

**METHODS USED BY TEACHERS TO TEACH CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS
EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KIMILILI IN BUNGOMA COUNTY,
KENYA**

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ABSTRACT: *Christian Religious Education in secondary schools in Kenya occupies a key position in the 8-4-4 curriculum. This is so because it enables the learner to integrate all subjects of the curriculum into a more mature view of self, their relationship with the environment, both physical and cultural, other people and God. The purpose of the study was to establish factors that face the use of audiovisual resources for teaching Christian Religious Education (CRE) in Kimilili Division, Bungoma County in Western Kenya. Based on the study, this paper surveys the methods used by teachers in teaching CRE in the study area. The study adopted a survey research design. Random sampling was used to select both CRE teachers and students to participate in the study while stratified sampling was used to select the schools. The sample was drawn from secondary schools in Kimilili Division of Bungoma County in Kenya. The sample size was made up of 266 respondents, comprising 242 CRE students and 24 CRE teachers. Data was collected using questionnaires and observation schedules. The study used two sets of questionnaires; one for CRE teachers and another for students. The collected data was quantitatively analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented using tables and graphs. The findings showed that the CRE subject is mainly taught using verbal communication and the use of textbooks is common. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that curriculum planners and other educational stakeholders in Kenya should establish CRE resource centres in every County so that resources for teaching CRE can easily be availed to teachers for teaching the subject. This paper will help teachers and other educational stakeholders to understand the importance of combining various methods in teaching with the sole purpose of ensuring that learners are able to master, retain and live out the content that is taught in CRE in Kenya.*

KEYWORDS: Methods, Teachers, Christian Religious Education, CRE, Secondary Schools, Kenya

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is an important part of the process of education. Its special function is to impart knowledge, develop understanding and skill (Aggarwal, 1995). Teaching and learning are opposite sides of the same coin; a lesson is not learned until it has been taught. Teaching, therefore, should be thought of as a process that facilitates learning. One of the main objectives of the secondary school 8-4-4 system in Kenya is to prepare students for self-reliance, training and further education. The Christian Religious Education curriculum is broad-based and is built upon the concepts, principles and skills established through the integrated relationship with other subjects and the learners' environment (Kenya Institute of Education [KIE], now Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development [KICD], 2000).

Christian Religious Education in secondary schools in Kenya occupies a key position in the 8-4-4 curriculum. This is so because it enables the learner to integrate all subjects of the curriculum into a more mature view of self, their relationship with the environment, both physical and cultural, other people and God (KIE, 2000). One of the objectives of Christian Religious Education in Kenya is to help learners acquire social, spiritual and moral insights to help them make appropriate moral decisions in a rapidly changing society (KIE, 2000), yet observations of CRE students indicate that this objective is not being achieved. This could be attributed to the way the subject is taught. Like any other subject, CRE needs to be taught by use of audiovisual resources and the right methods for students to understand and for the subject to be relevant to their lives.

The Wangai Committee (2001) tasked with investigating student discipline and unrest in secondary schools acknowledges that the decay in moral values and norms of the society to a great extent influence the behaviour and character of students. Despite acknowledging moral decay, the Wangai Committee (2001) never investigated whether or not CRE as a subject is achieving its intended purpose of inculcating moral values in learners. The Committee also never looked at an instructional approach that would help more effectively impart skills, knowledge and attitude to students which would help them during and after school life.

Because of the development of modern technology, teachers no longer have to rely solely on mere lectures to deliver their teaching content. There is a great variety of materials that can be used to make meanings more vivid and more interesting. These materials are often referred to as instructional aids; devices used to supplement or complement the teachers' task. Like any other subject, CRE content can be made clearer, more interesting and relevant if audiovisual media are used in teaching.

Aggarwal (1995), citing a research done by Cobun (1968), indicates that more is learnt and retained when audiovisual media are used during teaching. If CRE was taught by use of audiovisual media, the students would understand and retain more of what they would have learnt and this is likely to have a positive moral impact in their lives. Based on research done in 1969 by Chiba Prefectural Education Centre in Japan, Bishop (1986) observes that there are considerable educational advantages with the application of educational technology in primary and lower secondary schools. If CRE was taught by use of modern technology students would gain more than if it was taught by verbal communication only.

Today, many countries around the world use some form of technological media in education to enhance learning. In a few countries, the use is fairly widespread. In instances where the student is the centre of attention, technology is a catalyst for educational change. Its absence would make a significant difference to the educational process because technology is an integral part of a well-thought-out system not merely a teacher's aid. According to UNESCO (1975), failure to use modern communication media within the educational system as tools of instruction is intimately related to the lack of recognition of communication outside the system. To ignore communication media fits into the tendency of preparing students for the world of the past rather than for the capacity to live with and to dominate the future.

Today, the problem is not whether or not audiovisual aids should have a place in education. Rather, the problem now is that of extending the benefits of these aids to all teachers and to all children. CRE is in practice one of the least visual subjects on the timetable. Many excellent discussion lessons in Religious Education are possible without the use of any visual aids.

Nevertheless, teachers must be creative to devise visual aids to help learners in conceptualising concepts rendered through the lecture method and discussions.

The Kenya Film Corporation provides useful films that could be used to teach CRE. Moreover, the Christian Churches Educational Association (CCEA) and the Kenya Catholic Secretariat also have good catalogues that can be used for teaching CRE. Similarly, the Keswick Bookshop, the Catholic Bookshop in Nairobi and all the Catholic Diocesan Bookshops in Kenya sell a variety of CRE teaching aids, slides filmstrips and posters. These audiovisual resources can enhance understanding of CRE content and make teaching and learning effective and relevant to the lives of learners.

Availability and Use of Audiovisual Resources for Teaching CRE

According to Airasian (1994), the instructional resources available to a teacher influence not only the nature of instruction but also the learning outcomes that can be sought. The quality of teaching of CRE in secondary schools in Kenya is thus partly determined by the instructional resources available.

Time is a resource that greatly influences planning of instruction. Because there is never enough time to instruct pupils on all important concepts and skills in a subject area, teachers must carefully match their instructional time against the instructional objectives. According to Moss *et al.* (1991), each teacher's decision about what content to stress or omit is based upon instructional time available as well as their personal preferences regarding topics and methods of instruction. Moss *et al.* (1991) also aver that a number of studies have shown that a large part of the students' learning time and a large part of teachers' instructional time focus on the textbook use.

Callahan and Clark (1990) observe that of all the materials of instruction, the textbook has had the most influence on teaching content and method. For many teachers it has been the 'be all and end all' of their instructional life. This is unfortunate because the textbook is just one of the teaching tools. It is not supposed to be revered as the ultimate word.

Recently, educational technology has expanded to include teaching machines and computers. These machines present teaching-learning programmes to pupils. Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) is the most popular term used to describe the use of computers for instructional purposes. According to Callahan and Clark (1990), CAI can be purchased in form of diskettes, cassettes tapes or cartridges and used for teaching and learning. Like any other subject, CRE should be taught by use of CAI to make it achieve its objectives.

According to Groenewegen (1985), CRE is in practice one of the least visual subjects on the timetable. Groenewegen (1985) observes that one of the reasons CRE lessons tend to be boring is that teachers make almost exclusive uses of one communication channel, namely the auditory channel or speech and hearing. Nevertheless, the strength of audiovisual resources lies in the fact that they can present the closest thing to a real life experience (Groenewegen, 1995). Therefore, the use of audiovisual aids in teaching can help make concepts more real to students and more applicable in their lives.

Kocchar (1990) states that even though teachers may have the competence and positive attitudes, without sufficient resources, their efforts will come to naught. This assertion is in line with the views of the German agency for technical cooperation (GTZ) report (1979) that it is essential for teachers to be provided with the required materials early enough to facilitate

effective instruction. This is because the achievement of instructional objectives partly relies on the availability of the teaching and learning resources. Schools and educational stakeholder should, therefore, provide make these resources accessible to all teachers by establishing resource centres, providing audiovisual facilities and equipment and work materials.

The importance of instructional resources in teaching and learning has also been emphasized by many authorities, among them Kafu (1976), Romiszowski (1981), Walkin (1982) and Hills (1982). These scholars generally agree that if resources are properly selected and used, the following benefits can be realized:

- i. Knowledge obtained through instructional materials is retained longer than that obtained by purely verbal teaching.
- ii. Greater benefits can be obtained from the use of multimedia that enhances students' participation.
- iii. Learning becomes easy, more interesting, effective and meaningful.

The unavailability of facilities and materials is one of the major constraints to effective instruction in most schools in Kenya. According to Shiundu and Omulando (1992), every new programme requires relevant and adequate facilities. Prior to implementation, physical facilities must be prepared and materials purchased to ensure the successive activation of the programme. It is, therefore, important for schools to make instructional media resources available for successful curriculum implementation.

Fullan (1982) observes that the development and acquisition of materials constitute one major set of barriers that militate against successful implementation. This view is supported by World Bank (1988) which states that: "Without some basic inputs particularly textbooks and instructional materials, almost no learning can be expected to occur. Ensuring the availability of essential inputs is prerequisite for both quality and for expansion."

The KIE in 1988 carried out summative evaluation of 8-4-4 secondary curricular. The study revealed that the effectiveness of teaching methods is a product of availability and use of relevant resources and facilities by teachers. These resources include maps, resource persons, films and photographs while facilities refer to classrooms, tables, desks and chairs. All these constitute the necessary conditions for learning.

Mutsotso (2004), in a research on Social Education and Ethics (SEE) in secondary schools in Vihiga County in Western Kenya, indicates that there is evidence of use of instructional resources but most teachers mainly use the chalkboard and textbooks. Mutsotso (*ibid.*) further observes that relevant SEE instructional resources materials such as audiovisuals are inadequate or lacking in many schools.

Statement of the Problem

The effort of any teacher in instruction is to make the message clear, communicate the idea, capture the content and clarify the obscure for the learner. According to Nacico-Brown *et al.* (1982), teachers are often accused of "over-verbalization" because of their excessive use of words to convey meanings. Callahan and Clark (1990, p. 412) also observe that most of the teachers' day is filled with periods of explanation and discourse so much so that the teaching profession has been accused of perpetuating verbalism in the schools.

CRE in secondary schools in Kenya occupies a key position in the 8-4-4 curriculum. With the removal of Social Education and Ethics (SEE) in secondary school curriculum, CRE remains the only subject that addresses moral concerns of learning in Kenya's secondary education. One of the major objectives of CRE is to help learners acquire social, spiritual and moral insights to help them make ethical decisions in a rapidly changing society (Kenya Institute of Education [KIE], 2000). A cursory observation of CRE students' behaviour in secondary schools and the general feelings expressed by parents, teachers and the general public indicate that this objective is not being achieved because students – and many other people who have gone through secondary education system, including political leaders – do not seem able to make appropriate moral decisions.

The Wangai Committee (2001), charged with investigating students' discipline and unrest in secondary schools in Kenya, reports that decay in moral values and norms to a great extent influence the behaviour and character of students. Groenewegen (1995) also observes that one of the reasons CRE lessons tend to be boring is that the subject teachers make almost exclusively use verbal communication in teaching.

The focus of the study, therefore, was to address the two problems by investigating the factors challenging the use of audiovisual media for teaching CRE in secondary schools in Kimilili Division Bungoma County. The thesis of the study was that audiovisual media can help CRE teachers to better achieve the subject's objective of making students understand the moral relevance of what is taught. It is also argued that audiovisual resources can help make the subject more interesting. Therefore, the use of audiovisual media in teaching can improve the moral behaviour of those who are taught CRE.

The present secondary school CRE syllabus in Kenya has many biblical topics, concepts and issues whose understanding can be enhanced as learning is made more interesting, effective and relevant to the learners by use of audiovisual media. These audiovisual media include motion picture films, video cassettes, slides and posters. According to Callahan and Clark (1990), often serve to facilitate learning and eliminate verbalism. Therefore, CRE teachers should use audiovisual media. This paper examines the methods used by CRE teachers to teach the subject based on the study conducted in Bungoma County in Western Kenya.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in Kimilili Division of Bungoma County in Western Province of Kenya. At the time of the study, Kimilili division had 16 secondary schools: six girls' schools, three boys' schools and seven mixed-gender schools. CRE was being offered in all the sixteen secondary schools in the Division. The research adopted a survey design. According to Nsubuga (2000, p. 79), a survey is an important method employed when trying to solve problems in educational sections. Survey research is regarded the best method available to social scientists and other educators who are interested in collecting original data for the purposes of describing a population which is too large to observe directly (Mugenda & Mugenda 1999, p. 165).

The study targeted all secondary schools in Kimilili Division. The sample population was drawn from nine of these secondary schools. The schools were selected on the basis of gender composition of students. The study involved all the CRE teachers who had taught the subject

for the last three years. These were regarded to have sufficient experience to express valid views on the use of audiovisual media in their schools. The study also involved CRE students from the nine secondary schools. Thirty percent of Forms Two and Three students were picked from each of the nine secondary schools. Only Forms Two and Three CRE students were involved because it was believed that they had covered much of the syllabus and were, therefore, in a better position to comment on the use of media for teaching and learning CRE. Form One students were left out because it was assumed they were still new in school and were yet to cover much in the CRE syllabus. Form Four students were also left out because they were busy preparing for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examination.

The schools that participated in the study were selected using stratified sampling method. This was done on the basis of students' gender, that is, boys-only, girls-only and mixed-gender schools. Simple random sampling was used to select the number of students to participate in this study. Forms Two and Three students were purposively selected for the study. The teachers who participated were also purposively selected.

Data was collected from the sample population through the use of questionnaires and observation schedules. The data collected was analyzed quantitatively, using descriptive statistics such as percentages and presented using tables and graphs showing frequencies and percentages. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program was used to analyze data from questionnaires.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Methods of teaching CRE

The study sought to establish the methods used for teaching CRE in secondary schools in Kimilili Division, Bungoma County. The results were as summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Methods of teaching CRE

Method	Frequency of use	Frequency of non use	Total
Lecture method	184(76%)	58(24%)	242(100)
Discussion method	182(75.2%)	60(24.8%)	242(100)
Class presentation	129(53.3%)	113(46.7%)	242(100)
Audiovisual method	57(23.6%)	185(76.4%)	242(100)
Library research method	101(41.7%)	141(58.3%)	242(100)

From Table 1 above, it is clear that most (76.0%) of the CRE teachers use the lecture method for teaching the subject. This agrees with the views of Aggarwal (1995) that teachers in general are yet to be convinced that teaching with words is very tedious, wasteful and ineffective. The lecture method seems to be the easiest method of teaching in regard to a teacher's preparation, but it is not effective in helping learners to understand and retain content. This could be the reason CRE instruction seems not to be achieving its intended objectives of imparting moral values in students.

Table 1 also indicates that the discussion method is more frequently used in teaching CRE in secondary schools in Kimilili Division. This was indicated by 75.2% of the teachers who claimed to use it as opposed to only 24.8% who said they never used it. The results in Table 1 further indicate that almost half (53.3%) of CRE teachers used students' class presentation

method for teaching CRE in secondary schools. This is compared to 46.7% who said they did not use it.

The findings also indicate that the audiovisual method is not frequently used for teaching CRE in secondary schools in Kimilili Division. This was indicated by 76.4% who affirmed that they used the use of audiovisual method compared to only 23.6% who said they did not use the method. Moreover, Table 1 also indicates that more than half (58.3%) of the students did not use library research as method for teaching and learning CRE. However, 41.7% of the respondents used this method.

From the results above, quite a number of students used library research for learning CRE because textbooks are most easily available resource for teaching CRE as indicated earlier in this chapter. Majority of students do not use library research method because many schools do not have libraries, as observed during the research.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the study findings it was concluded that many CRE teachers prefer to teach using other methods such as discussion, class presentation and library research. Audiovisual method is the least used in teaching. This is partly because audiovisual resources are not easily available. In addition, a good number of teachers find verbal communication or discussion method easy in light of the short time to prepare for and deliver lessons. Because of these factors, CRE in secondary schools in the County is not achieving its objective of imparting moral values in students and the entire society.

Based on the discussion of findings and the above conclusion, it is recommended that curriculum planners and other educational stakeholders in Kenya should establish CRE resource centres in every County so that resources for teaching CRE can easily be availed to teachers for teaching the subject. In addition, heads of secondary schools in Kenya should encourage and support CRE teachers by ensuring that the requisite teaching aids are bought as a matter of priority.

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