

Full Length Research paper

The Perceived Discrepancy Between the Teaching of Christian Religious Education and Acquisition of Social Relating Skills Amongst Secondary Schools Students in Kisumu East District, Kenya

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Previous research and document evidence obtainable in popular media has consistently reported that Kenyan students' social standing and general conduct in the wider society does not reflect acquisition and practice of social relating skills learnt through the teaching of Christian Religious Education (CRE) at the form four level. This has caused complaints among those stakeholders in education who are concerned that the social well being of the youth is on a downward trend. This suggests that either the teachers of CRE do not provide the learners with social relating skills or the Kenyan education system as a whole does not contain relevant elements that could enable students acquire relevant social relating skills. Another possibility could be the existence of a discrepancy between the CRE program objectives and the instructional practices meant to achieve them. From the literature that was reviewed, it was evident that the nature of this discrepancy had not yet been established for effective intervention strategies to be put in place. The purpose of this study was to determine possible reasons for the assumed discrepancy between the stated objectives of teaching CRE in Kenyan secondary schools and current social standings that does not reflect acquisition of social relating skills. Specifically the study determined whether the teachers of C.R.E in Kisumu East District secondary schools provided learners with social relating skills in societal context. Four instruments used in collecting data included: a graphic observation rating scale, a learner's test, an in-depth interview schedule and documents analysis guide. The study population comprised 3225 students and 48 teachers. Out of the population, 16 teachers and the 343 learners were selected using stratified random sampling technique. The obtained results suggested that teachers rarely provided the social relating skills to their students. Another notable finding was that while the CRE syllabus contained relevant elements that could assist students acquire social relating skills, it was the implementation of the skills through the teaching methods adopted that was likely responsible for limited social relating skills acquisition.

Keywords: Social Relating Skills, Religious education, Secondary school.

INTRODUCTION

The opening verses in the book of Genesis (1:26) states that God created man and woman in His own image. While commenting on this verse, Thiessen and Doerksen (1989) state that the image of God imparted to man at

creation is His social attributes. That God is able to socially interact with man or woman universally without discrimination. It is therefore, the duty of man to protect this image more so positively. Wieland (2003) states that the ability to relate harmoniously by mankind is the exploitation of the social relating skills that God gave man at the time of creation. He adds that man naturally is a social being. Mbiti (2002) further observes that man's

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sociability is both vertical and horizontal. That the horizontal socialization by man is extended even to the realm of plants and animals as well as to the inanimate entities like stones. Boss (2001) in her studies of American youths' social habits found that social cohesion or integrity is all a factor of diligent use of social relating skills with which a learner is endowed in school. She states that, the fact that a youth is capable of saying 'I am sorry to an offended friend keeps the relationship going even beyond the school and at times carries it to adulthood.

Vivekananda (2001) adds that there are many conflicts including armed ones which can be avoided by enhancing the use of social relating skills. That by use of social diplomacy even countries will not go to war since the offending partner state will offer an apology to her counterpart before tempers boil to offensive proportions. Radhakrishnan (2002) states that the application of social relating skills in daily interaction is one way of manifesting religiosity. He asserts that by consensus building on issues which threaten to break the society man is able to prevent not only disasters but social catastrophes as well. In Kenya, one of the aims of education according to the ROK (1999) education commission report is to promote the acquisition of mutual social responsibility. In this instance, one is meant to acquire the capacity for being a brother's or a sister's keeper. The C.R.E syllabus therefore advocates for learning that is geared towards enabling the learner to identify and acquire social relating skills. According to the R.O.K (1964), R.O.K (1988) and R.O.K (1999) commission reports there are social relating skills which the C.R.E teacher ought to develop in the learner. The same social relating skills are also articulated by Grimmit (2005) and Groenewegen (2007).

Groenewegen (2007) proposes that one of the key social relating skills is communication skills. The C.R.E teacher has the duty of ensuring that the learner is provided with regular opportunities for self-expression. This enables the learner to explore his or her human environment to know what others feel about their interactions with him or her. Self expression goes hand in hand with active listening and show of respect. Teachers should encourage the learner to be active listeners and also to recognize the worthiness of others. Through this the learner will be able to know what others feel and avoid issues which might put social interactions in jeopardy and thus promote peace. Other social relating skills proposed by the Kenya education policy document like the R.O.K (1964) are problem solving skills, negotiating skills, consensus building skills, democratic and conflict resolution skills. These should also be developed by the teacher during C.R.E learning episodes in the classroom. In planning phases of teaching the teacher is supposed to lay emphasis on them. They should, Wamahu, Karugu and Otiende (1994) state, form the learning objectives in the discipline. This is due to the fact that they form the core issues that enhance social

relationships and harmony in the society. Whitehurst (2002) explains that when the learner is imbued with the social relating skills, his or her capacity to make the right moral judgment improves. In his studies of those taught social relating skills in Mexico, he came to realize that such learners would know ways of avoiding conflict mediate on conflict situations and promote harmony.

In addition to the foregoing, studies conducted by Wayne (2007) in Denmark and Somalia reveal that learners who are not imbued with social relating skills tend to be violent and disruptive in their social relating disposition. Perhaps this is because they are not tuned to follow the golden rules of social relationships, which lay emphasis on considering what others would feel or how they would act on account of own behavior. A learner who has good social relating skills will make sound decision in challenging social situation. This learner will no be rash, but will be meticulous and tolerant where necessary. These issues may sound theoretical but the fact is that they are what the Kenyan C.R.E teacher is expected to acquaint the learner with. One observation that the review would like to make is that the policy documents recommended the teaching of the aforesaid skills because they have worked elsewhere such as in Mexico, Denmark and Somalia. Their workability in Kenya has not been proved by research although they sound quite obvious. What makes them more questionable is that, though they exist on paper, whether teachers implement them or not has not been ascertained. Moreover, the fact that some Kenyans are being accused of hate speech, Ngunyi (2009 and 2010) may be a clear testimony that the Kenyan secondary school C.R.E teachers have not done much to enhance the acquisition of democratic tolerance and respect in the Kenyan school youth or those who have already left school and are in church or in politics. This study was therefore designed to ascertain whether the C.R.E teaching methods used by teachers has made Kenyans, especially those in Kisumu East district to develop the socially accepted social relating skills. Specifically the study, main focus was to take cognizance of all those factors that might be impeding effective social relating skill acquisition amongst students enrolled in C.R.E classes. The suspected gap between the C.R.E curriculum objectives and actual pedagogical practices surrounding moral education in secondary schools was also assessed. In addition, the authors' other aim was to determine the gap that exists between the objectives as stated in the C.R.E syllabus and actual practices of enhancing social relating skill acquisition by the learner in Kenyan secondary schools with particular focus on Kisumu East district. The study specifically attempted to: determine the social relating skills that the C.R.E teachers develop in the learners.

Table 1: Teacher providing Social relating Skills to the Learners (n=96)

Activity	Responses		
	Always	Occasionally	Never
i. Teacher emphasis on skills of showing respect.	0.0%(00)	9.4%(09)	90.7%(87)
ii. Teacher use of problem solving skills.	0.0%(00)	2.1%(02)	98.0%(94)
iii. Teacher providing negotiating skills.	0.0%(00)	1.0%(01)	98.9%(95)
iv. Use of consensus building skills.	0.0%(00)	1.0%(01)	99.0%(95)
v. Provision of democratic skills.	1.0%(01)	8.3%(08)	90.6%(87)
vi. Provision of conflict resolution skills.	3.1%(03)	12.5%(12)	84.3%(81)

Table 2: Learner show of Social relating Skills (n=343)

Items	Score Rating Range out of 100				
	0-15	16-30	31-45	50-64	65 & above
	f	f	f	f	f
i. Learner knowledge of the value of respect.	221	80	20	09	13
ii. Learner show of problem solving skills.	291	42	00	00	00
iii. Learner show of negotiating skills.	288	51	07	07	00
iv. Learner building consensus.	314	04	05	00	00
v. Learner show of democratic skills.	298	25	10	10	05
vi. Learner resolving conflicts.	306	17	10	00	10

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted descriptive survey design to gather data from teachers of C.R.E and form two students of C.R.E in secondary schools in Kisumu East district. The form two class was chosen because it is at this level of psycho-social development that acquisition and use of social relating skills is perceived to be challenging (Lahey,1995) .It is also in this class that C.R.E is made compulsory in the Kenyan education system (R.O.K,1999). The study population comprised of 3225 students and 48 C.R.E teachers. The study sampled a 1/3 of the population which comprised 16 C.R.E teachers by stratified random sampling technique. Using the Fischer et al. (1995) method of determining sample size, a population of 343 form two students was systematically randomly sampled for the study. The instruments used in the study included: a graphic observation rating scale, a learner's test based on moral identification and acquisition, in-depth interview schedule and a documents analysis guide. Piloting of the instruments was done in-order to determine both reliability and validity of the research instruments. Alpha coefficients of 0.76 and 0.77 were obtained for the teacher's graphic observation rating scale and the learner's test respectively. Face validity of the instruments was attained by giving the instruments to four experts in the field of study for critique and review. The instruments were then revised with assistance of the research supervisors. The quantitative data obtained from the graphic observation rating scale and the learner's test were coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics like frequency counts and percentages with an aid of SPSS computer software. The information was

then presented in form of frequency distribution tables. The data gathered from the in-depth interviews and document analysis were transcribed and organized thematically before analyses and interpretation. The data was then reported in form of text.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study received back 96 and 343 duly scored observation rating scale and learners' tests from both teachers and students respectively. This was a 100% return rate for both categories of the respondents. The data gathered was organized according to the study objectives as presented below.

The Social Relating Skills that the Christian Religious Education Teachers Develop in the Learners

The objective of the study was to establish the social relating skills that the C.R.E teachers develop in the learners. The findings indicated that the teachers did not endow the learners with the social relating skills as expected of them. This was evidenced by the poor performance of the learner in questions which demanded that they show competence in identifying social relating skills and explaining their usability in social interactions. Otherwise results were as shown in [tables 1 and 2](#) above.

As shown in table 1, the results revealed that it is in only an insignificant portion of the lesson that teachers occasionally used the skill of showing respect in their

instructional practices. On the other hand in 90.7% (87) of their teaching, teachers never emphasized this skill even though it is very important in both formal and informal aspects of human interaction in the society. When observed to determine whether they made use of problem solving skills as a means of inculcating social relating skills in the learner, the study revealed that this was done occasionally at 2.1% (02) of the lesson presentation, whereas in a larger part of the lesson presentation, it was never used. Negotiating skills were never provided in 98.9% (95) of the lesson. The study also endeavored to determine the teacher's provision of consensus building skills to the learners. The results indicated that this was quite inadequate as it was never done in 99.0% (95) of the lesson episodes. On the other hand democratic skills were never provided as expected since in 90.6% (87) of the lesson the skill did not feature. The skills of conflict resolution was always provided for in 3.1% (03) of the lesson presentation, occasionally in 12.5% (12) of the teaching episodes and it was never done in 84.3% (81) of the lesson. The foregoing results were indicative of the fact that teachers in more than 80% of their teaching episodes did not provide the learners with those skills that would enable them relate virtuously with those that they meet in the society.

Information from the learners test on issues relating to competence in showing social relating skills was as shown in table 2.

Learners taught by the C.R.E teachers in Kisumu East district were given a test to ascertain whether the teachers endowed them with social relating skills. The test dealt with issues that pertain to manifestations of the knowledge of social relating skills such as the value of respect, problem solving, negotiation, consensus building, democratic skills and conflict resolutions. The results revealed that, when tested on the knowledge of value of respect, only 22 students scored 50 to 65 marks and above, the rest failed. The performance reveals that majority of the learners are far below average when it comes to mastery of the value of respect. Thus only a minority could identify with some negligible degree of precision what respect stands for. Added to the foregoing most of the learners failed when asked to show their problem solving skills. In this item all the 343 students scored below average marks. Majority of the learners were unable to show skills in negotiation as 288 scored between 0-15 marks, 51 scored 16-30 marks, 07 scored 31-45 marks, 07 got 50-64 marks and none scored 65 marks and above. Performance in consensus building was equally poor as can be attested to by the results as shown in the table above. Still in showing democratic skills 298 learners scored 0-15 marks, 25 scored 16-30 marks, 10 scored 31-45 marks, 10 again scored 50-64 marks only 05 managed 65 marks and above. Performance in the domain of conflict resolution was also wanting, as 306 learners got 0-15 marks, 17 scored 16-30 marks and only 10 scored between 31-45 marks other

score category registered nil number of learners. The above result clearly shows that peace building can be a challenge to those who graduate from the secondary schools that were studied in Kisumu East district.

In order to ascertain whether teachers were providing for the aforementioned skills further, more data were sought for through interviews. Out of sixteen teachers interviewed, eight of them admitted that they were providing for such skills. They justified this by reporting that they emphasized on the skills of respect because it is very important to human interaction in both school and the entire human community. However, six teachers confirmed doing this occasionally while the remaining two reported that they were not doing it at all. The study realized there was a contradiction to what had been observed in the classroom earlier. Teachers were also interviewed to find out the negotiating skills that they provided the learners with, so that the students might know how to manage and solve problems that they encounter in life. All the teachers claimed that this was not provided for in the syllabus. However, the syllabus in itself shows this as an objective to be achieved by the teaching of C.R.E. the sixteen teachers also admitted that lack of commitment in providing learners with consensus building, democratic and conflict resolution skills even though these are values which sustain global peace at the moment.

Documentary analysis involving scrutiny of the past examination papers, lesson plans and schemes of work revealed that teachers did not plan to provide social relating skills to the learners. There was not even any thing to imply that what the teachers were going to teach would border on the provision of social relating skills to the learners. Definitely, what is not planned for may not be reflected in actual teaching and if it should be reflected then it may only be a case of chance. When the curriculum guide was studied, it showed that social relating skills is one of the objectives to be achieved through learning C.R.E. it did not show how it should be provided to the learners. Scores from learners' test especially from a question which expected the learner to show knowledge of social relating skills also indicated incompetence in the skills. This is because out of 343 candidates, only 10.0% (34) of them managed to score between 50-56%. This was indicative of average competence in identifying social relating skills. Given the fact that the majority of the candidates got below 50%, the pedagogical practices relating to this skill may be questioned. The results presented above shows that a lot is supposed to be done in the C.R.E classroom so that the learner is well endowed with those skills that will enable him/her interact well with those members of the society encountered in life. The pieces of evidence adduced from the study indicate that teachers either consciously or unconsciously do not lay emphasis on social relating virtues like respect. In life and especially where human beings interact, this virtue creates a bond

which fosters social unity. It is something that is taught and emphasized even at the very basic unit of the society which is the family. In religious education episodes, be it in the church or in school respect is talked about. In the bible, emphasis is laid on respect for God and humanity in general. In school in general the virtue of discipline will never be discussed without respect being mentioned. This is because of its harmonizing influence on the members of the society.

In a society where respect is not emphasized during value education, the worthiness of the members of the society may not be realized by the learner. The learner may not be able to show respect even to own self. Respect is shown through self expressions in which one manifests recognition of the worthiness of another in speech and action. The virtue can also be shown through active listening to what one is being told by those who are in authority or those who are not, provided that, they are concerned with the moral well being of the community. Peace is known to prevail in societies where people show respect to one another and it is also in this society that problem solving skills are made use of to ensure security of all. In Kenya, lack of respect for human life has led to destruction of property and life. This was evidenced by the post-election violence of 2007 and cattle rustling in the northern parts of Kenya. The study also revealed that teachers do not provide the learners with negotiating and consensus building skills. The negotiating skill is important in restoration of peace between individuals and even among the communities. Consensus building ensures that those steps taken towards peace building are adhered to and upheld for the good of all those involved in peace building. During the lesson observation, teachers were seen ignoring these skills even where key texts like the holy bible (RSV: Luke 6:17-49) brought them out clearly.

The study revealed that democratic skills and conflict resolution skills were not provided for in the teaching episodes. This happens although the C.R.E curriculum guide stipulates that democracy is a right and every Kenyan learner should be endowed with democratic principles and skills. During the lesson episodes, teachers appeared to be undemocratic as they dominated the lesson with learners being expected to accept moral prescriptions imposed on them by the teachers. There were no class debates or discussions on moral issues. Besides, the above conflict resolution which ought to have been taught in topics like 'the Galileean ministry' where Jesus met Pharisaic opposition and also in the 'Parable of the lost son'; these did not come out. A clear indication that this social relating skill is not given the attention it deserves. In teaching social relating skills Grimmit (2005) observes that teachers should provide for regular opportunities for self expression in which patience in dealing with others and active listening to others views is emphasized. This ensures development of respect among the learners. Teachers themselves should also

show respect to the learners by not ignoring their feelings and by showing empathy. Akech (2005) observes that teachers should acquaint the learner with co-operative skills, sharing skills, team work skills and team building skills. The research revealed lack of the above during classroom observations.

A part from the above, the teacher in inculcating the social relating skills in the learner should do so with recourse to skills of dealing with emotions. In this regard introspection skills where the instructor encourages awareness of preferences and feelings of others should be used. Once a learner knows how to deal with the feelings of others, Rao (2008) states that this learner will relate to them well, show sympathy or even empathy where and when it is needed without subjecting anybody to mental stress. Through empathy skills that are taught by teacher use of role-play and mock sessions, learners will learn other skills like co-operation and sharing which are basic ingredients of respect. These skills Aggarwal (2004) observes should be taught also by participation in play, work and by encouraging fair sharing in benefits and contribution in caring for people and the environment. Encouragement of the development of team spirit, an awareness of team needs and of the need for discipline are all strategies to be employed in teaching respect as social relating skills. These approaches seemed to be ignored by the teachers as the research reveals. Teachers are also expected to acquaint the learners with problem solving skills. Boss (2002) observes that the human society is in constant conflict because man is unable to solve his/her social problems using the laid down procedures. Given the foregoing, the ability of the learner to apply his/her thinking to the solving of problems will be key to success in life. There are more immediate gains to be had from bringing learners up as problem solvers. Problem solving activities stimulate and develop skills of thinking and reasoning. They utilize and make relevant the child's knowledge of facts and relationships. Getting results helps develop confidence and capability, the 'I can think this-out-for-myself' attitude. It can also provide opportunities for the learners to share ideas and to learn to work effectively with others, the 'Let us work-this-out together approach.

In teaching problem solving skills, the teacher, Johnson and Johnson (1992) state should encourage the learner to be involved in cognitive and affective processing. In other words, thinking and valuing are essential to problem solving. As such teachers should lead and encourage learners to brainstorm on problems that they encounter. Other than that they should engage learners on a number of problem solving exercises so that learners acquire competence in the same. During the brainstorming session, the problem should be analyzed and action plan drawn. Once this is done, the total picture of the problem should be looked into, related problems should be referred to, analysis and model of the plan should also be considered and the teacher should

provide support to the process of solving problems by the learner. Through this approach, the learner will be imbued with those skills needed in confronting life problems. Learners will also be trained not to jump into conclusions that in essence may complicate the problem further. During the research, it was observed that teachers did not offer opportunities for learners to solve various value related problems that they encountered in C.R.E. The problems were also mentioned haphazardly without putting them within their life contexts. Such an approach Nunan (1996) states, can easily water down teaching, especially where a serious issue like teaching social relating skills is concerned. Groenewegen (2007) in his study on conflict resolution in Somalia noted that social relating skills are important in bringing about harmony in the society and teachers should not overlook it when teaching C.R.E or any other religion. Though he used questionnaires and in-depth interviews only in his study, the points he made should not be overlooked.

Besides the aforementioned consensus building is another important social relating skill that the teachers are expected to inculcate in the learners. This is because in the process of building or promoting societal understanding, people have to be in one accord. Jesus said that his followers must be in one accord (John 15:4; Luke 11:17-18), the latter in which he says, a divided kingdom will not stand. These verses imply consensus building for sustainability of societal unity. It is in consensus building that negotiating skills are made use of. Teachers are supposed to provide opportunities for ensuring that learners engage in activities that require negotiations to be practiced. Through this Whitehurst (2002) asserts that learners will come to know how to go about issues that require making an agreement. Kyriacou (2008) suggests that provision of democratic skills is one of the duties of a C.R.E teacher. The Republic of Kenya (1999) education commission report reiterates the same. That in teaching this skill the teacher Groenewegen (2007) suggests should habitually and regularly encourage the application of democratic skills that is delegating, representing, transparency, accountability and equality because these are the key pillars of social unity. Democracy relieves student of living under oppression and libertine freedom, because in all social undertakings recourse is made to democratic principles. Free debates, discussions on value issues should be the benchmarks in value education. These practices did not come out clearly in the C.R.E lesson episodes which the study observed.

One other pillar in social relating skills is conflict resolution. This is because encountering conflict seems to be an inevitable aspect of social situation. Aronson (1978) defines life as that period of a person's stay on earth which is punctuated with irregular happiness. This implies living with conflict from within or from without. Conflict from within are problems which may emanate from the person himself. They may be psychological. On

the other hand conflict from without are due to one's interaction with the environment. In teaching the skill of conflict resolution, the teacher should acquaint the learner with conflict analysis skills. This is because, once the type of conflict is known ways of dealing with it can easily, be determined. In conflict analysis, the causes and consequences are looked into. One in this case is taught for example to learn what makes him/her angry and the healthy as well as the unhealthy ways to use in expressing anger. On top of that the need to face conflict rather than avoiding it is dealt with. This is followed by the typical strategies that one can use to handle conflict in a positive way. Tolerance is one such way, Cockburn (2006) states that the teacher should provide increasing opportunities for learners to practice tolerance of differences and interests in reasons for differences. Tabberer (1997) in her research in teacher effectiveness in teaching conflict resolution skills states that tolerance and conflict analysis taught well to the learners enables them to be mediators of peace first amongst themselves and later to the society. In enhancing the learners' capacity to resolve conflicts, they should be encouraged to adopt the right speech where they come to shun verbal aggression, verbal altercations and encourage use of affective vocabulary.

During the study the researcher expected to see teachers doing what is mentioned in the foregoing paragraph. This was actually true with the sub-topic. "Forgiveness of the sinful woman in Luke 7:36-8:3". The character of the woman was in conflict with the Jewish law and the Jews wanted to stone her to death. Jesus on the other hand wanted to save the woman from both the physical and spiritual death. Besides that temptation was also looming for Jesus in as far as adherence to Jewish law as a rabbi was concerned. Christ analyzed the conflict situation and resolved the matter without any problem. This approach seemed to have been ignored by the teachers and the situation now is such that learners are unable to amicably solve conflicts. Reason behind this occurrence being that conflict resolution is not taught in class as stipulated in the C.R.E teaching documents.

Teachers, Bennett (1991) states should in teaching social relating skills imbue learners with arbitration, intermediating and peace building skills. This is by first of all identifying those topics which deal with the aforesaid skills. This is then followed by the use of opportunities that allow learners to practice arbitration and mediation in class. Further opportunity should be given to the learner to participate in community development at a gradually widening range of levels. Teachers should also encourage learners to take responsibility for social relations involving themselves and for those not involving themselves. As things stand and as revealed by this study, teachers of C.R.E tend not to go to this extent. An explanation to these happenings would perhaps be inability to interpret the syllabus adequately or fuzzy pedagogical practice. Ryan (1989) observes that

character education may not yield much to man if it is eviscerated by journey man pedagogy or lack of teacher commitment. This suggests that these are errors of omission and commission as each C.R.E teacher should be able to interpret and implement the syllabus competently and professionally. Where this is not done, learners may not be able to relate well with themselves and even the other members of the wider society as evidenced in the Kisumu East district secondary schools.

CONCLUSION

Teachers in Kisumu East district secondary schools do not imbue the learner with the necessary social relating skills. This probably is due to lack of adequate knowledge of the same.

RECOMMENDATION

The curriculum content and the teachers guide should be made comprehensive and the content tied to the various social relating skills that the teachers are supposed to imbue the learner with in Kisumu East district secondary schools. Secondly, Teachers should be given an opportunity to undertake both pre-service and in-service courses to acquaint them with the social relating skills that they need to imbue the learner with as well as ways of doing so.

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