

Attitudes of Christianreligious Education (CRE) Teachers and Students towards the Role of the Subject in Provision of Hiv/Aids Education in Kenya

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ABSTRACT: *The purpose of this study was to establish challenges in the teaching and learning of Christian Religious Education (CRE) that affect its provision and integration of effective HIV/AIDS education in secondary schools in Bungoma County, Kenya. The objective of the study was to establish the attitudes of CRE teachers and students towards the role of the subject in provision of HIV/AIDS education to learners in Kenya. Stratified random sampling was used to select the 62 secondary schools that were used in the study while simple random sampling was used to select 102 teachers and 462 students who participated in the study. The study was guided by concepts and theories on factors affecting curriculum development and innovation by curriculum developers such as Farrant, Bishop, Gross and others. The research instruments for this study were questionnaires. Data from questionnaires was quantitatively analysed using descriptive statistics. The study established that both the CRE teachers and students had positive attitudes towards the role of the CRE in the provision of HIV/AIDS education. The study concluded that though most of the CRE teachers and students had a positive attitude towards the role of the subject in providing HIV/AIDS education, many felt what the subject was offering on HIV/AIDS was not adequate. Consequently, the study recommended that the ministry of Education should organize for in-service training or seminars for CRE teachers and students in secondary schools on the importance of the subject in providing HIV/AIDS education so that they continue to have a positive attitude towards the subject providing HIV/AIDS education.*

KEYWORDS: *attitudes, integration, teachers, students*

I. INTRODUCTION

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is one of the most devastating scourges in the world today (Bwanali, 2008, Kunhiyop, 2008 Winkler and Bodenstein, 2005, Nwaigbo, 2004). According to World Health Organization (WHO), AIDS is the fourth leading cause of death worldwide and the leading cause of death in Sub-Saharan Africa (Chepkwony, 2004 in AFER). Since it was first diagnosed in 1981, it has killed more than 25 million people (UNAIDS, 2007). The impact of HIV/AIDS on development is one of the greatest challenges in the world today (UNICEF, 2000). Of all regions of the world, Sub-Saharan Africa is the worst hit in terms of HIV/AIDS. Though HIV/AIDS occurs in all the continents, 70% of the cases occur in Sub-Saharan Africa (Willis 2002, Murundu, 2006, Granich and Mermin, 2001, Kamaara, 2004). Education is one of the sectors that can be used in combating HIV/AIDS. Provision of a comprehensive HIV/AIDS education can help reduce HIV infection among people. The spread and impact of HIV and AIDS is cause for global concern because it mainly afflicts young and productive populations in whom the African continent hopes to invest its future. In many of the African countries South of Sahara, 50 per cent of all new infections with HIV are found among young people below the age 25 (Winkler and Bodenstein, 2005). This clearly indicates that the HIV/AIDS prevention programmes and education in African countries should target young people.

According to Kunhiyop (2008), there is great ignorance when it comes to HIV/AIDS because some people deny the reality of the disease and continue with lifestyles that contribute to its spread. To win the war against this disease, we need to mobilize an army of educators to teach church members, citizens, children and students about this disease and combat many myths that surround it. Education is the most humane and moral way to combat ignorance, prejudice, fear and promiscuous behavior. According to Kunhiyop (2008), the education programme must provide accurate basic information about HIV/AIDS presented in a way that encourages people to discuss their beliefs about this disease and how it is spread. Such discussion demonstrates respect for those being taught and provides the educator with an opportunity to address their specific concerns. The programme must include information about how to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS. Emphasizing on the importance of teachers in the provision of HIV/AIDS education Winkler and Bodenstein (2005) stated the following:

Teachers have the potential to influence and inculcate the values and virtues of self control, assertiveness and other life skills that young people need to enable them to cope with the challenges of the pandemic. In addition, teachers can facilitate the cascading and uptake of proven interventions. For example, they can encourage abstinence and help children to make informed choices, p 6.

In Kenya it is estimated that 600 people die of AIDS daily. The government of Kenya in recognition of the magnitude of the problem declared AIDS a national disaster on November 25th 1999 (Murundu, 2006). Having declared the disease a national disaster, the government set up the National AIDS Control Council (NACC) to co-ordinate the fight against the disease. Mwololo(2009) in the Daily Nation of March 11th 2009 reported that 1.4 million adults in Kenya are infected with HIV (Human Immunodeficiency virus). This means that the young people in secondary schools in Kenya are at a risk of being infected now or in the near future because they fall in risky bracket of age 15-64. Therefore dissemination of information about HIV to this age group is vital. The best way this can be done is through providing effective HIV/AIDS education and awareness so that they can change their behaviour.

One of the concerns of this study is to establish whether or not CRE as a subject is providing effective HIV/AIDS education. Museveni (2006), commented that sensitization is the key in the fight against HIV/AIDS, and must be done in a way that reaches the people in their peculiar situations. Kamaara, (2005), concurs by saying that, in the absence of a cure for HIV/AIDS, behavioral change holds an absolute key to combating the scourge. Behavioural change can only be achieved through effective HIV/AIDS education. One of the objectives of CRE in secondary school is to provide moral and sex education for behavioural change. It is not clear if CRE as a subject is doing this work effectively. According to Granich and Mermin (2001) teaching people about real ways that HIV is spread protects them from the virus while teaching people about the ways that HIV is not spread protects everyone from unnecessary discrimination. AIDS pandemic is a major concern to all. The fight against AIDS calls for multi-sectoral approach. According to the CRE teachers' handbook (KIE, 2006) HIV/AIDS education has been integrated in the syllabus but the question is to what is the attitude of CRE teachers and students towards the role of the subject in provision of HIV/AIDS education?

The war against HIV/AIDS can have a positive impact if we arm the vulnerable group of youths with vital information. According to Wanjama, Muraya and Gichaga, (2006), adolescent sexuality remains the most challenging phenomenon the world is facing today, especially in Africa. There is an urgent need for a comprehensive and accurate education on sexuality as a mainstay for holistic growth. Further in the era of HIV/AIDS, it is critical to educate the youth and give them accurate information on sex and sexuality. The empowerment of the youth through education and communication for behavior development and change has been identified as one of the most viable methods of curbing the spread of HIV infection (KIE, 1997). The youth need to acquire the necessary knowledge, attitude and skills to avoid being infected with HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. The youth can also act as change agents in their respective communities by supporting the uninfected, infected as well as those affected by HIV/AIDS.

Studies carried out in schools have revealed that in most cases, learners do not have the right information on reproductive health (Wanjama et al, 2006). Although they get information from peers, their family members and the media, the information received is often inaccurate and incomplete. According to Murundu, (2006) the future course of the epidemic depends on the effort mounted today to prevent HIV among young people. Among the basic strategies which are essential for helping people to protect themselves include; providing HIV/STD prevention, sexual and reproductive health and life skills education and information to young people.

The 8th national goal of education in Kenya states that Education should promote positive attitudes towards good health and environmental protection. In detail the objective states that education should inculcate in the youth the value for good health in order to avoid indulging in activities that would lead to physical or mental ill health (Kenya Institute of Education, 2006:6). It is this 8th national goal of education in Kenya that provides a strong argument for HIV/AIDS prevention among youth in secondary schools in Kenya. This is because to partly achieve this goal of education, secondary school students need to be provided with information on HIV/AIDS so that they do not indulge in activities that can make them to be infected and have poor health. The main question here is, to what extent is this objective being achieved especially in relation to the HIV/AIDS pandemic? What is not clear is whether or not CRE teachers and students have positive attitudes towards provision of HIV/AIDS education in the CRE curriculum.

The government of Kenya introduced HIV/AIDS education in the year 2000 as a separate subject and through this strategy HIV/AIDS was taught as a separate subject on the timetable. This went on up to 2002 when the national curriculum was reviewed and HIV/AIDS aspects were infused and integrated into various subjects. This study is investigating the attitude of CRE teachers and students towards the same.

In 2002 the Kenya secondary school CRE curriculum was revised and rationalized so that emerging issues such as HIV/AIDS pandemic, drug abuse and morality could be included in the syllabus (KIE, 2002). What is taught in secondary schools in Kenya today is based on this revised and rationalized curriculum. But

with alarming statistics on HIV/AIDS infections among young people in secondary schools (KIE 2003, TREDs, 2005), what remains unclear is whether or not the CRE teachers and students have a positive attitude towards the role of the subject in provision of HIV/AIDS awareness among the learners.

Statement of the Problem

Christian Religious Education (CRE) is one of the subjects in the secondary school curriculum in Kenya entrusted with the responsibility of teaching and instilling in learners moral values (KIE, 2002). In 2002 the CRE curriculum was revised so that emerging issues such as HIV/AIDS could be properly included in the Syllabus (KIE, 2002). Despite all these efforts, HIV/AIDS infection is still high among secondary schools students in Kenya (TREDs, 2005, KIE 2003) and research done by Wepukhulu (2009) found that it affects their performance negatively. According to Musamas (2007) and Nwaigbo (2004), one preventive measure of HIV/AIDS among the youth is providing moral education. CRE as a subject has been entrusted with the responsibility of providing both HIV/AIDS and moral education for the prevention of HIV infection among young people in secondary schools in Kenya. But with the alarming statistics on HIV infections and premarital sex in Kenya, many questions remain unanswered for example; what are the attitudes of CRE teachers and students towards the role of the subject in provision of HIV/AIDS education? That is what this study has investigated.

On attitudes, Hawes (1979) emphasizes the need to change peoples' negative to positive attitudes to favor implementation of any particular innovation when he points out that in the very simplest analysis the task of curriculum implementation can be said to involve changing the attitude of policy makers, administrators, parents and ultimately the learners and teachers. The same is emphasized by Gross, Giacuinta, and Bernstein (1981), Okech and Asiachi (1992). According to Nacino-Brown, Oke, and Brown (1982) a curriculum design incorporates aims and objectives which is hoped will be realized when the curriculum is implemented. It goes without saying that without the active and whole-hearted co-operation of the students such aims can never be achieved (Nacino-Brown et al 1982). That is why this study investigated the attitudes of CRE teachers and students to determine if they had a positive or negative attitude towards the role of the subject in provision of HIV/AIDS education.

The Attitudes of (CRE) Teachers and Students towards the role of CRE in provision of HIV/AIDS Education

The youth need to acquire the right skills, knowledge and attitudes before they are sexually infected with HIV (TREDs, 2005, Winkler and Bodenstein, 2005). In the era of HIV and AIDS sexual behavior is an important issue of concern. It requires a positive change in order to reduce HIV transmission and keep positive clients healthy. The attitudes of CRE teachers and students towards the role of the subject in providing HIV/AIDS education is unknown and a concern in this study. This is because the attitude of the teachers determines the extent to which they are likely to teach the HIV/AIDS issues. On the other hand the attitude of students determines how much they will take in.

Nacino-Brown et al. (1982) clearly emphasize the importance of teachers in implementation of a curriculum by saying that; of all the personnel involved in curriculum implementation and design, the teacher is certainly the most important. She/he is the one who implements the ideas and aspirations of the curriculum designers. This study is interested in establishing the attitude of the CRE teachers in secondary schools in Kenya towards the inclusion of the HIV/AIDS education in the CRE curriculum in secondary schools in Kenya. This is because for effective provision and integration of HIV/AIDS education to learners, teachers need to have a positive attitude. The attitude of CRE teachers towards the role of the subject in providing HIV/AIDS education was investigated in this study.

According to Winkler and Bodenstein (2005), teaching about AIDS in schools is bound to meet certain challenges, especially in Africa, where attitudes, beliefs and practices handed down from one generation to another, have a lot of influence in adulthood. They emphasize on how a teachers' attitude can influence the way a teacher teaches HIV/AIDS in the following terms:

It is inevitable that the teachers' own attitudes and their personal perception of risk will be heavily influenced by their community's attitude towards HIV and AIDS. This may have a negative effect on the manner in which they teach their children about the subject (Winkler and Bodenstein, 2005:1) According to Chepkwony (2004) Africa continues to register heavy death tolls from the epidemic due to the prevailing attitude by different Christian and traditional African groups on the deadly scourge. Accordingly, he posited that the negative attitude of different Christian and African groups has led to the spread of the disease. The attitude of CRE teachers and students towards HIV/AIDS education was investigated in this study. This was because the attitude contributed a lot to the extent of the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Similarly, Hawes, (1979), emphasized the need to change people' negative attitude to positive attitudes infavour of the implementation of any particular innovation when he points out that in the very simplest analysis the task of curriculum implementation can be said to involve changing the attitudes of policy makers, administrators, parents and ultimately the learners and teachers. Since the integration of HIV/AIDS education into the CRE syllabus, it has not been established whether or not the CRE teachers have a positive or negative attitude towards the role of the subject in providing HIV/AIDS education. This study therefore sets out to establish the attitudes of CRE teachers and students towards the role of the subject in providing HIV/AIDS effective education.

Masinjila, (1996) states that positive attitude towards a subject leads to successful implementation. Kiniale, (2000) in her study on implementation of 8-4-4 in the study CRE in secondary school in Kenya established that there was a positive attitude by teachers and students towards CRE. The attitude of CRE teachers and students towards the role of the subject in providing HIV/AIDS education was not yet known and was the concern of this study.

A research by Sachiyo (2010) on knowledge and attitudes on HIV/AIDS and several practices by primary school students in Eldoret municipality found out that although most students had a positive attitude towards people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) but others had a negative perception on HIV infection and felt PLWHA should be separated from the rest and even others felt they should be punished or killed. This attitude is as far as primary school is concerned. The situation in secondary school especially as far as CRE teachers and students are concerned is unknown and is a concern of this study. This study therefore investigated the attitudes of both the teachers and students towards the role of the subject in provision of HIV/AIDS education.

According to research by Mulinge(2009) on the Role of Kenyan Public universities in communicating information on HIV/AIDS to surrounding local communities discovered that attitude was a barrier in the process of fighting HIV/ AIDS in surrounding communities. According to the research some members of the surrounding communities had developed an attitude that many members of the university fraternity were immoral due to their lifestyles that portrayed loose morals among other mannerisms like drunkenness. In this case attitudes act as a barrier in the provision of HIV/AIDS education to the surrounding. This study sought out to establish if attitude of CRE teachers and students is a challenge in the provision of effective HIV/ AIDS education in secondary schools in Kenya.

A research by Kinanga (2009) on integration of HIV/ AIDS content in the Kiswahili curriculum revealed that most teachers of Kiswahili preferred to discuss about HIV/ AIDS on its own and not during Kiswahili lessons. This leaves us with a question: do CRE students hold the same view. The exact attitude by CRE teachers on the subject was unknown and the concern of this study. A report by Kiberenge (2010) on research done in secondary schools found out that a number of students still have some incorrect beliefs about the spread of HIV. For instance ten per cent of them expressed a negative attitude towards a teacher or student living with HIV and AIDS while half of them reported they would neither buy food from a shop keeper who has the disease nor disclose to anyone, if a member of their family became ill with HIV and AIDS. This indicates that students might be having negative attitudes even towards a subject that provides HIV/AIDS education. This study therefore investigated the attitude of CRE students towards the role of CRE in providing HIV/AIDS education.

According to Omolo (2012) in previous surveys carried out in Kisumu County revealed that the negative attitude among the learners and teachers about the HIV/AIDS was hampering providing of HIV/AIDS education. Further some people began holding the view that HIV/AIDS education was getting a low consideration in most of the schools. Omolo's research was on general provision of HIV/AIDS education. The attitude of CRE teachers and students in secondary schools in Kenya towards the provision and integration of HIV/AIDS education in the syllabus was unknown and the concern of this study.

When it comes to the curriculum, the learner is the centre of attention, being the subject and object, without whom a curriculum does not exist. A curriculum design incorporates aims and objectives which are hoped would be realized when the curriculum is implemented (Nacino-Brown et al, 1992). It goes without saying that without the active and whole-hearted co-operation of the students such aims can never be achieved. Given the importance of students in the curriculum implementation this study was interested in establishing the attitude of secondary school students towards the role of the subject in providingeffective HIV/AIDSeducation.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study used the descriptive survey design to investigate the attitudes of CRE teachers and students towards the role of the subject in provision of HIV/AIDS education. Public secondary schools which offer CRE as a subject in Bungoma County were 161 and were all targeted for in this study. The target population for the study also included all form four CRE students and all CRE teachers who have taught the subject from form one to form four in secondary schools in Bungoma County. The sample population was drawn from several of the secondary schools in Bungoma County. Therefore the 62 Schools that participated in the study were selected using stratified random sampling from a total population of 161 public registered secondary schools in Bungoma County. This led to the selection of 62 secondary schools of which 12 were boys schools, 11 were girls' schools and 39 mixed schools. 102 CRE teachers and 462 CRE students were selected for the study from the 62 schools using the simple random sampling method.

Instrumentation and Data Analysis

The data collection instruments for the study were questionnaires. Two sets of closed ended questionnaires were used: the CRE teachers' and the CRE students' questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered to 102 CRE teachers and 462 CRE students. Descriptive statistical approaches were used to quantitatively analyse data from questionnaires.

Findings

a) CRE Teachers' Attitudes

This study established that most of the CRE teachers in secondary schools in Bungoma County had a positive attitude towards the role of CRE in provision of HIV/AIDS education. Majority of the teachers (97%) reported to agree that CRE as a subject is best placed to teach HIV/AIDS issues to the learners. A majority of the teachers, (94%) also reported to agree that the CRE teacher is also best placed to teach issues on HIV/AIDS to the learners.

The study also established that that a majority of the CRE teachers 97% also felt that CRE students can have a positive behavior change if they are given proper and adequate information on HIV/AIDS. In conclusion, although most of the CRE teachers in secondary schools in Bungoma County had a positive attitude towards the role of the subject in providing HIV/AIDS education, majority (85%) also felt that what is being taught from the CRE syllabus is not adequate for learners.

b) Attitudes of CRE Students

This study established that majority of the CRE students in secondary schools in Bungoma County had a positive attitude towards the role of CRE in the provision and integration of HIV/AIDS education. According to the findings almost all CRE students (96%) felt that CRE as a subject is best placed to teach HIV/AIDS issues. In addition majority felt the subject is also best placed to teach issues on human sexuality, morality and responsible sexual behavior.

The study also found that majority of the CRE students, (85%) felt HIV/AIDS education is more relevant when taught in CRE than other subjects and a majority (93%) felt that the CRE teacher is best placed to teach on HIV/AIDS issues. The findings also established that most of the CRE students (93%) felt that CRE students can have positive behavior change if they are given proper and adequate information on HIV/AIDS.

III. CONCLUSIONS

Basing on the findings and discussions of the study the following conclusions were made:

Though most of the CRE teachers and students had a positive attitude towards the role of the subject in providing HIV/AIDS education, many of the teachers and students felt that what the subject was offering on HIV/AIDS was not adequate. To them more information on HIV/AIDS should be included in the CRE curriculum.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations presented here are based on the findings and conclusions of the study and are meant to address the challenges in the teaching and learning of CRE that affect its provision and integration of effective HIV/AIDS education in secondary schools in Bungoma county, Kenya. The following recommendations were made:

- i) The Ministry of Education should organize for seminars for both CRE teachers and students to teach them on the importance of the subject in providing HIV/AIDS education so that they can continue to have a positive attitude towards the subject in providing HIV/AIDS education.
- ii) More information on HIV/AIDS should be included in the secondary school CRE curriculum.

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