

The Role of Teaching Christian Religious Education to the Development of Critical Thinking Amongst Kenyan Secondary School Students in Kisumu East District, Kenya

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Abstract

Previous research has consistently reported that Kenyan students' moral standing and general conduct in the wider society reflects incompetence in critical thinking. The scenario in which irrational behavior has dominated the character of the Kenyan youth has brought to contention whether the moral well being of the youth is on a downward trend suggesting that either the teaching of critical thinking through C.R.E is defective or the Kenyan education system as a whole is defective. Another possibility is that the syllabus does not contain relevant elements that could enable students acquire and develop the needed critical thinking skills. One other likelihood could be the existence of a discrepancy between the C.R.E program objectives and the instructional practices meant to achieve them. From the forgoing, it was evident that the nature of this discrepancy is yet to be established for effective intervention strategies to be put in place to arrest the apparent downward trend in the acquisition of moral critical thinking skills. Specifically the study determined whether or not aspects of critical thinking skills are employed by teachers in their (teachers) instructional practices in Kisumu East district secondary schools. Four instruments used in collecting data included: a graphic-observation rating scale, a learners' critical thinking achievement test, an in-depth interview schedule and documents analysis guide. The study population comprised 48 teachers and 3225 students. Out of the total population of 3273, 16 teachers and 343 learners were selected using simple random sampling technique. The obtained results suggested that teachers rarely used the elements of critical thinking skills that could enable the learner make accurate moral decisions. Another notable finding was that the curriculum and the syllabus guides did not elaborate on the elements of critical thinking skills that teachers ought to use during C.R.E content delivery.

Key Words: Objectives, Critical Thinking Skills, Moral Values.

Introduction

One of the stated aims of education in Kenya is to promote social justice and morality by instilling the right attitude necessary for the training in social obligations and responsibilities among the youth (Republic of Kenya, 1999). The presupposition has been that the teaching of C.R.E is a critical component that enables the school going youth to acquire the above. To achieve this, it is necessary that the nation must ensure that pedagogical practices in education are geared towards realizing this aim. It is also assumed that those who are just are critical minded as they are able to make rational decisions based on individual and societal morality (Nsubuga, 2007). This is why in teaching C.R.E the learner must be exposed to techniques and values of critical thinking (Strain, 2008). On the basis of the stated C.R.E objectives the discipline must be used to enable the learner acquire critical thinking skills (K.I.E, 2003). Critical thinking involves judgmental reflection on facts of life especially those that appear to be confounding. Fisher (2006) states that it is human nature to attempt to make meaning out of things that are encountered in life. Critical thinking as such involves making meaning out of things by mental reflection process which entails skilled, active, interpretation and evaluation of observations communications, information and argumentations (Fisher & Scriven, 1997). Even though reflective thinking may appear natural, for it to be productive to an individual and his or her immediate environment, it needs to be organized into a logical whole. This calls for systematic instruction in an organized system such as a school where youths are taught to think rationally (Paul, 2007).

A question that may be asked is “why should one think critically or of what importance is critical thinking?” Nelkon (2008) states that the need to understand our environment as human beings demands critical thinking. Secondly, the author states that human nature demands full knowledge of the cosmos, whether spiritual or physical. It is only critical thinking that will enable man or woman to comprehend the world. Critical thinking Geisler (2008) states, enables man to understand spirituality as articulated in spiritual texts especially the bible. On account of these he states that every learner of C.R.E must be taught to think critically. In Kenya according to the R.O.K (1999) educational commission report, education must enhance the development of critical thinking in the learner, so that the learner may not fall prey to cunning manipulation of some individuals. On the basis of the above, the report and the C.R.E syllabus recommends that the learner at his or her formative stage in life must be taught critical thinking through C.R.E.

Odipo (2009) reports that critical thinking can be taught using C.R.E. To be able to achieve this he recommends that the teacher should acquaint the learner with clear reasoning skills on religious matters. In doing this, the teacher should consistently emphasize on advancing moral issues as they emerge from religious episodes. Thus logic and appeal to precision in reasoning should dominate the teaching-learning process. The above should lead to justification of

religious concepts through induction. Rao (2008) supports the same position and adds that appeal should be made to reliability and accuracy of reasoning by the learner to ascertain the truth of a claim. These must be accompanied by the use of affective strategies and exploitation of the micro and macro skills. Through this the learner's critical faculties shall be tuned not to look at religious and moral life issues casually but to reflect on them diligently. For the above to be achieved the teacher must, through C.R.E, enable the learner to acquire the skills of critical thinking. Ellenwood (2007) suggests the use of analytical vocabulary in which critical religious or moral issues are analyzed to determine their usefulness to an individual person. Davis (2008) adds that the teacher should provide the social implications of the lesson content by asking the learner thought provoking questions on moral issues, identifying values for the learner, leading learners in valuing and employing the use of value sheets. All these are elements necessary for the acquisition of critical thinking skills (Fisher, 2006).

Grimmit (2005) states that critical thinking can be taught to the learner by using C.R.E if the value issues raised in a lesson episode apply to the learner. As such the author suggests that the teachers should enable the learner to mentally visualize, how the values apply to themselves. Secondly, value analysis should be done by the teacher for the learner to evaluate and imbibe them. The forgoing should be accompanied by imbuing the learner with the skills necessary for application of the values to self, and above all critically linking value issues to the philosophy of teaching C.R.E in Kenya. By linking the value issues to the philosophy of teaching C.R.E in Kenya, the learner will be in a position to realize the importance of the Kenyan philosophy of education in not only shaping his or her character, but moral life as well. In Kenya even though such proposals have been made on how to conduct moral education (C.R.E) it appears like they have not been used to enhance the desired achievement of the learner in acquiring critical thinking skills. Mwalulu (2007) and Odipo (2009) noted that even though the need to enable the Kenyan youth to think critically is well articulated in the C.R.E syllabus, many of the learners who graduate at K.C.S.E are still unable to use their critical faculties well. This is evidenced by the fact that it is the school leaving youths who are normally used by politicians to cause mayhem in the society (Mwalulu, 2007). To the forgoing, Oyaro (2009) adds that Kenyan reform institutions are full of the youths who should belong to secondary schools rather than penitentiary institutions. Majority of these youths have committed crimes that could easily be avoided if only they could use their critical faculties to make right moral judgments. Normally, where one cannot think critically, making sound moral judgment and taking sound moral action becomes a challenge. This causes one to be a victim of emotions which may lead to untold immorality (Murphy-O'Connor, 2003).

Although the need to examine C.R.E teaching with the view to determine whether it enables the Kenyan youth to think and act critically was first made by the R.O.K (1976) and later by Okullu (1983) no action was taken. Studies that have been attempted by Moya (1978) indicated a lack of teaching-teaching resources for social studies and concentrated on the generalities of implementing the social studies curriculum in primary schools in Siaya district. It did not address issues of value education or pedagogy in critical thinking in either primary or secondary schools. Secondly, this study did not get to the real issues of teaching C.R.E which is an aspect

of social studies. Were (1988) who also attempted to study the implementation of social studies curriculum by the Teachers Advisory Centre did not address the issue of moral education and moral incompetence pointed at by Okullu. Other studies by Malusu (1997) and Kowino (2002) only looked at the development of the C.R.E curriculum and its evaluation by the Teachers Advisory Centers respectively. The role of C.R.E in promoting the acquisition of critical thinking skills was not dealt with. This is a limitation that has been taking place while the youth are constantly filling penitentiary institutions for lack of critical thinking which should guide both their thinking and action. In view of the forgoing, the study aimed at determining the possible commissions and omissions in C.R.E teaching that may have led to lack of the capacity to think critically and act morally amongst Kisumu East secondary school students. Specifically, the main focus was to take cognizance of all those factors that might be impeding effective critical thinking skill and moral skills acquisition amongst students enrolled in C.R.E classes. The gap between the C.R.E curriculum objectives and actual pedagogical practices surrounding education in critical thinking in secondary schools were 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 critical thinking skill identification and acquisition by the learners in Kenyan secondary schools with particular focus on Kisumu East district. The study specifically attempted to: determine the critical thinking skills that the teachers of C.R.E develop in the learners, teacher application of critical thinking skills in enhancing learner ability to make value judgment and learner application of critical thinking skills on value issues.

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 classes were chosen because it is at this level of psycho-social development that using critical thinking skills to make accurate moral decisions 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 simple random sampling technique. Using the Fischer et al. (1995) method of determining sample size, a population of 343 form two students was randomly sampled for the study. The instruments used in the study included: a graphic observation rating scale which assessed the teacher's attempt at developing critical thinking skills in the learner, a learner's test which assessed learner competence in critical thinking, an in-depth interview schedule and a documents analysis guide which evaluated teacher knowledge and planning to teach critical thinking. 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 reviewed to make them suitable for data collection. 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. 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 texts.

Results and Discussion

The study received back 96 and 343 duly scored observation rating scale and learners' tests from 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.

Critical Thinking Skills that the Teachers of Christian Religious Education Develop in Learners

The study aimed at determining the skills employed by the C.R.E teachers to enhance the learner's ability to think critically and make rational moral judgment and acquire and develop moral insights. It was important to determine these critical thinking skills since objectives of a program normally give a picture of what content the program should adopt in order to achieve the stipulated objectives. A program like moral education through C.R.E requires a critical reflection when implementing it so that it enhances rational thinking, rational speech and well thought out action (Mbiti: 2002). The findings indicated that in the major part of their lesson presentation, teachers never used the skills as expected of them. The learners were also found to lack competence in the same (see tables 1 and 2 respectively). There is a probability that these occurrences are due to lack of ideas on how to employ these skills or sheer incompetence in the same as a result of inadequate training. Learner incompetence is probably linked to teachers not doing a good job in as far as providing the student with critical thinking skills is concerned (Akech, 2005). Details of the findings are shown in tables 1 & 2.

Table 1: Teacher use of Critical Thinking Skills in Teaching C.R.E

Activity	Responses					
	Always		Occasionally		Never	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
i. Teacher use of clear reasoning.	10	10.4%	22	22.9%	64	55.7%
ii. Teacher appeal to consistency in argument on moral issues.	07	7.3%	09	9.4%	80	83.3%
iii. Teacher use of logic.	20	20.8%	28	29.2%	49	50.0%
iv. Teacher appeal to precision in reasoning.	08	8.3%	10	10.4%	78	81.2%
v. Teacher using rules/principles of reasoning.	08	8.3%	15	15.6%	73	76.1%
vi. Teacher appeal to relevance of argument on moral issues.	02	2.0%	07	7.3%	87	90.7%
vii. Teacher judging whether an argument is advanced or taken for granted.	00	0.0%	01	1.0%	95	98.9%
viii. Teacher judging adequacy of reasoning by	00	0.0%	07	7.3%	89	92.7%

	the learner.						
ix.	Teacher ascertaining the truth of a claim.	01	1.0%	07	7.3%	88	91.7%
x.	Teacher use of affective strategies.	00	0.0%	04	4.2%	92	95.8%
xi.	Teacher use of macro-abilities.	01	1.0%	02	2.1%	93	96.9%
xii.	Teacher use of micro-skills.	01	1.0%	00	0.0%	95	98.9%

As shown in table 1, results revealed that in their teaching 66.7% of the lesson use was never made of the skill of clear reasoning. To further ascertain teacher's development of critical thinking skills in the learners, lessons were observed to confirm the teachers using the skill of appeal to consistency in argument on moral issues. The results showed that in a limited portion of the teaching exercise was this skill always used, occasionally in a negligible part and in 83.3% of the lesson presentation the skill was never used. The teacher use of logic was always in 20.8%, occasionally 29.2% and it was never used in the better part of the teaching episode. Teacher appeal to precision in reasoning was never used in 81.2% of the teaching activity.

In addition, the lessons were also observed to establish teachers' use of the rules and principles of reasoning in a bid to develop critical thinking in the learner. Results showed that this approach was minimally used in the teaching episode. Otherwise in 76.1% of content delivery it was never used. Teacher use of inductive conclusion and justification of moral issues was equally minimal as shown in the table. Besides, further investigation of teacher development of critical thinking skills in the learner using the approach of appeal to reliability or accuracy of reasoning revealed that this was also weak, as it was never used in 90.6% of the lesson. Added to the forgoing lesson observations were made to confirm whether or not teachers employed the approach of appeal to relevance of argument on moral issues in teaching critical thinking. The research indicated that this was weak, as the approach was always and occasionally used in a smaller percentage of the lesson. Otherwise in 90.7% of content presentation the skill was never applied. The approach of placing judgment on whether an argument is advanced or taken for granted was occasionally used in 1.0% of lesson episode and in the bigger chunk of the lesson it was never used. Besides, teacher judgment of adequacy of reasoning by the learner was never used in 92.7% of the lesson episode. The research went further to establish whether or not the teachers used the skills of ascertaining the truth of a claim in developing critical thinking in a learner. The study revealed that in 91.7% of classroom interaction it was never used. Teacher use of affective strategies took a similar dimension. The micro-abilities skill was always used in a small percentage of the lesson presentation and in 96.9% the approach was never used. Lastly, the research endeavored to determine the use of macro-skills in developing critical thinking ability in the learner. The findings revealed that this skill was always used in a small portion of the lesson while in 98.9% of the instructional exercise it was never used.

Information gathered from the learners test was almost similar to that of observation. This is revealed by the information in table 2.

Table 2: Learner ability to Think Critically (n=343)

Items	Score Rating Range out of 100				
	0 - 15 f	16 - 30 f	31 - 45 f	50 - 64 f	65 & above f
i. Learner reasoning clearly	305	15	10	07	06
ii. Learner consistency in reasoning	291	35	06	06	05
iii. Learner showing precision in reasoning.	291	33	09	07	02
iv. Learner advancing relevant arguments.	308	23	09	01	02
v. Learner show of macro-skills	309	20	09	04	00
vi. Learner show of micro-skills.	309	18	11	00	05

In order to leave no doubt as to whether teachers imbued learners with critical thinking skills or not, the learners were given a test to confirm this. The learners were tested in various critical thinking elements which expected them to show skillful reasoning typical of clear reasoning that they may have been imbued with in the course of being taught C.R.E by their teachers. The result from the test was as follows. In the element of showing clear reasoning ability 330 learners scored 0-45, only 07 scored 65 marks and above. In the element of showing consistency in reasoning, 291 students scored 0-15 marks, other scores were as the table indicates. Thus a weakness was revealed in the learner use of the two skills in critical thinking. Added to the above, the learners were tested to determine their competence in showing precision in reasoning. Their performance was almost similar with that in the foregoing areas. That is, only 02 scored 65 marks and above. The skill of advancing relevant arguments was also inadequately shown by the learners as most of them (340) scored below the pass mark. Majority of the students as such scored below average marks in the foregoing areas. This put the pedagogical practices which could endow learners with the needed critical thinking skills into question.

Normally where a learner has been well endowed with critical thinking skills, by the teacher, Fisher (2006) states that he or she should be in a position to display both micro and macro skills in reasoning. To prove whether teachers in secondary schools in Kisumu East district imbued their students with these skills, the learners were given a test focusing in these areas. In the element of use of macro skills in critical thinking 309 students performed poorly thus scoring between 0-15 mark and non scored 65 marks and above. In the area of micro skills 338 scored 0-45 marks, none scored 50-64 marks and 05 scored 65 marks and above. This gives the reason for the inability of learners in this area to think convergently and divergently. Teachers seem not to have done their jobs properly hence the learners show of weakness in critical thinking.

Data on the teacher use of critical thinking skills was also generated through an in-depth interview session with the teachers. The teachers were asked to confirm whether they used the

logical principles of clear reasoning. Only two of the teachers confirmed this to be true although eight of them reported that the approach is too philosophical to be used in secondary school teaching. The other six teachers admitted never using the aforementioned approach. The teachers accepted that the skills of micro- and macro-abilities were not known to them. In other words they admitted not using them at all. Results from the teaching documents such as the lesson plans and schemes of work showed that in their teaching endeavors, critical thinking is not planned for. The past examination papers also manifested lack of questions which demanded rigorous mental activities. Investigative thinking both convergent and divergent were not catered for in the examinations. The forgoing result was indicative of the fact that critical thinking though important in developing a learner into becoming a complete decision maker in life is not developed in our C.R.E classrooms. Teachers seem to concentrate on the first three levels of Bloom's (1956) cognitive domain objective; analyses, syntheses and evaluation are ignored. In C.R.E, the learner is expected to apply what he/she has learnt in daily life situations. Definitely, as mentioned by Fisher (2006) he/she cannot apply what is imposed on him/her. He/she has to tenaciously ruminate on the religious issues at hand after which he/she can make them part of his way of life. Moreover, Ryle (1990) observes that a religious issue carefully thought out by an individual and imbibed by the same, does not become a dogma of life but a giver of direction in one's life, thoughts, speech and practices. This view is also held by Santayana (2007) who observes that the beauty of religious values lies in one's ability to apply them in life that engenders peaceful social co-existence.

The research findings showed the inability of the teachers to imbue the learner with critical thinking skills as the reason for irrational utterances by those who graduate from secondary schools in Kisumu East district. It may also be the reason for all manner of corrupt practices in both the civil and the political offices, which in many cases has led to the loss of both life and property. Nelkon (2008) while commenting on the general life of one who has studied C.R.E states that this person's thought, speech and action should be value filled. It should be a life of both spiritual and mental examination. Mental examination is only possible in that person who is able to think critically on the values knowledge that he/she has acquired more so in the classroom. Critical thinking is actually productive thinking which should be positive. Cases where the products of an educational system cannot think productively show questionable pedagogical practices and are reflective of the teacher's inability to implement the C.R.E curriculum with the fidelity that it deserves. It has been observed that the learner may at times absorb the opinions of the teacher. The moral structures of the teacher can in effect be imposed on the learner. A teacher who employs this belief in his/her instructional practices can be a good influence in the moral development of his/her learners. Values on the other hand should not be imposed on anybody; instead, learners should be subjected to serious mental rumination so that once accepted, the learner is able to account for them. For this reason and the need to enable the learner live responsibly with religion the K.I.E (2003) saw it reasonable to advise that the secondary school student be trained to think critically. In training a learner to think critically, the teacher must ensure that the students are encouraged to value the authority of their own-reasoning capabilities, consider it natural that people may differ in their beliefs and points of view, to question their own reasoning and the reasoning of others. If a

learner is to become open-minded and critical, his/her thinking should not be left to chance. The learner must be taught to engage in worthwhile thinking (critical thinking). Critical thinking describes how something is being thought about. The teacher should teach the learner how to question, when to question and what questions to ask. The learner should be taught how to reason, when to use reasoning and what reasoning methods to use, (Fisher, 2006).

The research in the first instance endeavored to determine whether or not teachers used clear reasoning in teaching values. It was noted that teachers in their content presentation of values did not use this skill as revealed by the findings. They did not expose learners to the basic skills of reasoning such as investigating and labeling of the attributes of religious issues at hand. In this instance, the teachers did not engage the learners in those discussions that could enable them to discover the moral truths that are taught using C.R.E. In addition to the above, information concerning moral practices such as honesty were not given to the learners adequately. In inculcating critical thinking skills in the learner, the instructor should appeal to consistency in argument on the issue at hand, the use of logic and appeal to precision in reasoning (Nyasani, 2007). This involves the methods of comparison of things to notice similarities and differences in them. It involves taking note of the characteristics of issues at hand and considering the order, causal and logical connections in them. The foregoing should be followed with determining whether the learner has used the principles of reasoning or not and also establishing the reliability and accuracy of moral facts being advanced.

What is stated above is ideally what should take place in the classroom where the learner is taught to think critically. The study reveals that in reality, this seems not to take place in the Kisumu district public secondary school C.R.E classrooms. Moral issues appear not to be given the attention that they require. This is so with those issues that require critical thinking such as the pursuit of justice. The teachers were found not to sequence their arguments on moral issues to make them logical so that conclusions may be arrived at inductively. A value claim could be made by a learner in the classroom during learning; the teachers did not try to ascertain their truths. The implication is that the products of the C.R.E classrooms in secondary schools will never be people who can make sound and rational judgment on issues that affect them as individuals or as members of a collective society. The learners' test yielded similar results. In questions that demanded the student to demonstrate critical thinking by use of analytical language, the scores were low with the majority scoring less than 10. %. This is an indication that instruction meant to inculcate critical thinking in the learner is wanting. In teaching critical thinking especially in a C.R.E class, the learner must be exposed to analytical vocabulary (Korzybski, 2008). The author goes ahead to mention those terms that the learner who is taught to think critically should be exposed to. These terms are clarity, logic, precision, accuracy, justification, relevance, principles, assumption, adequacy and acceptance. Such terms are synonymous with evaluation and if used well will allow the learner to think precisely and make the right moral or value oriented decisions.

In order to further ascertain the development of critical thinking in the learner investigated the teachers' use of micro-ability and macro-ability skills. It was found that this does not happen.

Micro-abilities have to do with the use of independent critical thinking principles. In the use of micro-abilities, the teacher should train the learner to think for himself/herself especially in as far as moral issues are concerned. Through this, the learner may become an independent thinker with a constantly enquiring mind. The learner through the use of micro-abilities should be made a fair thinker with a strong sense of reasonableness. The lessons were observed to determine whether teachers enabled the learners to develop micro-abilities in thinking. The researcher expected to see teachers take the learner through self questioning episodes like: what do I believe? How do I come to believe this? Do I really accept this belief? The absence of this approach was noted. To achieve this, the teacher should act as a role model to the learner by showing the student how to think independently and judge self. It was revealed that many times in their presentation this was not done. Teachers did not share their curiosity with the learners neither did they bring moral issues that could stimulate critical thinking to the classroom. In addition, the teachers seemed not to expose the learners to productive, provocative and open-ended questions. Teachers should include thought provoking moral questions for the learners to explore and reflect on them further (Paul, 2007). A problem corner can be established where a moral question of the day or of the week can be on offer with materials or books to stimulate thought and action. Through this approach, critical thinking abilities on moral issues can be inculcated in the learner. Failure of teachers to develop micro-abilities of the learner means that the student will not be brought up to think critically. When a learner is not trained to think critically in the classroom, he/she may turn out to be a failure in decision making (Odipo, 2009). This is true on matters of value. In Kisumu East district, this is the situation, the author adds, the products of the Kenyan education system reflect this. Kelly and Mukinda (2009) link the Kenyan cabinet's inability in making decision on post election violence issues to the forgoing scenario.

The study also endeavored to establish the use of the learner's macro-abilities to inculcate critical thinking skills in the pupils. Macro-abilities are the processes involved in thinking and organizing separate elementary skills (such as defining meanings of words accurately) into an orderly sequence of thought. What must be guarded against in using this mode in developing critical thinking is the tendency to; fragment, focus on parts and ignore the whole and to show global abilities. On the basis of the above, the research expected to observe teachers using the cognitive strategy of fostering insight into mechanical skills of the learners. The learners for example were expected to be told why a given value issue has to be the way it is and not otherwise. They were supposed to be informed why a given approach is the best method to solve a moral problem. This would expand a learner's capacity to think critically and come up with better decision in life (Akech, 2005). The unfortunate case is that in the lessons studied during this study, teachers did not employ this method. Value issues which demanded critical thinking were ignored and those that were mentioned were never subjected to proper mental rumination. The outcome of the above is more likely a lack of critical thinkers among learners in Kisumu East district public secondary schools as they are not imbued with such skills.

The forgoing suggests that there is a purpose to teaching and learning process, there is a purpose to our thinking and purposes for rules, institutions and human activities. Exploring the

underlying purpose is one key strategy. For the learner, religious episodes are often 'just there' as purposeless pre-ordained packages they must learn about. But the world is not given, it must be created. All human activity presupposes some purpose, reasons for doing things as well as ways of doing them. Often, there is another way to do things and some ways that are better than others. The learner who is able to understand the purposes of things will be in a better position at the appropriate time to judge and understand them. A learner may have moral lessons but what is morality? They may know about moralists but what do moralists do? What do they study? How do they find out? What questions might a moralist ask about for example abortion? What is the purpose of a particular moral lesson? The question for the critical thinker is not just what are we doing but why we are doing it. A keen critical thinking pedagogical practitioner must bear in mind the foregoing. This is because evaluation is fundamental to critical thinking; the evaluation of ideas, evidence, arguments, actions and solutions. The process of evaluation involves developing and using criteria of judgment. Teachers must enable the child as a critical thinker to realize that expressing a preference 'I prefer it', is only one way and not necessarily a reliable one for judging the rightness of outcomes. Whenever learners are judging something, the teacher can ask what they are evaluating; the purpose of the evaluation and the criteria being used.

It was revealed by the current study that teachers do not take learners through critical thinking skills on value issues that require them before a conclusion on the matter is made. Affective strategies, the use of micro- and macro-abilities thinking strategies were not made. Religion was given to the learner in its raw form without the learner being guided through cognitive processes of digesting the information. Well, the learners were able to recall information but where they were asked to deal with value issues at higher cognitive levels like analysis, synthesis and evaluation, they could not cope. Even though C.R.E is about ethical living, the ethics cannot just be imposed on the learner; they must be taught why they need them and why they need to accept them (Dinabindhu, 2008). This calls for the learner to be a critical thinker so as to be able to make rational decisions on moral issues. If not, then the learner may end up being a victim of religious aridity and thus may not live responsibly with religion.

In support of its observation on the teacher development of critical thinking skills in the learner using macro-abilities, the study refers to Taneja (2007) and Geisler (2008) who observe that in teaching critical thinking, the learner should be encouraged by the teacher to study the criteria that are used in evaluating things. Having distinguished criteria, the learner can be asked to judge between them. What are the most important criteria for judging which material is the best? Which facts relating to the material are relevant to this conclusion? What are the consequences of this view? Where does it lead your thinking next? Learners can be enabled to evaluate any value of idea, object, action or event by a process of open-ended questioning. Only by exercising critical judgment will they become critical and fair minded thinkers. The foregoing is what teachers of C.R.E should be doing. Unfortunately they do not do it. It is not done faithfully as the research result showed. This explains why many Kisumu East who have graduated from our education system or from C.R.E classrooms cannot think critically as expected. The C.R.E teachers' pedagogical practices seem to have failed to imbue the learners

with the affective micro- and macro-abilities that they may use to think critically. Critical thinking if taught well especially in a religious education class enables the learners to take responsibility for what they hold. The learners are expected to learn to justify their beliefs and values.

Teacher Application of Critical Thinking Skills in Enhancing Learner Ability to Make Value Judgment

The research endeavored to determine the objective of application of critical thinking skills in imbuing the learner with the ability to acquire morals and make correct value judgment. Findings in this area indicated a trend similar to what has been shown earlier. Teachers rarely used the pedagogically sound skills in training the learner to think critically on moral value issues. This is another pointer to teacher apparent ignorance of the skills or inadequate teacher guide in the curriculum handbook (Sinawarta, 2006). Results were as shown in table 3.

Table 3: Teacher Training the Learner to Think Critically on Value Issues

Activity	Responses					
	Always		Occasionally		Never	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
i. Teacher training the learner to think critically on religious issues/use of analytical vocabulary.	07	7.3%	13	13.5%	76	79.2%
ii. Teacher enabling learners to grasp the learning of value issues	09	9.3%	15	15.6%	72	75.0%
iii. Teacher providing social implications of the lesson content.	11	11.5%	29	30.2%	56	58.4%
iv. Teacher asking learners thought provoking questions on moral issues.	03	3.1%	28	29.2%	65	67.7%
v. Teacher identifying values for learners.	04	4.2%	25	26.0%	67	69.8%
vi. Teacher leading learners in valuing.	04	4.2%	25	26.0%	67	69.8%
vii. Use of value sheet.	06	6.3%	06	6.3%	84	87.1%
viii. Application of values to self by learners.	06	6.3%	01	1.0%	89	97.7%
ix. Value analysis by the teacher.	22	23.0%	18	18.8%	56	59.3%
x. Teacher providing moral lessons learnt from C.R.E content.	10	10.4%	15	14.6%	72	74.8%
xi. Teacher relating content to real life situations.	05	5.2%	07	7.3%	84	87.5%
xii. Teacher linking C.R.E content to Kenyan philosophy of teaching the discipline.	20	20.9%	27	28.1%	49	51.0%

From the table 3, results from the classroom observation revealed that in their teaching, the teachers always trained the learners to think critically or used analytical vocabulary on moral issues to a limited extent and in 79.2% of their content delivery this was never done. The skill of

enabling the learner to grasp the learning of value issues was always used in 9.3% of the lesson presentation, occasionally it was minimally used and in the major section of the lesson episodes it was never used. Teachers did not provide the social implications of lesson content in 58.4% of their presentations.

The study went further to ascertain whether or not the teachers asked learners thought provoking questions on moral issues when training them to think critically on the value issues. The results revealed that this was below the standard pedagogical expectations because in 67.7% of the lessons it was never used. The approach of teacher identifying values for learners was occasionally used in 26.0% of the lesson activity and in the better part of the content presentation it was never used. Teacher leading learners in valuing was always used minimally in the lesson, occasionally to a negligible percentage while in 87.1% of the teaching-learning episode it was never used. The teachers were also observed to confirm their use of value sheets in teaching critical thinking on values. The results showed that the approach was never used in 97.7% of the lesson episode. Value sheets are important when it comes to identification and assessment of values (Groenewegen, 2007). The study was also conducted to confirm the teachers' usage of the skill of applying values to self by the learner. Results show that this skill was always used in 23.0% of the lesson presentation. It was used occasionally in 18.8% of the content delivery and in the major part of the lesson the skill was never used in imbuing the learner with critical thinking skills. There is some evidence of seriousness though in using this approach as teachers tend to concentrate on what might be tested in the main exam (Ayot and Patel, 1992).

Learners can also be trained to think critically on value issues using C.R.E by the teachers employing value analysis approach. The study endeavored to confirm whether this skill is applied by teachers in Kisumu East district. Results indicated that this was done to a small scale occasionally and in 74.8% of the teaching exercise it was never used. Further observation indicated that teacher provision of moral lessons learnt from C.R.E content was always used minimally in the lesson presentation. Occasionally it was used in 19.8% of the lesson and in 58.3% of the teaching exercise it was never used. This was followed by looking into teacher relating content to real life situations or learners' experience. The results revealed that this approach was always used in 5.2% of the lesson episodes while in the larger part of the lesson it was applied occasionally or ignored altogether as reflected in the table above. The research further endeavored to determine whether or not teachers of C.R.E linked value issues in the discipline to Kenyan philosophy of teaching it. This was also found to be wanting as the results showed that the approach was always used in 20.9% of the lesson and in 28.1% it was occasionally used, while in half of the learning exercise it was never used.

Learner Application of Critical Thinking Skills on Moral Value Issues

To achieve the objective of determining whether or not the learner is able to apply critical thinking skills on moral value issues, they were given a test. The findings revealed generally that learners are weak in this area. Their performance in the test was expected to reflect the

teachers input in as far as teaching critical thinking to the learners is concerned. Once critical thinking skills are acquired Fisher (2006) and Rao (2008) states that the learner should be able to apply them in situations that require valuing. Thus in answering questions asked in the test, the learners were expected to show critical thinking skills in valuing. Learner inability to show competence in application of critical thinking skills on moral value issues implies inadequate and inappropriate pedagogy (Okullu, 1983). The results were as shown in table 4.

Table 4: Learner application of Critical Skills on Value Issues (n=343)

Items	Score Rating Range out of 100				
	0 - 15 f	16 - 30 f	31 - 45 f	50 - 64 f	65 & above f
i. Learner use of analytical vocabulary.	340	02	01	00	00
ii. Learner knowledge of social implications of values.	275	41	17	05	05
iii. Learner show of logical valuing skills	319	18	02	02	02
iv. Learner use of value sheet.	343	00	00	00	00
v. Learner linking Kenyan philosophies of education to values.	339	03	01	00	00

From table 4 above, when the learners were asked to confirm their skills in using analytical vocabulary in valuing and later their performance analyzed, 343 of them scored marks between 0-45 thus the scores were far below average, which indicates inadequacy in using analytical vocabulary in valuing. In showing knowledge of social implications of values 333 learners scored 0-45 marks and only a minority scored 65 marks and above. Scores here were also weak. The learners were tested to determine their competence in the use of logic in valuing, only 04 of them got 50 and 65 marks and above. This performance also revealed a serious weakness. When asked to indicate their knowledge and use of value sheets, all the 343 students scored marks between 0-15. Another area where the learners registered massive failure was in linking the Kenyan philosophies of education to values. In this case, all learners' marks were below average. The above result is indicative of inability to employ critical thinking skills learnt in class to valuing. Where learners are not able to apply what they have learnt in class in their daily activities or if they cannot reflect it in their performance in academics chances are that pedagogical practice relating to the skill under examination was not properly done or it was ignored by the teachers' altogether (Davis, 2007). Results from observations made in class and also from the test given to the students confirms either of the two possibilities.

The study went ahead to conduct an in-depth interview with the teachers to determine how they used C.R.E to train learners to think critically on moral issues. The sixteen teachers responded that they did this by asking learners how they would apply various religious issues to

their (learners) lives. This the researcher interpreted to mean use of a lower cognitive approach in teaching critical thinking. It also meant failure on the side of the teacher to use analytical vocabulary. The teachers were asked to identify and explain how they enabled learners to grasp the value issues as they emanated from various C.R.E lesson episodes in the classroom. In these question fourteen teachers out of sixteen mentioned that they did this through textual analysis where the learners would be asked to explain how they understood the C.R.E texts. The remaining two teachers admitted not using this approach. On the use of social implications of the lesson content the sixteen teachers concurred that this skill was applied to learners as individuals and not with reference to the entire society. The sixteen teachers also admitted during the interviews that they did not ask learners thought provoking questions on moral issues with reference to the affective domain objectives. They said most of the questions they asked centered on the cognitive domains of teaching C.R.E as this is what the examination demands.

The in-depth interviews also revealed that two teachers attempted to identify values for learners and even led them in valuing. Ten teachers admitted not using this approach while four teachers showed lack of knowledge in using these approaches. In addition to the above, the teachers were asked to state whether or not they used value sheets in teaching critical thinking, this seven teachers admitted using it though not consistently, the other nine teachers indicated lack of knowledge on the use of value sheets in providing critical thinking skills to the learner. In application of values to self by the learners, value analysis and provision of moral lessons, five teachers admitted using these approaches, while the other eleven mentioned that this was not an examination requirement. The sixteen teachers accepted relating C.R.E content to the learner experiences. This latter response contradicts what was observed in class where about thirteen percent showed that they on a number of occasions relate C.R.E content to the learners' real life experiences.

Results from an in-depth interview with teachers on linking C.R.E content to Kenyan Philosophy of education showed that, this was assumed by the sixteen teachers. This contradicts what was observed in class, where about 49% of C.R.E lesson presentation was characterized by linking the discipline to Kenya philosophy of education. Upon critical analysis of the documents the study realized that the schemes of work never mentioned, use of analytical vocabulary, use of value sheets, provision of social implications of C.R.E value episodes was not planned for. The syllabus extract together with curriculum guide did not mention them. The latter documents only mentioned that C.R.E teaching should be used to achieve the Kenyan philosophy of education. How this was to be done was never mentioned. The past examination papers showed lack of use of analytical vocabulary, value sheets and reference to Kenyan philosophy of education.

The forgoing results are indicative of the fact that, a lot should be done in the teaching of critical thinking to the youth. In cases where a learner is not made to acquire the skills of judgmental thinking on religious matters, the learner may only memorize the C.R.E content without knowing how they affect his/her life as a person living with other members of human

community. Critical thinking on religious matters enables the learner to emancipate self from blind indoctrination that one may be a victim of, if not taught to think critically.

The study revealed that teachers did very little to train learners in using analytical vocabulary when making decisions on religious matters. Thus, as C.R.E was being taught, various events were not subjected to judgmental examination where different parts of religious issues would be separated and their relationships looked at in order to have a more balanced view of the events. In more than seventy percent (70%) of the teaching learning episode, the learners were not systematically taken through the lesson episodes so that they could identify, isolate and grasp the value issues as they emerged in the classroom. The fact that teachers rarely pay attention to the afore-stated issues has been reported by Ellenwood (2007) and Calin (2009). The implication is that there is a major anomaly, as the results shown above puts into question the various aspects of the methods used by teachers to foster the acquisition of the skill of critical thinking in learners. It may be assumed that the learning experiences provided to the C.R.E studies are less than wholly worthwhile. It may also mean that that the nature of teaching and methodology in teaching C.R.E has failed to inculcate the ability to think critically on religious issues by the learner. Almost all the teachers never planned or adequately used the above approaches in teaching critical thinking using C.R.E. Further to the above, in teaching critical thinking on religious matters or when using religion to teach critical thinking, the teacher Lehr, Katzman, Clinton and Sullivan (2007) posit, should draw learners' attention to the social implications of the C.R.E lesson content, ask the learner challenging questions on moral issues, identify values for learners and lead learners in valuing by use of value sheets. The study results showed that all those were done minimally with teachers not planning for them. In the examinations there was minimum provision for them and where they were used during classroom activities chance played a role. Value sheets were never known to the teachers as indicated in the interviews and the documents studied. This result is indicative of the fact that the teaching of critical thinking or C.R.E issues is superficial and did not cater for the learner's as well as syllabus needs. This accounts for the learners' isolation from the value laden behavior that they should exhibit.

Ellenwood (2007) states that teachers have the responsibility of training learners to think critically. This is what was expected during the study. During the many lessons which were observed, the teachers engaged learners in C.R.E lesson activities in which they read and recalled religious facts as they emanated from the bible and the course books which were read by the learners in class. Systematic isolation and identification of value as they apply to the learner was omitted. In addition to the above, analysis, synthesis and evaluation of values was omitted by teachers in a bigger chunk of their presentation of C.R.E content. Further to the above, the teachers did not consistently engage in activities which allowed the learner to state the advantages of values and disadvantages of vices. The learner many a times was not given the opportunity for quiet reflection on moral issues. Omissions of the foregoing activities would imply that the learner would competently narrate religious episodes without realizing their value in personal life. This also implied that intellectual growth without change in attitude that could have led to moral competence was also lacking. Such learners have not grasped the

necessary values and have also not learnt to think critically. The implication was that they will not have known the social implications of the lesson content. Such learners may not know how to interact with others within their social milieu. In teaching critical thinking on moral values, the teacher should ask learners thought provoking questions; they should draw learner's attention to vices and remind them to be mindful of the other people's welfare. Principles of the golden rule and the use of the value sheets should be put into account. The value sheets enable the learner to identify and record values in the order of their priority as they emanate from the various C.R.E episodes. This should be followed by a thoughtful consideration of value consequences, value pricing and connecting values to life experiences. Agran and Wehmeyer (2005) posit that, the forgoing should be accompanied by telling the learner how values can be applied in daily life activities. The learner should be well informed of the need to make use of analytical skills in applying values to life. If this is done, the learner will have been liberated from taking impulsive actions which may jeopardize peace in the society.

This study revealed that many a times the teachers did not guide learners in making value analysis. Secondly, use of the value sheets was not known to the majority of teachers. The teachers seemed not to have realized that they are important value education agents who needed to be committed to value education. Rational analytic approach to teaching of value skills is wanting. This is the reason for the unfortunate moral scenario in Kisumu East district secondary schools.

The teachers were expected to link the C.R.E content to the general life philosophies of the nation. (Rao: 2003) indicates that it is the task of C.R.E to develop in young people the specific values that all those concerned (the society) consider necessary for a mature and responsible member of the community. The R.O.K (1999) education commission report states that observance of the life philosophies of the nation is the indication that one is a mature member of the Kenyan community. Therefore, in order to bring forth a morally mature individual, C. R. E must be used to achieve the noble goals of education in Kenya. Thus a link must be made between C.R.E and the national goals of education, for example, national unity. This is because the government wants all its citizens to work together in harmony. In Kenya today, there are people of different nationalities, ethnic groups, different church communities or denominations. The government wants us all to deepen our realization of what we have in common, rather than the differences that exist. The C.R.E teacher should foster national unity by showing pupils practical ways of eliminating any element in their lives, their speech, and behavior which goes against this goal or philosophy of national unity. Only critical thinking skills offer an opportunity to realize the achievement of this goal. The omissions cited above will only result in producing learners who would not make rational decisions after sitting in classroom learning C.R.E which has not imbued them with proper decision making skills.

Conclusion

The study made the following conclusion based on the findings:

The teachers did not develop critical thinking skills in the learner. This seemed to have jeopardized the capacity for critical thinking in the learner in Kisumu East district secondary schools.

Recommendation

The study recommends that the curriculum guide in C.R.E should be reviewed to include and make elaborate the critical thinking skills that the teachers need to use in inculcating in the learner, the ability to think critically. Secondly, the teacher's in-service training should be enhanced to enable them (teachers) acquire critical thinking skills.

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