participants in the study mentioned Spaita as one of the Catholic personalities that had contributed to the mission of the Catholic Church through education. As a priest, educator and church leader, Spaita contributed to education in the northern part of Zambia and the national education trajectory. These contributions ranged from spelling out the nature of education that was deemed relevant for the country, widening access to primary, secondary and higher education, critiquing state policies, advocating for government funding and the redress of the demand for higher education and social justice.

Holistic Quality Education

To start with, Spaita advocated for the holistic nature of education for the country by emphasising that genuine education needed to promote respect for culture, tradition and other values of love, truth, wholeness, justice and freedom. This was because:

... much of Zambia's education had become textbook-centred and oriented towards passing examinations ... the value of a person could not be measured in terms of examinations passed or the position one holds in society ... learning for certification's sake rather than for life was not enough. (Spaita interview with the *Post Newspaper* 26 August 2004)

By this, Spaita advocated for the kind of education that addressed the whole person in terms of the aesthetic, creative, critical, emotional, intellectual, moral, physical, political, social and spiritual development. This was to be accompanied by skills development. These sentiments on the need for holistic education in Zambia were related to the kind of education that was envisioned in the 1996 policy document on education (Ministry of Education 1996). The advocacy for holistic education also resonated with the Catholic principles on education that fostered holistic education (Pope P. VI. 1965, *Gravissimum Educationis*: Declaration on Catholic Education). For example, the 1991 Zambia Episcopal Conference plenary meetings observed that holistic education that involved learners and teachers in school projects inculcated a sense of value, sense of responsibility and aesthetic appreciation (Banda Project Director Zambia Education Projects Implementation Unit Report to the Bishops 13 December 1991). One participant in the study also emphasised that:

... we tailor our education to teach the whole person or simply what we can call holistic or integral education. We pass on that educational skill which will enable our students to really become mature citizens who are adjusted and with responsibility not just within the immediate nuclear family but beyond so that they are able to become citizens who will be leaders, responsible and accountable and at the same time helpful to the nation. (Participant H)

While Spaita's advocacy for quality holistic education could easily be identified with the Catholic teachings on education, it is probable that this perspective could not be detached from his own educational background. As a product of Catholic mission education and a teacher in a Catholic mission school, Spaita experienced what holistic education entailed for the greater part of his life. For example, he recalled how intense and fulfilling the liturgical life was during his days at Lubushi, and how as a student, he was involved in hunting, fishing, swimming, monthly picnics and sport (which was compulsory) (Spaita 2012). Having served as a teacher and bursar at Charles Lwanga Seminary from 1963 to 1965, Spaita could also have been shaped by the markers of teachers in Catholic schools as the Catholic school depends on its teachers for the accomplishment of its programmes (Pope P. VI. 1965, *Gravissimum Educationis: Declaration on Christian Education* 1965).

Widening Access to Primary and Secondary Education

Spaita also stood for access to education across the education system. This began soon after his appointment as education secretary where he was part of Kenneth Kaunda's education expansion programme. Having become the education secretary in 1966, two years after Zambia's independence, Spaita's appointment coincided with Kenneth Kaunda's government's ambitious programmes of educating the nation. As such, Spaita supported the programme of building primary and secondary schools in the country through the recruitment of teachers from abroad for secondary schools, many of whom came from the United Kingdom, Ireland and India under the Lay Mission Association of Teachers Conditions (Spaita 2012). Spaita's actions in teacher recruitment and support for the expansion of the education system therefore signified the demands and needs of the moment in which he exhibited the desire to serve others. This is because, soon after independence, national aspirations were anchored on educational expansion and meeting the human capital demand (Kelly 1991).

Apart from teacher recruitment, Spaita without hesitation took back some schools from the government to foster Catholic education in the country and support state provision of education. This was because after independence, the state desired to control the educational system and thus the Catholic agents, like many Protestant groups, handed over their primary schools to the central government in 1973 (Carmody 2010).

One of the major decisions I made was to get back some of the Catholic schools which were taken over by the Government ... at that time churches were asked by government to take back their schools. The Catholic bishops decided that those dioceses ready to take them back could go ahead. Archdiocese of Kasama went ahead and took back only those schools which were on mission property, and the schools were handed back to the Church on 27 June 1997. (Spaita 2012, 79)

The result was the running of primary and secondary schools by the Catholic Church once again, a decision that received criticism on the one hand and support on the other. Spaita insisted that education was key. As such, he was strongly compelled to get some

of the Catholic schools. This stance on education was largely anchored in the dignity of the human person, the right to education and option for the poor. For example, the second Vatican Council Declaration on Christian education, *Gravissimum Educationis* (Pope P. VI. 1965), points out that everyone has an inalienable right to an education that is in keeping with their ultimate goal, ability, sex and the culture and tradition of their country. By repossessing the Catholic schools, Spaita contributed to ensuring that the Catholic Church continued to be a state partner in the provision of education, thereby enabling the Catholic Church to continue promoting holistic education through Catholic educational institutions.

Spaita also advocated for the development of a major seminary in northern Zambia in order to address the shortage of priests and widen access to education to those who had intentions of becoming priests. This translated into turning Bahati Minor Seminary into a secondary school. At the time of his appointment as Bishop of Mansa, Bahati Minor Seminary had classes up to Grade 9 (Junior secondary) and for senior secondary education, the boys went to Lubushi. Therefore, Bahati became a full secondary school and the diocese could send more students to the major seminary. This resonated with the CST on human dignity and Catholic teachings on education as a human right that was to be accessible to all (ZEC 2004). While the development of the major seminary was closely related to his positionality as a priest, educator and church leader, it also signified his efforts to contribute to the Catholic Church through education by striving to serve those who had intentions of becoming priests. Having had to go to Lubushi (the only minor seminary), and later to Kachebere Major Seminary, Spaita might have well appreciated the need for the availability of a major seminary in the area.

Increasing Access to Higher Education

Spaita was further supportive of the need to widen access to higher education in a context that had few higher education institutions and a high demand for higher education (Participant N). For instance, Spaita offered St Mary's High school to be turned into an institution of higher learning in Mbala, northern Zambia. Consequently, the permanent education secretary in the Ministry of Education commended the Catholic Church for demonstrating true partnership in improving the education standards in the country. A technical team to ascertain the possibility of St Mary's High School's upgrade was appointed, whose preliminary report was presented to the President (*Lusaka Times*, 7 October 2008). Consequently, St Mary's transformed into a college and was "earmarked for sciences and mathematics" (Participant H). The transformation of St Mary's High school into St Mary's College of Education gave Mbala two higher learning institutions in addition to the Mbala School of Nursing. While driven by a desire to address the demand for higher education, the social justice undertones of bridging the gap between the rich and the poor through education could also have underpinned Spaita's contribution to higher education, owing to his positionality as an educator, priest and church leader. One participant noted that "our education is mainly based on justice and peace ... and interventions in terms of certain social injustices" (Participant, J).

Spaita's passion for higher education was also expressed through his contribution to the realisation of the birth of the Zambia Catholic University (ZCU). All the participants in the study affirmed Spaita's contributions to the growth of ZCU. For example, the ZCCB Education Department representative stated that at the time when Catholic university education was becoming a reality in Zambia, Spaita served not only as the Archbishop of Kasama but also as the ZEC Bishop Director for Education (Personal Communication, June 2019). Spaita also presided over the historical event of March 11, 2005 that ended with the signing of the lease agreement between the Chamber of Mines and Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC).

The university was housed in Kalulushi because of the Church's quest to start in a modest way given the high costs of building a whole university complex. Hence, existing structures that could be rented (or bought) as a start-up measure were sought for, and that is how it all ended up at Kalulushi. (Spaita interview with Catholic Information Service for Africa, 15 March 2005)

Another participant noted that:

As director of education at the time the university was being established, he was instrumental in organising meetings, finding this place [which is hosting the institution], finding the first people that came to lecture here. ... (Participant L)

The core of ZCU's mission was the promotion of Gospel values and Christian ethics and the provision of holistic formation by disseminating knowledge and truth through teaching, learning, scholarship, and rigorous research. This was because the Catholic bishops had always emphasised the responsibility of providing high quality education as part of the mission of the Catholic Church (Spaita 2005). A prominent characteristic of this university education was an option for the poor. The support for higher education with a focus on the poor signified the option for the poor (Komakoma 2003) and the rights relating to education. As remarked by some participants in the interviews, Spaita had a great passion for education. This interest in education could not only be easily related to his positionality as an educator. It also pointed to his awareness of the context that was characterised by the growing demand for higher education and various challenges pertaining to illiteracy, poverty, child labour, child marriages, girl child early pregnancies as well as sexual child abuse in the Zambian society (Kabeta 2017).

Funding for Education

Spaita further called for more funding for education and expressed discontent over inadequate funding for education (*Times of Zambia*, 26 August 2004). Inadequate funding for education had resulted in the lack of infrastructure maintenance at all levels of education over the years; hence he advocated for an urgent need for a massive injection of capital in education to improve the situation. Situated in the broader political and socio-economic context of the 1990s, in which financing of education declined after

the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), Spaita was concerned with government funding of education and its effects on the quality of education.

Quality education does not come cheap ... current funding to schools was very inadequate. ... The conditions of service for teachers were poor. The teachers are overworked and because of poor conditions of service, many of them inevitably are forced into supplementary employment. Due to long working hours, poor teaching may be taking place with insufficient time being devoted to preparation for classes and lack of marking pupil's work. ... (Interview with Salukesi, the *Post Newspaper*, 26 August 2004)

As acknowledged by Kelly (1999) and Sawyerr (2002), a key element of SAP was the withdrawal of state support for social sector programmes like health and education, as government embraced the notion that education should and could be regarded as a private rather than a public good. Spaita's call for funding and speaking on behalf of the teachers thus found expression in the social teachings of the Catholic Church, such as those relating to life and dignity of the human person, rights and responsibilities, the dignity of work and the rights of workers and solidarity (Pope John Paul II, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1994). As emphasised, all people have the right to economic initiative, productive work, just wages and benefits, decent working conditions and freedom of association to organise and join unions or other associations (National Conference of Catholic Bishops 1997, 5). DeBerri et al. (2003) also affirm that any business that does not enhance its workers and serve the common good is a moral failure, no matter how healthy the bottom line. Thus, inadequate funding to education was not only an injustice to the learners' education but also to their rights and those of the teaching staff. Seeking justice for the teaching profession signified Spaita's strides to safeguard the teaching profession. At the same time, Spaita's calls for adequate funding for education also revealed the essence of the kind of education (quality holistic) envisaged by the Catholic Church.

While Spaita's contributions could easily be linked to the different positions he held in the Catholic Church from the 1960s to 2000s (as a priest, educator and church leader), his narrative pointed to how the mission of the Catholic Church through education was shaped by individual trajectories. His efforts in education could, therefore, not only be seen through him as an educator, but also in his strides to advance the mission of the Catholic Church through education as informed by the CST in ways that portrayed the quest to serve. As a church leader, he advanced the mission of the Catholic Church by acting in ways that advanced the education agenda (widening access to primary, secondary and higher education and critiquing state funding for education) and the growth of the Catholic Church (promoting religious vocations to priesthood, initiating the Sisters of Mercy religious congregation and the charisma "compassion" for the Sisters of Mercy, and the development of Lutanda Catholic radio station). As such, the aspirations of the Catholic Church became manifested in the actions of individual narratives that signified the strides to uphold the dignity of the person, rights and responsibilities, option for the poor, solidarity and care for God's creation so as to

advance the mission of the Catholic Church. By being immersed in the life of the country through his stance for education and social justice, Spaita demonstrated the passion to serve (and not to be served) the growing church-state relations and the public role of the Catholic Church in Zambia's post-independence and modern era. It is for this reason that he was awarded in 2012 for his contributions to social justice and described as one who stood for social justice until the time of his death in 2014 (Malambo 2014).

Conclusion

The article explored the contributions of James Mwewa Spaita to the mission of the Catholic Church through education in Zambian Catholic Church history in the public sphere. The discussion was directed by a context that neglected the individual contributions of Catholic personalities, despite acknowledgment of the Catholic Church as a renowned provider of education and a long standing partner of the state in the sector. The article showed that Spaita, as an indigenous priest, shaped the course of Catholic Church history by being among the first to join the educational department of the Catholic Church. This created a platform to advance the mission of the Catholic Church through education. As an educator, Spaita was passionate about education; hence he fostered holistic education and spoke against inadequate funding for the sector, including protecting the teaching profession. As a church leader, Spaita shaped church history by acting in ways that promoted the mission of the Catholic Church through education, such as widening access to primary, secondary and higher education through teacher recruitment, repossessing Catholic schools, developing a major seminary in northern Zambia, laying grounds for the transformation of St Mary's High school into a college, and contributing to the establishment of Zambia Catholic University. These contributions were not only tied to his multiple roles but also largely shaped by Catholic Social Teachings (CST). Despite his positionality as a Catholic priest, educator and church leader, Spaita's contributions to social justice and education in the public sphere were recognised beyond the Catholic sphere in the country. Based on these contributions, the article has argued that while discourses of Zambian church history were preoccupied with historicising missionary work and the popularity of Catholic education, the mission of the Catholic Church through education was also largely shaped by trajectories of the clergy in postcolonial and modern times. Therefore, the article showed that church history discourses could be enriched by biographical studies of individual clergy who had shaped the Catholic Church's narrative of her mission in education within different contexts.

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