

INVESTIGATION OF CHALLENGES FACING THE TEACHING OF CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ON MORAL QUALITY AMONG STUDENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The standing of moral conduct among secondary school students in Kenya has been dropping in the recent past. The morals of college students and secondary graduates in Kenyan society in general fail to reflect the impact of teaching of Christian Religious Education (CRE) as an effective means of character transformation among the learners in secondary schools. This study was therefore designed to investigate challenges facing teaching of CRE in secondary schools in Kenya. Descriptive survey design was used to conduct the study with the aid of 20 trained CRE teachers as research assistants and researcher. Participants were 600 CRE students (form 1 and form 2) in 20 secondary schools randomly selected in ten counties, namely; Nakuru, Nyandarua, Narok, Kisii, Nairobi, Meru, Muranga, Lamu, Kitui, Taita Taveta, Kajiando, Bomet West, Kajiando and Isiolo. . The key findings revealed negative attitudes on the subject among teachers and students, use of traditional methods of delivery and lack of relevant ministries in churches and schools, among others. The study utilized descriptive design. The study recommended that these key challenges be addressed in innovative ways by relevant stakeholders.

KEYWORDS: Moral Transformation, Instructional Methods, Need-Based Support, Holistic Curriculum, Tic Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The moral standing and general conduct of the Kenyan secondary school student in the wider society has been dropping in the recent past. The morals of the secondary school graduates in colleges and society do not reflect the acquisition and practice of values learnt through Christian Religious Education (CRE). Holistic education, Christian Religious Education (CRE) and moral formation and instructional strategies. The Education Act of 1968 empowered the religious sponsor if Kenyan primary and secondary schools. Since then, the sponsored secondary schools have assumed responsibilities of ensuring the religious wellbeing of learners in their schools is taken care of through pastoral programmes which primarily inculcate the Christian religious doctrines, beliefs and values according to theological orientation and content of the sponsoring Christian denominations. Given the large diversity of the sponsor theologies among protestant churches and between protestant and Catholic churches, it is a challenge to entrust sponsor to guide moral life according to biblical perspective. The CRE curriculum has biblical allusions in many topics that can guide CRE teachers on best instructional strategies that would meet the national, parental, church and personal aspirations on moral lives of secondary school students who go through the CRE curriculum. However, the moral practices of secondary school students have continued to raise great concerns. The behavioral indicators include sexual sins, their consequences such as abortions, dropouts and more. This study focuses of finding out how any changes in the way CRE teachers teach CRE to their students might improve moral quality of the students.

Global, national and local perspectives on the two variables have been reviewed. The study has utilized two theories to guide data collection, analysis and recommendations for desired changes. Holistic curriculum theory developed by Miller (1998) posits that teaching of CRE should integrate religious knowledge with practical application in learner's life and in wider society in which such learners influence. This theory has been reviewed by several scholars, including Mahmoud (2012) whose words clarify the philosophy of holistic curriculum as 'A main element of holistic education is its focus on the interconnectedness of experience and reality' (p.179). The second theory used in this study is *Divine Command Theory* that posits that 'Actions are right or wrong because they accord or conflict with the commands of God'. This theory was developed by Immanuel Kant. It helps to establish that moral standard for Christians is prescribed by God and recoded in the Holy Scriptures as norms. This theory was the most appropriate guide for the analysis of data on dependent variable in this study. The theory assumed that God revealed in the Bible relates with His believers through commands, although He gives choices and aids fulfilment of the commands. The study also assumed that CRE students were perfectly inclined and able to obey everything taught by their CRE teachers such that improving instructional methods would improve moral lives of the students.

Rationale for Teaching Christian Religious Education in Secondary Schools (Case Study of Scotland)

In the words of the author of national report in Scotland on *Curriculum for Excellence: Religious and Moral Education. Principles and Practice*. In words of the author, 'Religious and moral education has strong associations with learning for citizenship, enterprise, international education, creativity and sustainable development'. (p.4). The implications on instructional strategies used by CRE teachers in secondary schools in Kenya need to content and include holistic applications to different aspects of life. The article sought to justify the teaching of religious education to children and in Scotland in general but with specific reference to teaching of CRE in schools. Four reasons cited by the author. First, to create awareness of variety of doctrines, beliefs and practices by studying various world religions in units like comparative religions taught in secondary schools in Kenya. The goal noted is to enable the Christian learners to appreciate and respect beliefs of others and learn to live with them. Second, CRE is intended to enable learners to respond in godly ways in all matters of human experience. Third, CRE is expected to enable learners to develop skills of reflection, critical thinking, godly discernment and capacity to make critical decisions in life. Did teachers need to be trained that way in the universities in Kenya, be role models in all aspects from a biblical perspective and assessment is relevant to applications in life? Fourth, it is expected that graduates who have done CRE are able to transform society in the way they live and serve.

Implications on CRE Curriculum in Ireland and UNESCO: Is CRE Curriculum in Kenya in Need of Review Needed to Accommodate Expanded Instructional Strategies?

The twenty-first Century UNESCO Report prepared by a research team (Delores Commission, 1996) has cited two principles needed to guide Education relevant to 21st Century. The pillars of learning and learning through life in order to live in harmony with dynamics of change in various contexts. Zhao (1999) reviewed the four pillars in his article, *Pillars of learning for the Reorientation and Reorganization of Curriculum: Reflections and Discussions*, and expanded them as 'learning to know, learning to do, learning to live with others, and learning to be' (Zhao, p. 1). The philosophy of learning how to learn focuses on rote learning for factual knowledge, learning to do emphasize application of what the learners have done in the lesson in order to gain competence, *learning to live together* as advanced by Delore (1996). *Learning how to be*. The emphasis was to develop learners who experience complete fulfilment in holistic ways; moral, intellectual, cultural, cultural and intellectual dimensions. According to section 9 the Irish Education Act (1998) one of the functions of

a school is: *“To promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school.” (Le Cheile: A Catholic Schools Trust, 1996, p. 3)* Applying this recommendation to teaching of CRE in secondary schools in Kenya, this is the scope the CRE curriculum should cover in order to guide the scope of content CRE teachers should include in their content coverage.

Problem Statement

The problem was that moral quality among the students in secondary schools in Kenya did not reflect moral values expected to be taught in CRE lessons by CRE teachers. Concerns expressed by parents, teachers, educational managers, researchers, church leaders and wider community on cheating in exams, incidents of sexual immorality with disturbing evidence of abortions and pregnancies, as well as tribalism were widespread.

Research Questions

- What are moral challenges among students in the secondary schools studied in the eleven counties?
- Is there a relationship between instructional methods and moral challenges faced by secondary school students?
- What are the current teaching methods being used by CRE teachers in relation to their capacity to facilitate godly transformation of moral life of students?
- What changes need to be adopted in teaching of CRE in order to bring about moral transformation among students in secondary schools in Kenya?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to improve moral life of the CRE students in selected secondary schools in Kenya by improving instructional methods. The purpose of the study was to underscore the role of holistic Christian education that covers spiritual, emotional, moral, social, intellectual, and economic. The study made a positive contribution in sensitizing the readers on the fact that human being is spirit, soul and body

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study have a wide spectrum of possible users. CRE curriculum developers may use results to review the curriculum. CRE teachers in Kenya may use to improve their instructional methods by teaching as holistic subject and using a variety of instructional methods.

Research instrument on methods of teaching CRE and effect on moral life of learners in secondary school in Kenya

Assumptions of the Study

The main assumptions for this study included but not limited to:

- Those only instructional methods would bring about moral transformation of CRE learners.
- That CRE teachers were all born again and living morally upright so that they could be role models of transformed lives.

- That the total environment in school and out of school was supportive to application of moral values taught in CRE.
- That the learners themselves were committed to God for purpose of moral transformation so that CRE was a facilitator of their goal.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical Review of Empirical Studies on Moral Challenges among Students in Secondary Schools in Kenya

A study was done by Gechiko, Katola and Muindi of Kenyatta University in 2013 in Seventh- day Adventist churches in Nyamira County. The teaching of Christian Religious Education (CRE) provides the teacher with an opportunity to address the multi-dimensional needs of the students taking CRE in secondary schools in Kenya. Although statement in the study claims to have collected data, no reference to data analyzed in the conclusions neither is there evidence of data collected, analyzed and discussion of findings. The scope of the study (SDA churches only is rather narrow theologically and geographically and therefore less useful as a reflection of how teaching of CRE in secondary schools in Kenya was influencing Christian moral character formation in Kenya. The authors focused on highlighting the importance of holistic Christian education without any attempt to answer the how question. These gaps are addressed in this study as data analysis, discussion of findings, conclusions and recommendations indicate.

Current Teaching Methods being Used by CRE Teachers in Relation to Their Capacity to Facilitate Transformation of Moral Life of Students

A study was carried out by Waithera (2014) in Muranga County. The purpose of the study was to assess the role of CRE in transmission of moral values learners in secondary schools. The stated problem was that moral lives of college student who have done CRE in secondary schools did not reflect godly character as was anticipated to have been achieved through teaching of CRE in secondary schools. Theory used was Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning. The study used descriptive survey design. The study targeted 28 secondary schools from which 56 CRE teachers, 28 heads of discipline and 1180 Form III students, total of 1264 possible participants. Through simple random, 142 participants were selected. Self-administered questionnaires and face-to-face interview were conducted; data analyzed using frequency distribution tables, percentages, and bar graphs. Capturing outstanding statements from majority participants, 'moral development was greatly influenced by: CRE syllabus; moral belief of the students; and the methods used by secondary school CRE teachers'. Based on key findings, the study recommended that teachers should cultivate an atmosphere of trust and act as role models; parents should create conducive home environment for the child's upbringing; CRE should be made a compulsory subject in secondary schools; school administration should ensure that school rules are seriously followed and educators, especially quality assurance officers, should make visits to the schools to ensure that teachers use learner-centered methods. The research gaps identified in this study were; first, no between learners, teachers and God was mentioned the scholar. Moral reasoning alone does not guarantee transformation of human beings from a Christian perspective, God's interaction with human beings guarantees Christian moral transformation. Theory is not appropriate. The current study has attempted to address the gaps by use of holistic curriculum theory and divine command theory because human needs are multidimensional and by obeying God in all aspects of life, God empowers one to experience moral transformation by the power of the Holy Spirit (see 2 Corinthians 3: 17-18, "*The Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being*

transformed glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit”, (Ryre Study Bible, 1995, p.1850). The text brings out the truth that Christian morality cannot be separated from ongoing work of God the Holy Spirit working in the lives of learners of CRE during their secondary school lives and after. The study done by with era assumed that college students might have backslidden after high school and there are several factors that influence the moral behavior of any Christian at any one time just it happens with other human beings. Situational ethics was assumed.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey design was used since the study only measure of central tendency (mean, mode, median), measures of dispersion (range, standard deviation and variance), distributions (percentages, frequencies) and relationships (correlations). The study was carried out in ten counties, namely; Nakuru, Nyandarua, Narok, Kisii, Nairobi, Meru, Muranga, Lamu, Kitui, Taita Taveta, Kajiando, Bomet, Kajiando, Isiolo and Kiambu. Twenty trained CRE teachers were trained by the researcher to aid in data collection as research assistants. The researcher collected data in a number of schools as well. Participants were 2000 CRE students (form 1 and form 2as whole classes of fifty, 50, students each on average who did CRE). Student population was 4000 students in 20 secondary schools randomly selected in ten counties. The total population was 4 church leaders, 16 CRE teacher trainees, and 24 CRE teachers. All participants were purposely selected because they were the only ones available for information needed. They all filled questionnaires. Structured, semi-structured and open-ended self-administered questionnaire was used using face to face technique for maximum efficiency which targeted 100% response rate. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 to determine Spearman’s correlation with focus on relationship between gender and religious concerns. Summary tables, frequency tables, histograms and pie charts were used. Ethical considerations were observed with respect to research participants, research process and the researcher.

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The response rate was 90%. Ten percent were incomplete questionnaires among students. The four objectives were interrogated using the data analyzed and interpreted, objective by objective.

Liker scale (Table 1) presented a summary of findings with respective research questions as RQ1-RQ4 and at least a biblical text that would assist the CRE teachers to respond to outcomes of each variable through adoption of recommended instructional methods.

Table 1: Summary of Findings, Objective by Objective and on Each Variable in the Likert Scale Used

S/N	Variables Studied	S.A	A	SWA	D	SD
1	Societal norms often contradict my Christian norms. <i>Var RQ1. Moral conflict (1John 2:15-16).</i>	15	162	115	87	42
2	Peer pressure challenges my Christian doctrine, faith and practice. <i>Var RQ 1. Peer pressure (2Cor. 6; 14-18).</i>	120	98	40	35	20
3	My gender influences my ability to apply CRE teachings. <i>Var RQ 2. Gender</i>	75	160	40	25	10
4	My interaction with social media challenges my capacity to apply teachings of CRE. <i>VRRQ1. Use of media</i>	30	145	121	92	33
5	My parents’ faith is influencing my ability to live morally at school. <i>VarRQ4. Parental influence (Prov.22:6)</i>	39	197	127	51	20
6	The traditional beliefs and practices of my leaders are a challenge to my efforts to apply teachings of CRE for quality moral life. <i>Var RQ 3. Leadership at various levels</i>	43	192	128	31	12

7	Different churches have different views on moral standards on various moral issues. <i>Var RQ3. No moral standards in the Church.</i>	57	194	127	38	3
8	There is need to change the way CRE is taught in secondary schools to enable youths to apply Christian teachings. <i>VarRQ4. Recommendation</i>	91	178	96	25	13
9	Current teaching methods in CRE are for head knowledge. <i>VarRQ3. rote learning, intellectual dimension</i>	170	70	30	12	3
10	My culture presents resistance to my efforts towards living a godly life, especially my moral life. <i>VarRQ1. Culture</i>	120	40	30	20	15
11	If I am caught by police, I will save more by bribing than going to court. <i>Var RQ1. Convictions (Eccl.7:7, bribery corrupts the heart).</i>	30	40	50	90	120
12	As a Christian, it is my right to use my body the way I want. <i>Var RQ 1 value of sanctification (Romans 12:1-2).</i>	10	20	25	30	130
13	Methods teaching CRE need to be changed. <i>VarRQ4. Change teaching methods</i>	90	70	30	20	15
14	Methods used to teach CRE are transforming lives of students in godly ways. <i>Var RQ 4. Effectiveness of current. Rationale for change.</i>	10	12	20	80	100

DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

The findings in table 2 were considered useful to a variety of stakeholders identified under significance of the study. The researcher observed that a wide scope of factors influenced the moral quality of learners and that instructional methods used in CRE as a causal variable is only a factor. ANOVA test would have strengthened the study and future researchers were invited to conduct similar studies with this objective in mind.

Moral challenges among students in the secondary schools identified in the eleven counties Three indicators of immorality, here defined as ungodly conduct, given to students and other participants were frequency of cheating in general, sexual immorality in school and practice of tribalism. Distributions reported were as summarized in a histogram.

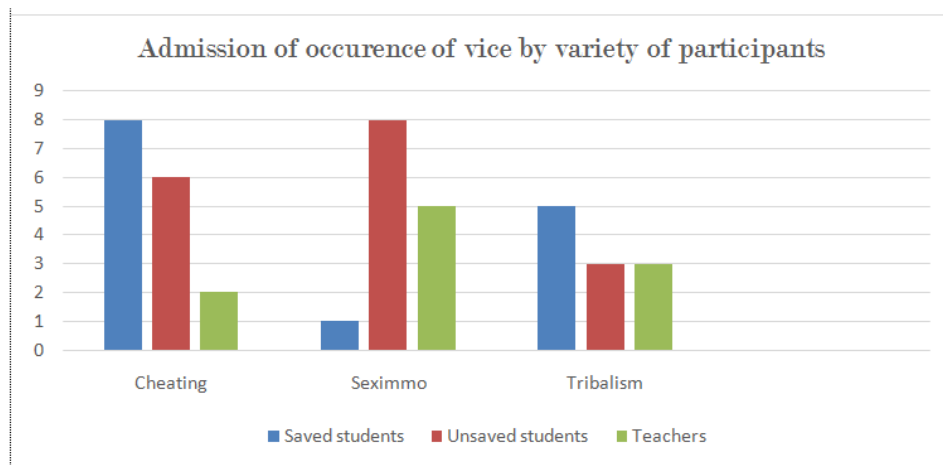


Figure 1: Admission of Occurrence of Selected Moral Vices According to Status and Spiritual Standing of the Participants (Moral Dimension)

The study interrogated the readiness to admit that certain moral vices existed in the schools studied. Born again (saved) students and those not born again responded differently as reflected in the histogram. The findings indicated that saved students were more honest in admitting that cheating was quite frequent among students than the unsaved. This disclosure was significant in informing those to whom findings of this study were useful, notably as an evidence that

current cheating in national exams has a moral dimension to it and teaching of CRE can contribute towards minimizing the moral vice. On sexual immorality, the unsaved students were who admitted that the practice was frequent among students were more than the saved students. Following the other responses on moral practices studied, the saved students were less informed of the practice because they were not participants in it. Teachers who participated in the study were of sexual immorality among students as the findings reflected. This finding was significant to CRE teachers, school managers, parents, chaplains, church leaders and other curriculum implementers. Looking at findings on practice of tribalism in secondary schools, saved students scored highly in their admission that the moral vice was active. Teachers and unsaved students were at the same level of admission that tribalism was actively practiced in secondary schools. This finding was important to stakeholders afore mentioned and the interested parties in the Government of Kenya as well as researchers who are concerned about addressing the problem of tribalism in Kenya.

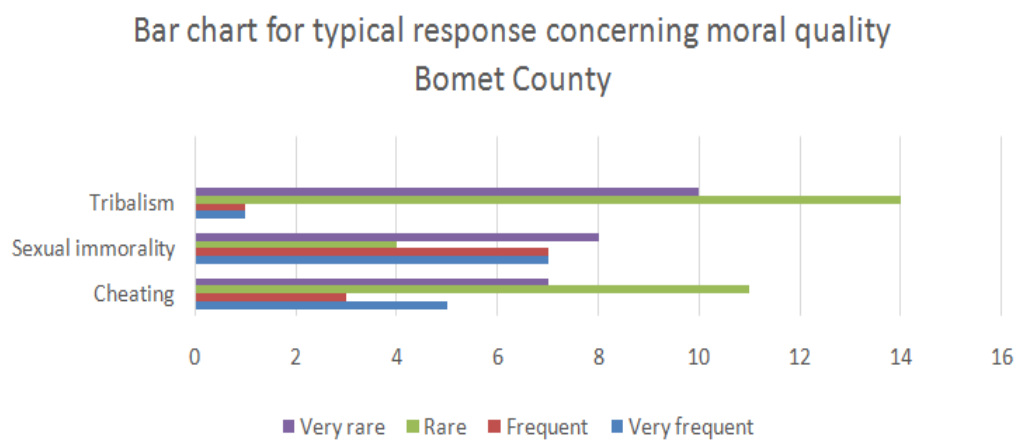


Figure 2: Frequency of Occurrence of Each Moral Vice According to Strength of Opinions

A selected report in secondary schools studied in Bomet County expressed that tribalism was Rare, perhaps due to Kalenjin tribal dominance or homogeneity in most schools. Different opinions were expressed by students on prevalence of sexual immorality.

Relationship between Instructional Methods in Use and Moral Challenges Faced by Students

Findings on this objective were subjected to Pearson’s Correlation test without concern about coefficient since the study was done under descriptive design. A relationship of 0.828 as value of r was obtained. This indicated there was a strong relationship between instructional methods used in CRE and moral outcome of the students. The study supported that change of instructional methods was necessary.

Table 2: Findings of Correlation Test between Existing Teaching Methods and Moral Outcomes as Expressed by Participants r=0.828

Correlations			
		Sex	CRE teaching
Sex	Pearson Correlation	1	.172
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.828
	N	4	4
CRE teaching	Pearson Correlation	.172	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.828	
	N	4	4

Current Teaching Methods Being Used by CRE Teachers and Their Capacity to Facilitate Transformation of Moral Life of Students

The findings from likert scale indicated 80% score by responses from participants who expressed that instructional methods used were focused on rote learning with no devotional dimension or practical applications to moral quality of learners. Participants who recommended that change of teaching methods were necessary were 75% on 'agree' and 'strongly agree', a relatively high consensus. The visual presentation (Figure 3) provides summary of highs and lows along the likert scale (table 2).

Changes Recommended for Adoption in Teaching of CRE in Order to Bring About Moral Transformation among Students in Secondary Schools in the Selected Counties

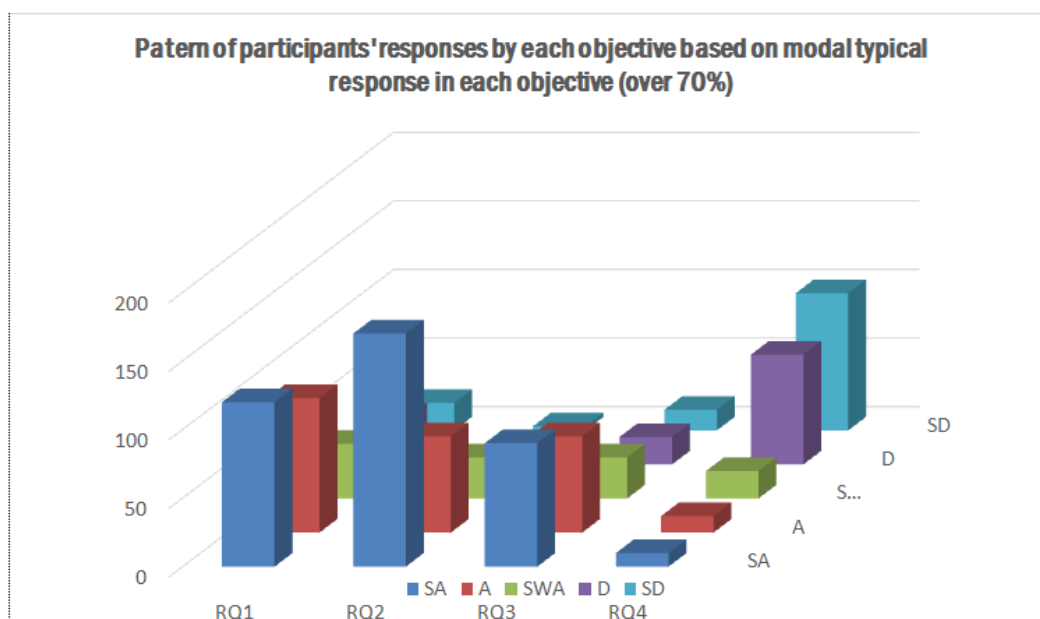


Figure 3

Discussion of Findings on Selected Variables Based on Visual Impact

RQ1. Peer pressure challenges my Christian doctrine, faith and practice. RQ2. Current teaching methods in CRE are for head knowledge. RQ3. Methods teaching CRE need to be changed. RQ4. Methods used to teach CRE are transforming lives of students in godly ways. Participants strongly agreed that peer pressure was a strong factor influencing moral practices of secondary school students. This finding was important to all users of this study as a guide towards addressing peer pressure whenever it would be negatively influential. Other findings in this figure were considered useful to various users.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

When asked to identify five problems facing teaching of CRE in secondary schools in urban areas, top five responses were;

inadequate materials in teaching and learning process, negative attitude towards CRE as a subject by both learners and teachers, strict and conservative preachers at the churches who demonize the youth and thereby making them run away from the church, rigid religious doctrines which do not allow the young to be free to express their demands-this is reflected

in the manner pupils hate CRE

When asked five reasons secondary school students should be exposed to church life interactions, the top five reasons given were; to get spiritual nourishment, comfort and mutual aid from church members, experience of forgiveness, love of God, thank God for His gift of life.

When asked to suggest ways in which teaching of CRE can be improved to transform learners, the outstanding responses were;

Use of ICT integration in teaching (power point, Christian videos, movies). Incorporating teaching of with guidance and counseling programmed, using it as a platform to organize for forums aimed at inculcating moral standards among learners, incorporate more life skills in CRE lessons, teach the laws of God at a tender age, use of learner-centered teaching techniques.

CONCLUSIONS

Other recommendations directly from participants were; Make CRE compulsory (80% of participants, introduce group work and presentations by students in teaching of CRE, teachers to be role models, parents to be involved in ensuring moral quality of their children is godly through teacher-parent consultative meetings to appraise the students, inclusion of guidance and counseling services and pastoral care in the CRE curriculum, every student to own a Bible and make use of it through organized Bible studies and use of the same by CRE teachers.

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