

Influence of Role Play Teaching Technique on Secondary School Students' Acquisition of Life Skills through Christian Religious Education in Ndhiwa Sub-County, Kenya

Daniel Omondi Onyango
PhD Student of Pedagogy
Maseno University, Kenya

Abstract:- Christian Religious Education (CRE) is a carrier subject of Life Skills content in Kenyan Secondary School Curriculum. The purpose of this study was to establish the effect of Role Play Teaching Technique (RP) on secondary school students' acquisition of life skills through Religious Education in Ndhiwa Sub- County, Kenya. The study adopted a Quasi Experimental Research Design involving Solomon Four Non – Equivalent Group Design. The population of the study was all Form Four CRE students in public co- educational day secondary schools. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 169 students and simple random sampling was used to determine four schools with similar characteristics to participate in the study. RE students' Life Skills Test was used to generate data. CRE teachers were provided with a RP guide for teaching the experimental groups the selected CRE topic. The reliability of the tool was estimated by use of Kuder Richardson's Formula and the reliability coefficient was .78. Data was analyzed with SPS. The research question was tested at $\alpha = .05$ using a t- test. The study results indicated that RP positively affects secondary school students' acquisition of life skills. The t- test results indicated that the difference between the mean gains was statistically significant at .05 in favour of the experimental group. The study concluded that there is a significant relationship between the life skills acquisition of students taught CRE using RP and those taught using the traditional methods. Teachers need to use RP to enhance their life skills pedagogical approaches so as to attain the intended objectives of learning CRE.

Keywords:- Acquisition, Role Play, Christian Religious Education, Life Skills, Traditional Method.

I. INTRODUCTION

Life skills are set of human skills acquired via teaching or direct experiences that are used to handle problems and questions encountered in daily life (Nivedita & Singh, 2016). They are positive behaviours that encompass a mixture of knowledge, behaviour, attitudes and values and designate the possession of certain skills and know how to do something positively. The strength of

positive behaviour depends upon the depth of life skills acquired by the individual (Subasree, Nair & Ranjan, 2014). Secondary students in Kenya are provided with Life Skills (LS) training to foster good critical thinking skills, interpersonal relationships develop a sense of self-respect and respect for others and contribute positively to the transformation of self and society as a whole Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD, 2006). Xaxx (2014) asserts that people with solid sense of life skills are less easily coerced by others particularly where peers pressure is intense, hence, the need for life skills education. In Kenya, students are trained to acquire life skills through carrier subjects like Christian Religious Education in secondary schools.

➤ *Role Play as a Teaching Technique*

According to Webster's New World College Dictionary, (2014) role play is described as a way of acting of a specified part of a person or a character as a way of therapy or psychotherapy. In this thesis the intention of the use of role play is not far fetch from the dictionary definition. In the use of role play, students are expected to act out a part of a story or a certain scenario, usually based on the real-life issue. This is attested by Altun (2015) who defined role play as a method or strategy in which students are expected to act out a specific role through saying, doing and sharing. Through the process of role play, the students gain competence in the life skills characteristics such an enthusiasm, self-confidence, empathy and critical thinking Alabsi (2016).

Mwaka, Nabwire and Musamas (2014) aver that role play is a heuristic/ constructivist teaching technique which involves indirect instruction where the teacher facilitates learning by posing questions, guiding, indicating sources of information, and sharing of ideas, problems and solutions. Further, it encourages learners to display elements of scientific reasoning such as recognition of the problem, formulation of the hypothesis, construction of mental models and reaching possible conclusions (Otewa, 2015). Randall and Cox (2015) assert that role play not only provides a variation in teaching techniques but also allows a more student centered approach to learning. Whilst in the orthodox method only the bold students manage to raise questions, in a role play all students are actively involved.

By getting students to play roles, they come to feel issues, experience tension and conflict and enter into bargaining and cooperation. As a means of increasing students’ participation, role play can stimulate interest in the subject and encourage students to continue reading. Role play is a very well-known teaching method that helps students to become familiar with their natural environment where society dwells. This is because role play that is introduced at the beginning of learning can prepare learners to deal with situations that they would come across in their future endeavours (Sullivan & Clarke, 2013). Put together with the objectives of learning life skills, role play facilitates life skills enhancement among the learners.

➤ *Religious Education and Life Skills*

Debate on the place and purpose of Religious Education (RE) was vigorously pursued in Britain in the 19th century and even generated a lot of research work (Lord & Barley, 1973). For more than half a century after 1870 Education Act, the main question remained to be how RE was to be offered in the country’s schools. By 1944, school curriculum in Britain was conceived as two fold-secular instruction and religious instruction. Distinction was made between evangelization and education, as the former was affecting religious teaching in the country’s schools.

Religious education has been an important subject of study in USA because of its role in equipping learners with LS (Eric, 1994). It was first conceived as Comparative Religion or Science of Religion in the early years of its inception as a discipline in the 1950s. Hull (1982) notes that by the second half of the 20th century the study of religion had become a prominent and important field of academic inquiry. This made several state agencies and local school districts to create mandates and guidelines regarding the teaching of religion (Eric, 1994). For instance, California were among the first to publish the handbook on life skills, civic education and teaching about religion. The National Council for Social Studies gave a statement on its position about religion that stated that knowledge about religion was not only a characteristic of an educated person, but it was also necessary for understanding and living in a world of diversity (Eric, 1994).

The Kenyan secondary Religious Education syllabus, Kenya Institute of Education ([KIE], 2002) provides the following as the objectives of teaching CRE: acquire social, spiritual and moral insights to think critically; and to make appropriate decisions in rapidly changing society, appreciate and respect their own; and other peoples’ culture, acquire the basic principles of Christian living; and develop a sense of self-respect and respect for others, promote international consciousness through the understanding of universal brotherhood and sisterhood; and contribute positively to the transformation of self and society as a whole.

However, (Bowen & Karanja, 2012) contend that the Kenyan learning institutions have been plagued with students’ characters that does not indicate life skills

competency. Cases of students’ bullying others, theft cases, strikes, students’ fights dominate the learning institutions despite the teaching of religious education which is viewed as a carrier subject to life skills. Oyaro (2009) adds that Kenyan reform institutions are full of the students who should belong to secondary schools rather than penitentiary. Peace Net- Kenya (2007) reported that students in Ndihiwa Sub- County were being used by the politicians to disrupt meetings organized by the leaders.

Teachers are the implementers of the Life Skills (LS) curriculum. Their teaching strategies towards the life skill objectives affect the learner LS acquisition. Role play allows teachers to make their teaching engaging, active, real, and student – centered to achieve their teaching and learning goals. CRE has not adequately achieved its intended objectives (Makewa & Ngussa, 2018; Kowino, 2012). Failure of CRE to achieve its objectives may perhaps be attributed to teachers’ instructional techniques. This study investigated the influence of Role Play teaching technique on Secondary school students’ acquisition of life skills through RE curriculum.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

➤ *Research Design*

The study involved a Quasi-experimental research design using the Solomon Four Non-Equivalent Control Group Design (Gall, Borg & Gall, 2003) .The design was preferred because the classes involved in the study remained intact , this was to avoid disrupting the school schedule (Coolican, 1999; Wachanga, 2002). It assesses the plausibility of pre-test sensitization effects, that is, whatever the mere act of taking pre-test influences scores on subsequent test administration (Clark & Elen, 2006). It also ensures that administration of pre-test to two groups and post-test to all four groups (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996; Wachanga, 2002 & Mwangi, 2007). The independent variable was the RP teaching technique while student’s acquisition of life skills was the dependent variable with teachers being intervening variables. The design is structurally represented as shown in **Table 1**.

Group E ₁	Pre-test O ₁	Treatment X	Post- test O ₂
E ₂	-	X	O ₅
C ₁	O ₃	-	O ₄
C ₂	-	-	O ₆

Table 1:- Quasi – experimental, Pretest- Postest, Non-randomized Control Group Design

➤ *Population and Sampling Techniques*

The population of the study consisted of all 1850 form four CRE students. Purposive sampling was used to select four (4) co-educational schools from the four main administrative units of the study area. A random sample of 169 students was selected for the study.

➤ *Research Instrument*

The research instrument developed and used for the study was CRE Students Life Skills Test (CRESLST). It consisted of three parts; preliminary information of the respondents, multiple choice questions and defining issue life skills test. The CRESLST multiple choice questions and defining issue life skills test were of standard objectives adapted from past question papers of Kenya National Examinations Council. The test was used both as a pre-test and a post-test.

➤ *Validity and Reliability of Research Instrument*

Validity is the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of data actually represents the phenomenon under study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The test was examined for both content and face validity. The validation was done by two CRE teachers and a team of experts at Maseno University in the department of Educational Communication, Technology and Curriculum Studies. The opinions of the experts were used to improve the instrument before its use in the actual study. Further, it was piloted for reliability.

This was to ensure that it yields consistent results or data repeatedly (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003). The KR21 formula was used to estimate the reliability coefficient of the tool. KR21 was deemed appropriate since the test was administered once and its data was continuous (Borg &

Gall, 2003). The reliability coefficient was estimated at 0.78 which was deemed reliable given that its coefficient was above the recommended 0.7 threshold (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000)

III. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The research question was:

What is the difference in life skills acquisition between students taught CRE using RP and those taught using the traditional methods?

Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value
E ₁	40	5.61	2.28	81	-.336	.738
C ₁	43	5.79	2.52			

Table 2:- Showing Comparison of Students' Life Skills Pre- test Mean Scores by Gender Categorization

The results in Table 2 indicate that the students life skills achievement mean score (M= 5.79, SD= 2.52) of C₁ was higher than that of (M= 5.61, SD= 2.28) of E₁. The difference between the two means was however not statistically significant at .05 level (t (81) = 4.906, p>. 05). This means that the two groups, C₁ and E₁ were similar before commencement of the study.

Group	N	Mean Max= 24	SD
E ₁	40	11.41	3.73
E ₂	39	10.59	1.92
E ₃	41	8.20	2.89
E ₄	44	7.49	2.22

Table 3:- Students Life Skills Post- test Mean Scores and their Standard Deviations

The mean scores of the experimental groups E₁ (M= 11.41, SD= 3.73) and E₂ (M= 10.59, SD = 1.92) were higher than those of the control groups C₁ (M= 8.20, SD = 2.89) and C₂ (M= 7.49, SD= 2.22).

The results suggest that students exposed to RP perform better than their counterparts taught using traditional teaching approaches. The ANOVA test was conducted to establish whether the difference among the mean scores of E₁, E₂, C₁ and C₂ was significant.

➤ *ANOVA*

Scale	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-ratio	p-value
Between groups	436.115	3	145.372	18.950	.000
Within Groups	1227.439	160	7.671		
Total	1663.554	163			

Table 4:- Comparison of Life Skills Post-test Mean Scores by Learning Technique

The ANOVA test results show that the difference in mean scores among the four groups E₁, E₂, C₁ and C₂ was statistically significant at the .05 level in favour of the experimental groups, F (3, 160) = 18.950, p<.05. The results of ANOVA test only show differences among a group of more than three variables, it does not reveal where the differences are. Therefore, there was need to conduct further analysis to reveal where the differences were. The Least Significant Difference (LSD) test was conducted to reveal where the differences were

Paired Group	Mean Difference	p-value
E ₁ versus E ₂	0.82	.190
E ₁ versus C ₁	3.21	.000*
E ₁ versus C ₂	3.92	.000*
E ₂ versus C ₁	2.39	.000*
E ₂ versus C ₂	3.10	.000*
C ₁ versus C ₂	0.70	.243

Table 5:- LSD Multiple Comparison of Life Skills Post-test Mean Scores by Learning Approach

The multiple comparison results reveal that there were significant differences between pair groups E1-C1 ($p < .05$), E1-C2 ($p < .05$), E2-C1 ($p < .05$) and E2-C2 ($p < .05$). However the differences between E1-E2 ($p > .05$) and C1-C2 ($p > .05$) were not statistically significant. Generally the experimental groups outperformed the control groups. Further analysis was conducted by comparing the mean scores of the control (C1 and C2 combined) and experimental (E1 and E2 combined) groups using the t-test to confirm the results of the ANOVA test. The comparison was conducted using the t-test.

Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value
Experimental	79	11.00	2.99	162	7.306	.000*
Control	85	7.83	2.57			

Table 6:- Showing Comparison of the Students’ Life Skills Post- test Mean Scores between the Experimental and Control Groups

The test results reveal that the mean ($M = 11.00$, $SD = 2.99$) of the experimental group was higher than that ($M = 7.83$, $SD = 2.57$) of the control group. The results further reveal that the difference between the means of the two groups was statistically significant at the .05 level, in favour of the experimental group ($t(162) = 9.306$, $p < .05$).

➤ *Gain analysis - groups C1 and E1*

Gain analysis examines the achievement levels of E1 and C1 before and after the programme and tries to explain improvements in learning outcomes as measured by the mean scores.

Stage	Scale	Group	
		E1 n = 40	C1 n = 43
Pre-test	Mean	5.61	5.79
	Standard Deviation	2.28	2.52
Post -test	Mean	11.41	8.20
	Standard Deviation	3.73	2.89
	Mean Gain	5.80	2.41

Table 7:- Students’ Pre- test and Post- test Mean Scores, Standard Deviations and Mean Gains by Learning Approach

The pre-test life skill mean ($M = 5.61$, $SD = 2.28$) of E1 and that ($M = 5.79$, $SD = 2.52$) of C1 were comparable before the commencement of the programme. After the treatment, the mean ($M = 11.41$, $SD = 3.73$) of E1 was higher than that ($M = 8.20$, $SD = 2.89$) of C1. The result also reveal that the mean gain of E1 ($M = 5.80$) was higher than that ($M = 2.41$). This means that improvement in learning outcomes of the experimental group E1 was higher than that of the control group C1.

The t-test was used to establish whether the two mean gains were statistically significant as presented in Table 8.

Group	N	Mean Gain	SD	df	t-value	p-value
E1	40	5.80	3.15	79	4.104	.000*
C1	41	2.54	3.95			

*Significant at .05

Table 8:- Difference in Mean Gain on Life Skills Test between E₁ and C₂

The t-test results show that the difference between the mean gains of E1 ($M = 5.80$, $SD = 3.15$) and C1 ($M = 2.54$, $SD = 3.95$) was statistically significant at the .05 level, in favour of the experimental group ($t(91) = 7.606$, $p < .05$). The experimental group thus had a higher improvement in learning outcomes as measured by the mean gain. That high improvement in the experimental group is attributed to the treatment. The results of life skill post-test analysis revealed that the difference among the means scores of groups C1, E1, C2 and E2 were statistically significant in favour of the experimental groups. On the basis of these results, the research hypothesis which stated that the difference between the life skills of students taught using RP is not statistically different from those taught using traditional strategies was rejected.

IV. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

As revealed by the mean scores between the experimental groups and their SD, RP teaching techniques improves the students’ acquisition of life skills. This was in agreement with the findings of studies by (Ilori, 2001; Njoku, 2015) that effective use of learner-centred teaching approaches helps in attaining religious education learning outcomes among secondary school students. Ilori (2001) emphasized the need for RE teachers to always pay attention to the teaching approaches that caters for the needs of the students as a factor in attaining CRE learning outcomes. RP technique presupposes that students learn faster through experience. When students are exposed to making their own findings, (Njoku, 2015) contend that they gain knowledge faster, and as such knowledge is usually permanent.

The findings of this study, further, synchronized with the submission of Nelson (2002) that constructive approach to teaching yields positive attainment of desired learning outcomes. RP therefore supports the adage that says experience is the best teacher hence life skills knowledge can best be achieved from learners’ experience. RP appeals to the students’ conscience on the need to learn. This agrees with Njoku (2012) that effective use of teaching strategies helps the teacher to develop ethical and responsible students by encouraging them to acquire life skills required to operate in the society. RP not only exposes the students on the need to be diligent with their study but also help teachers to advocate for conducive environment that would enable effective learning to take place.

The results of this study complement the observation of Obanya (2004) that learner-centred teaching approach builds in the student good attitude, respect for others; and the aura to appreciate the society and to interact properly with the teacher thereby turning the class into a better learning environment. CRE being an abstract subject could be discussed and understood better if the students are given the opportunity to share ideas and different views on conflicting issues. Furthermore, constructive teaching methods according to Njoku (2002) increases students' self – esteem, motivation and empathy.

Contrary to the findings of this study, the report of a study by Dinama (2013) showed that teachers are aware that they need a strong pedagogical and content knowledge in the teaching of religious education but they hardly practice the same. The study recommends the need for teachers to be professionally, culturally and religiously competent in religious education classrooms in order to deal with differences an effective and constructive way. Njoku (2013) supports this argument because students could be different in terms of who are hyperactive, socially inhibitive or those who are average academically relative to their classmates. However, the environment in most of religious education classrooms privilege the teachers' knowledge over those of students rather than emphasize the extent to which students are enabled to become independent learners who are empowered.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, if teachers of RE effectively make use of RP while teaching, they would increase the students' life skills competency, thereby attaining the desired objectives. Effective application of RP would in addition provide opportunities for the learners' interpersonal and personal life skills development. It would also imbue the learners with the experiences that would warrant future success as in any endeavour of their life. Imperatively appropriate application of RP as a teaching Technique is a key factor in attaining RE learning outcomes among secondary school students in Ndhwa Sub- County, Kenya.

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