



AN INVESTIGATION ON THE ATTITUDES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TOWARDS THE TEACHING OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN NAKURU COUNTY, KENYA.

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ABSTRACT

Christian Religious Education (CRE) in Kenya dates back to the 18th century with coming of the European missionaries (Kenya Institute of Education, KIE, 1989). Hence, CRE has been a teaching subject since the coming of the missionaries in Kenya. At the beginning, it was taught for purpose of conversation but it gained a new orientation after independence of an academic subject. The purpose of teaching CRE in independent Kenya was to foster national goals such as national unity and fostering respect for self and others, and their property. However, the introduction of 8-4-4 system of education in Kenya in 1985 placed a premium on science and technical subjects which could be directly be used for employment. Consequently, CRE became an elective. However, there have been increased cases of destruction of school property, cheating in exams and drug abuse among others among the other students. This could be an indicator of loss of key moral values such as self respect and respect of others that CRE is expected to foster. The study investigated the attitude of students towards the teaching of CRE shaping moral values. Ex-posto research design was adapted. The study was carried out among form four students in to randomly selected secondary schools in Nakuru County. The sample size comprised of 307 form four CRE students. A student attitude questionnaire (SAQ) containing both open and closed items was used for data collection. Data was analysed using statistical package for social science (SPSS). Descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Test of significance were performed at $\alpha = 0.05$. The results indicated that the study of CRE is important and relevant in the world today due to its contribution to moral development and provision of career opportunities. However the wide nature of the syllabus, peer pressure, lack of adult role models and human weakness. The results could be useful to policy makers in the ministry of education, curriculum developers at the KICD, CRE teachers and school counselors.

Key words: Christian Religious Education, attitude, Values.

INTRODUCTION

Religious Education (RE) is an important subject as it enhances growth in knowledge and also in the moral values of young (Itolondo, (2013). According to Ihoema 1997, CRE assists young people in search of the truth and provides an understanding of beliefs on way that could help young people develop a positive attitude in their own world outlook. The government of Kenya (2001) postulates that all students in secondary schools to receive moral instruction through religious studies as it helps student's gains moral insights by helping them make informed decision. Though the objectives of teaching CRE are clear as stated in CRE syllabus, there

continue to be concomitance increased in secondary students' immoral behavior (ICICD 2002). In Kenya, moral education is provided to secondary school students to equip them with moral reasoning skills to foster good morals (KIE, 2002). CRE has been viewed for many years as one of the means of restoring morals and social order in society. According to Mbiti (1969), there has always been a close link between religion and moral education. For example, in traditional African communities, initiation ceremonies, rituals, beliefs, habits and practices, among others, were both religious and educative in nature. Bastide (1996) observed that when the Butler Education Act of 1944 made Religious Instruction (RI) compulsory in all state-funded schools in Britain, it was only making mandatory what was a universal practice.

In Kenya, CRE is one of the carrier subject used to enhance the acquisition of moral values among students in secondary schools in Kenya. Its objectives and content is geared towards training of morals and is deemed as an important instrument in the making of the nation by inculcating of desirable interrelationships among people and nations (Kenya Institute of Education [KIE], 2002). The CRE curriculum stipulates that students who interact with CRE content should acquire social; spiritual and moral insights to think critically; and make appropriate moral decisions in a rapidly changing society, appreciate and respect their own; and other peoples' culture, promote international consciousness through the understanding of universal brotherhood and sisterhood; and contribute positively to the transformation of self and society as a whole. However, majority of secondary school students are teenagers and are at the stage of learning by experimenting and trying to seek freedom. In the process, most of them become victims of moral decadency. Some common immoral behaviour in secondary schools include; alcohol and drug abuse, bullying, cheating in examination, stealing, raping, among others(County government of Nakuru 2014). Online Kenyan (2014) claims that cheating and other examination irregularities during the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) increased significantly from 534 cases in 2010 to 2927 in 2011. (County government of Nakuru 2014).

2.2 Effects of Teaching Methods on Students' Development of Moral Values

Methods of teaching refer to the processes or set of procedures of teaching which tend to promote specific strategies of teaching (Kiruhi et al, 2009). Hence the question of methods and approaches to use in the teaching of CRE remains an important issue. An effective CRE teacher is not only likely to create good rapport with students but also good at organizing the content and the methods to be used during the teaching learning process. Ryans 1964 contends that competent teachers should have amastery of technical stall to facilitate learning and display attitudes which foster learning. According to Aduda 2001 schools world be useless if they only produce bright but intolerant people. He emphasize that science without religious is lame. Ming'yue, (2013) avers that the main teaching method in secondary schools is indoctrination. This process is cutting up the knowledge into examination points and the main teaching goal is reciting knowledge and the main standard of evaluation is test scores. Teachers stick to textbooks hence teaching lacks flexibility, vitality and hampers students participation. This may lead to the development of a negative attitude towards CRE.

There are various views on the teaching of CRE. These include; direct teaching which is inducing by constant practice of the actual habit so that there is a better chance of students doing so in everyday life. Direct method needs to be backed up by other methods for purpose of sustainability of behaviour. These methods are the lecture, narratives, note writing from dictation

among others. However, there are a number of approaches that can help a learner develop positive attitude towards the learning of CRE such as;

Value Clarification Approach

In this approach, teachers help students clarify their morals by having them reflect on moral dilemmas and think through the consequences of the options open to them, choosing that action that maximizes their deepest morals. It is unjustifiable for a teacher to “impose” his or her morals on students; this would be an act of oppression that denies the individuality and autonomy of students (Nord & Haynes, 2013). One would therefore be responsible for their choice of morals, opinion and beliefs. Teachers are expected to help students make moral choices which involve three stages of choosing, prizing and acting (Straughan, 2000). 2.7.3 Reasoning Approach.

This is a moral approach developed by Piaget and popularised by Kohlberg (Straughan, 2000). It is a conscious effort to provide students with the intellectual resources that enable them to make informed and responsible judgments about difficult matters of moral importance. It gives students opportunities, guidance and practice as being moral actors (Education Encyclopaedia, 2014). The programme provides training, guidance and problem solving support to students as they encounter problems and difficulties in life (Nord & Haynes, 2013). Teachers engage students intellectually and emotionally through discussion and problem solving to hypothetical moral issues in order to help students think morally (Paisey, Kobayashi & Li, 2007).

Moral Sensitivity Approach

It states that teachers are expected to be free of bias, and should set aside their opinions to encourage students express themselves without inhibitions (Dinama, 2012). The challenge of this theory is that it may lead to misinformation and hence, teacher-student relationship is necessary for purpose of clarification of moral issues (Smith, 2011). CRE is viewed as a broad-base education which would enrich the students’ outlook of life. The main purpose of CRE should be to assist students develop the ability to make rational decisions so that they can resolve personal problems and shape public policy by actively and effectively taking part in social actions. Thus, the objectives of teaching CRE as outlined by KIE (2003) is expected to focus on learning about public issues, societal problems, national and international understanding, personal and individual participation, and political and economic realities which are vital to the participatory role of citizens. Hence CRE teacher should apply those approaches and methods appropriate for enhancing students’ positive attitude towards learning.

3. Reasoning Approach

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Factors Affect Students' Attitude towards Learning of CRE

There are various factors that may affect the way students learn. Some of these factors include religious background of the students, lack of direct experience of what forms the bulk of the content, hostile attitudes towards CRE as a subject and lack of role model among others.

According to Ngussa. and Role, (2016) CRE content is abstract and historical and therefore divorced from learner experiences. The syllabus is also overloaded with contents giving teachers little choice on the appropriate methods (Groenwegen, 1993).The Government of Kenya, (2001) found out that there was little consensus on the nature of moral reasoning education and how it should be taught among students. The teaching has been turned into a cognitive relationship between the old and young people where values are passed on to the young by the teachers (Husley, 2002). Hence, learners are lack a chance to form their own values.

Much of the syllabus especially in form one and two is biblical understand of the new and old testament making it difficult for students to understand at their early age.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design adopted was ex-post facto. This refers to a design where the researcher does not have direct control of independent variables. The variables are taken as they are in a natural setting (Orodho, (2005).). This design was appropriate because the researcher did not manipulate the variables but studied them as they were. In the schools, teachers and students had been exposed to the CRE syllabus and also had heard of or experienced the acts of indiscipline.

Location of the Study

The study was carried out in selected secondary schools in Nakuru district. This district was selected because of its cosmopolitan nature, accessibility and familiarity to the researcher and the existence of a critical mass in terms of the number of secondary schools. Nakuru district is divided into thirteen divisions. These are Mauche, Lare, Elburgon, Njoro, Rongai, Molo, Bahati, Keringeti, Mbogoine, Olenguruoni, Nakuru municipality, Gilgil and Naivasha.

Population

The target population comprised of all CRE teachers and 5,654 Form Four students from selected secondary school in Nakuru district. The form four students were selected for this study because they had already made their subject choices. It was also the class, which had been exposed more to the CRE syllabus.

Sampling procedure and Sample Size

According to a report obtained from the Nakuru District Education Office (2001), there were 134 secondary schools in the district. Due to time and financial constraints, schools in all the divisions could not be visited. Sampling was, therefore, carried out to provide a sample which could give information that was used to make judgments about a much larger number of cases (Mugenda&Mugenda, 2007).

The sampling frame was obtained from the class registers of Form Four students of 10 selected schools in Nakuru district. Two divisions were purposively selected. These were Nakuru municipality and Bahati. This was because the two divisions were accessible and familiar to the

researcher. The population of form four students in this division was 1797 and 1105 respectively, totaling to 2902.

A student attitude questionnaire was used for data collection. The attitude questionnaire which had both closed and open ended item had a reliability of 0.7 is considered acceptable (Henerson, Mons and Fitz-gibbon 1987).

Students’ Attitude Questionnaire (SAQ)

This also consisted of items which were both open and closed-ended on the attitudes of students towards the teaching and learning of CRE. Specific areas of focus were; the importance of CRE as a moral changing agent, the teaching and learning methods used and the attitude towards the acts of discipline in Kenya secondary schools. Closed-ended questions were also measured on a 5-point likert scale.

Data Analysis

Qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis were used in which both descriptive and inferential. Statistics was applied. The statistical significant level for inferential statistics was = 0.05.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter presents results of discussion on the attitudes of teachers and students towards CRE in selected secondary schools in Nakuru district. The data was collected from form four students. The study aimed at answering the following question:

What are the attitudes of teachers and students on the importance of CRE in enhancing moral values?

**Table 1:
Distribution of Students by religion and Gender**

Religion	Gender	F	Percentage (%) N=297
Christian	Male	146	49.0
	Female	142	47.8
Muslim	Male	-	-
	Female	7	2.3
Mungiki	Male	2	0.6
	Female	-	-
Rasta	Male	-	-
	Female	1	0.3
	Total	297	100

The total number of students on Table 3 is 297. They are 10 less than the actual sample size. This was because, some students did not indicate their religion as required in the questionnaire. However, table 3 shows that the majority of student studying CRE (96.7%) professed the Christian faith, while others were Rasta, Mungiki and Muslims. Raster, Mungiki and Muslims students studied CRE so as to meet the minimum requirements for examination purposes. Rasta and Mungiki had the lowest percentages because they are upcoming and outlawed sects with few followers. The Mungiki sect especially is associated with anti-social behavior such as killings as reported in Nakuru (Muiruri, 2003). This sectarian religion is not recognized in Kenyan secondary school curriculum. Hence, the government and the society in general do not think favourably about the Mungiki followers. The results that most of the students studying CRE were Christians is in line with results obtained by KNEC (2001), which indicated that 93.8% of students in Kenya are Christians and 6.18% are Muslims. The results and discussion of this study are presented in the sections that follow.

Attitudes of Students on the Importance of CRE in enhancing Moral Values.

In order to respond to this objective, teachers and students perspectives were captured by determining their responses to the following three areas.

- (a) Values they perceived as being promoted by CRE.
- (b) Why students chose to study CRE.
- (c) Whether teachers and students felt CRE was still important in this techno-scientific age.

Values Perceived as Being Promoted by CRE

Table 2 provides a summary of the responses made by teachers and students on the values they perceive as being promoted by CRE.

Table 2
Values perceived as being promoted by CRE

Statements	Teachers’ responses % N=31	Students’ responses % N=297
CRE helps students to:		
(a) Grow morally upright	90.0	91.2
(b) Accept each other	90.0	90.4
(c) Respect oneself	86.6	88.8
(d) Make morally rational decisions	82.6	83.6
(e) Understand the love others	65.5	90.8
(f) Respect peoples’ property	69.0	91.0

The findings of the study indicated that CRE teachers and students respectively, were in general agreement that CRE was an important subject. This is because it helped students achieve certain moral values in life. This included moral growth, self-respect, respect for other people and their property and making morally rational decisions concerning issues in life. This implies that CRE is important in enhancing moral values. The teaching of CRE helped students to grow into socially acceptable beings who portrayed the desired behavior in the society. This was in line with Oteyo, J. and Kariuki, (2009) who contended that through the learning of CRE, students were able to perceive the difference between good and evil. CRE was also viewed as being able to promote the power of reason by helping students to grow towards personal autonomy based on

criteria of awareness of alternatives (Grimmit, 1973; Malusu, 1981). This was an indication that knowledge gained from the learning of CRE enabled students to make informed judgments by weighing alternatives of moral actions to be taken. Snik& Jong (1995) agree with these findings by arguing that if moral thinking is encouraged, it helps students grow into people with personal identity and dignity. Over 86% of teachers and students respectively were in agreement that CRE helped students respectively indicated that CRE helped students to respect other people’s property. This shows that personal and social aspects go hand in hand for the benefit of the individual and the society at large. The respect for self is likely to lead to respect for other people and this also is likely to enhance human identity and dignity. The findings of the study also agree with shorter (O’Grady, (2008), who contended that culture and morality were closely related facets of human dignity and identity. Onsongo, (2008)(confirms this when he argues that good morals are the food that keep the society alive, healthy and happy.

However, the researcher observed that thought the teachers, to some extent, agree that CRE helped students to understand, love other people and respect their property, the magnitude of responses between the two groups differed. More students (90%) agreed with the statements than teachers (96%). This may suggest that students perceived CRE as an important subject which may help them achieve these values. The lower responses in the case of teachers may emanate from their experiences with students. In the recent past, secondary school students have caused massive destruction on school property and also burned their fellow students. For example, students’ riots in Nyeri High and Kyanguli secondary schools resulted in tragedies in which many students died and property destroyed, when some students attacked their colleagues (Kinyua, 2000: Siringi, 2000). On the same note, Marbel, 2016 claimed that 100 schools in Kenya were touched within two months which led to massive destruction of property.

Why Students Chose to Study CRE

The study sought to find out from the students why they chose to study CRE despite the fact that it was an optional subject. Table 3 indicates their responses.

**Table 3:
Why Students Chose to Study CRE**

Statements	Responses (N-218)	
	Yes	No
(a) To know God better	89.0	11.0
(b) To be a better person	85.7	14.3
(c) For my future career	71.3	28.7
(d) It is an easier subject	32.0	68.0
(e) To please my parents	8.1	91.9

Table 5 shows that majority of students (89.0%) chose CRE in order to know God better. This is an indication that even in this utilitarian age, people still are interested in knowing God. The knowledge of God helps a person to know and understand the do’s and don’ts of life in relation to the will of God. This knowledge of God is attained through the learning of CRE in school as already confirmed by students. This is in line with Pope Paul II (1992) who argued that the highest goal of personal development is to orient oneself to God. This finding contradicts Kutto, (2013who claimed that the current generation has been overwhelmed by technology and

therefore, has no need for God. The results also contradict the humanistic view that man is the measure of all things (Rao, (2008). At the same time, 85% of CRE students claimed that they chose to study CRE that they could be better people in the society. This implied that the knowledge of God attained through the learning of CRE helped students to fit better in the society. For instance, the Ten Commandments are some of the basic principles of Christianity that teach students their duty towards God and their fellow men (KIE, 2002).

Further, 68% of students indicated that they willingly chose to study CRE. Of the 68% interviewed, 23.7% and 46.6% chose to study CRE because of moral and spiritual nourishment respectively. They indicated that they did not choose CRE to please their parents or because it was an easier option. However, the minority (32%), were forced by circumstances to study CRE. For example, some studied CRE because it was either compulsory in the school they were or it was an easier option as indicated on Table 5.

4.2.3 Relevance of CRE in the World Today

In addition, the researcher was interested in finding out whether, in the opinions of teachers and students, CRE is relevant in the world today. Table 4 shows the various reasons why CRE was perceived as being relevant today.

**Table 4:
Reason for the Relevance of CRE in the World Today**

Reasons	Teachers (%) N=31	Students (%) N=259
(a) Spiritual and moral development	19.4	89.7
(b) Career choice and placement	80.6	10.3

Results given in Table 6 show that both teachers and students perceived CRE as relevant in the world today. Both groups argued that CRE contributes to moral and spiritual development and also career choice and placement. However, an interesting observation was the difference in the perceptions of teachers and students as shown in Table 6. Whereas the teachers argued that CRE would help students grow morally upright (90%) (See Table 4), the teaching of CRE in their opinion, was away of earning their daily bread. Many teachers (80.6%) saw CRE in terms of career opportunity. Students perceived the learning the learning of CRE as important because it promoted spiritual. Students perceived the learning of CRE as important because it promoted spiritual development and enhanced positive moral values (89.7%). This is an indication that young people are interested in living an acceptable life as required by God and society even in this utilitarian age.

Both teachers and students, therefore, viewed CRE as an important subject which may be useful in enhancement of moral values. The students indicated that the knowledge of God through the learning of CRE was paramount as it helped them become morally upright people. However, the attitude of teachers towards CRE was biased towards career. Hence, they may not teach in a way likely to change students’ behavior positively.

SUMMARY

From the foregoing, moral values emanating from knowledge of God as taught in CRE were found to be important even in this techno-scientific age. Consequently, CRE was indicated as relevant in the world of today. The subject was also viewed as important in providing career opportunities, especially by teachers who participated in the study. On the same note, students indicated that they chose the study CRE not because it was an easier option, but because they wanted to know God more. They indicated that this knowledge was important in building them up morally and spiritually

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