



RESEARCH ARTICLE

IMPROVING TEACHING OF CHRISTIAN MORAL EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SOUTH EAST GEO-POLITICAL ZONE OF NIGERIA THROUGH COMMITMENT IN TEACHERS' BEHAVIOUR

*¹Dr. Nkechi C. Njoku and ²Dr. Patrick E. Eluu

Department of Arts and Social Science Education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Nigerian society exhibits symptoms of serious moral decay. There is consequently widespread concern about the moral predicament in the nation. This paper is an attempt to investigate how commitment in teachers' behaviour could improve the teaching of Christian moral education in secondary schools in the southeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. South-east geopolitical zone is the area of study and the population comprised of all the Christian Moral Education teachers in the states that make up the zone. 300 teachers were selected out of 967 Christian Moral Education teachers in the area using purposive sampling technique. Fixed response questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. Mean was used to analyze data. Result show-cased that the teaching of Christian Moral Education could be improved through commitment in teachers' behaviour. Based on the findings, the study stresses that a greater percentage of the work of improving the teaching of Christian moral education lies in the hands of the teachers as commitments in teachers' behaviour becomes a necessity of immediacy and paramount. This however forms the contribution of the study.

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INTRODUCTION

The moral, ethical and spiritual development of human being is a fundamental goal of education. This means that the final goals and objectives of education is to build man to meet up the level of moral, ethical and spiritual development which is expressible as a balanced human being. This however, unfolds the reasons for including moral and religious studies into the school curriculum. The sudden renewal of interest in the study of moral education arises as a result of rampant materialism and decline in moral behaviours of school pupils, breakdown of social discipline and clash of cultures and values prominent among youths. Moral education involves the teaching of values, norms, ethics, practices that influence people living in every day life. Christian Moral Education (CME) deals with fostering within man a growing understanding of himself and relationship with others as well as appreciating man's tradition. According to Njoku (2015), CME aims at inculcating in a child the desired respect for self and others. It is a training geared towards assisting a growing child to be responsible. CME, according to Njoku (2012), is not only independent subject matter but also a function of the total school curriculum in that other subjects find support from the outcomes of moral education or basis of existence.

*Corresponding author: Dr. Nkechi C. Njoku,
Department of Arts and Social Science Education, Ebonyi State University,
Abakaliki, Nigeria.

CME is a teaching subject in secondary schools in south east geo-political zone of Nigeria. CME derived its strength from Christian religious knowledge. In Christian dominated areas in the South eastern states where Christian religion studies are studied, the moral education is empowered through Christian precepts or doctrine. In this case Christian moral education is aimed at equipping the student with the desired intellectual training in Christian religious doctrine embedded with values (Anyanwu, 2002). Impacting good character in the learner has been a major objective of Christian and moral education. This is done through the teachings and life style of Jesus Christ and other biblical figures. Recently there is increase in immoral behaviours among the young in the secondary schools to the extent one will wonder if moral education teachers are teaching adequately. Ukeje (1998) observed that teachers of moral education may have greater influence on the students' behaviour through commitment. This development takes into consideration teachers' behaviour as a component of teachers' effectiveness in impacting knowledge to the learner. This suggests that a teacher of moral education should demonstrate high level of moral to be able to transfer such to learners. Teachers of moral education are expected among their school wide practices, to prepare their lessons in a lively changing manner, use people's life stories to challenge their pupils to emulate worthy character. They encourage pupils with coordination problem (attention difficulty), insisting on

character formation through building healthy atmosphere packed with caring, and respect instilling compassion and discouraging perjuries. CME teachers are to improve school environment through promoting tolerance, kindness and preventing bullying, peer cruelty and handling controversial issues with delicacy and wisdom. By so doing, the teacher of moral education influences the pupils' behaviour exhibiting a positive character. Teacher's commitment to duty involves way teacher conducts himself in the classroom and beyond. For instance the way teachers treat students determine learning outcome. If a student is shown compassion or treated fairly by the teacher, the student will always have trust and confidence in the teacher and this relationship encourages effective learning and through such teachers, the life of the student is impacted positively. Orebanjo (1987) opines that teachers' commitment to duty have greater impact on the learners because teachers' affection spurs interest thereby create a conducive atmosphere for learning to take place. This suggests that teachers' readiness to work, attitude towards students and care predispose students to learn, hence moral education is more or less a practical study. In the words of Goldman (1992) teachers' readiness involve preparation of lessons, selection and use of appropriate teaching aids or materials, use of varieties of methods and techniques, willingness to spur learners to learn. The above statement gave crudeness to Redman (1992) assertion on the importance of teachers in the development and implementation of curriculum. Redman acclaims that teachers are the hub of any educational system; and that their qualities and commitments determine the success of classroom interaction. This therefore holds teachers very important because of their application of expertise strategies in bringing effective classroom interaction and knowledge. No wonder the popular adage that says that no nation will rise above its teachers. This unveils relationship between teacher's teaching behaviour and the students' learning outcome.

Statement of Problem

Many believe that the reason for Nigeria's in-ability to achieve political, stability, economic and technological advancement could be due to its failure to trim the behaviour of its people despite its abundant natural and human resources. Njoku (2011) attributed moral decay as responsible for economic failures or an impediment in National development. However this is manifested in the alarming rate of immoral behaviours among youths in secondary school which seem to suggest that the teaching of Christian moral education is being challenged.

Adukwe (2004) observed that what is seen in the schools could be attributed to adoption of values of alien culture particularly the values of individualism and materialism in social, political and economic levels which in turn have influenced the youths. The challenge of this study is to investigate ways of improving the teaching of Christian moral education in secondary schools in the South-East geopolitical zone, through commitments in teachers' behaviour as a way of stabilizing the political, social and economy of the country. The problem therefore is how the teaching of Christian moral education be improved through commitments in teacher behaviour.

Research Questions

- What is the desired behaviour of Christian Moral Education teachers?

- How could the commitments in teachers' behaviour improve the teaching of Christian Moral Education in South-East geo-political zone of Nigeria?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted descriptive survey design aimed at investigating how commitment in teacher behaviour could improve the teaching of Christian Moral Education among secondary school students in South East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The population comprised all the Christian moral education teachers in government secondary schools in the South east geo-political zone of Nigeria which is estimated at 967 teachers (Odo, Enugu State Office, SEB Unit, 2015) 300 Christian moral teachers were selected out of the 967 teachers in the area using purposive sampling technique. 60 teachers were selected from all the five states in the zone. The selection of only teachers from government owned secondary schools is to ensure that the schools possess almost similar learning environment. Fixed response questionnaire was the instrument for data collection; experts in educational measurement validated the instrument to ensure clarity of items, appropriateness of language and expression to the respondent and relevance to the purpose of the study. Mean was used to analyze the data. Criterion mean of 2.50 was raised by adding the assigned values of responses and dividing it with the total number of the responses options which is the summation of $4+3+2+1 = 10/4 = 2.5$. 2.5 becomes the judgmental point or cut-off mark for acceptable, and less than 2.5 considered rejected.

Data Presentation

Table 1 that items 1-33 on desired teachers' behaviours for improving the teaching of CME obtained a mean above 2.50. The grand mean of 3.87 indicates high level of acceptance of the items in the above table as the desired teachers' behaviour in improving the teaching of CME.

DISCUSSIONS

Results of the study in Table 1 showed that respondents agreed with the items as desired behaviour of a good teacher of CME. This was evident in the results as it emphasized the impact of teachers' behaviour in teaching and learning of CME among secondary school students. The above findings agree with the view of Anyanwu (2002), who asserted that CME teachers have greater role to play in ensuring that CME is effectively taught. The finding is understandable in that teachers' commitment is paramount to any curriculum implementation. If teachers of moral education possess qualities like leading by example, use of verbal praise, accepting other people's view, exhibiting Christ-like qualities, giving frank answers to students questions, being impartial, demonstration of good moral judgment, sharing concern in students' needs, exhibiting sense of humor or friendliness, showing love and care, attending classes regularly and timely, use of reinforcement, giving guidelines for acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, making adequate preparation in lesson planning and so on will help enhance teachers' ability to impact on students positively. According to Redman (1987) effectiveness of any strategy depends greatly on the teacher handling it. Teachers of moral education could teach better if they apply the craft associated with teaching of CME. Teachers of CME are expected to be role model, dedicated and committed to their duties.

Table 1. Mean Score of Respondents on Desired Teachers' Behaviour Required in Teaching CME in Secondary Schools. (N = 300)

| S/N | Items | \bar{X} | Remark |
|-----|--|-----------|----------|
| 1. | Leading by example | 3.5 | Accepted |
| 2. | Avoid unnecessary digression | 2.5 | Accepted |
| 3. | Use of verbal praise and encouragement | 2.8 | Accepted |
| 4. | Show pride in students' achievement | 3.0 | Accepted |
| 5. | Dress modestly, clean and smart | 3.8 | Accepted |
| 6. | Create good moral atmosphere | 3.6 | Accepted |
| 7. | Create avenue for dialogue | 3.5 | Accepted |
| 8. | Involve students in fishing the moral obligation | 3.2 | Accepted |
| 9. | Live according to what you teach | 3.9 | Accepted |
| 10. | Occasionally punish the misbehaving students | 2.8 | Accepted |
| 11. | Applying service learning approach | 3.8 | Accepted |
| 12. | Correct immoral behaviours of the student in the class. | 2.6 | Accepted |
| 13. | Demonstration of sound moral judgment | 3.5 | Accepted |
| 14. | Accept other view | 2.8 | Accepted |
| 15. | Exhibit stability in temperament during classroom or outside class interaction. | 3.5 | Accepted |
| 16. | Avoid all forms of partiality in relating with the students | 3.0 | Accepted |
| 17. | Give frank answers to student's questions. | 3.2 | Accepted |
| 18. | Exhibit Christ like qualities e.g. obedience to authority, love, humility, justice, tolerance, truthfulness and patience | 3.8 | Accepted |
| 19. | Observe students moral behaviour e.g. obedience in prompt submission of class work. | 2.9 | Accepted |
| 20. | Show concern to students religious need | 3.0 | Accepted |
| 21. | Making them understand the consequences of their behaviours/actions | 3.6 | Accepted |
| 22. | Attend to students needs | 3.2 | Accepted |
| 23. | Exhibit sense of humour and friendliness | 3.5 | Accepted |
| 24. | Show them that they are loved and cherished. | 2.8 | Accepted |
| 25. | Speak, read audibly and fluently with the right voice modulation. | 2.9 | Accepted |
| 26. | Always allow students to express themselves | 2.8 | Accepted |
| 27. | Stop or prevent misbehaviour with a minimum of class disruption. | 2.5 | Accepted |
| 28. | Attend class regularly and timely | 3.5 | Accepted |
| 29. | Always make reference to bible stories as a back up to the moral lesson | 3.2 | Accepted |
| 30. | Cite and use persons within the area to encourage or discourage behaviour | 3.8 | Accepted |
| 31. | Making adequate preparation in planning lessons | 3.8 | Accepted |
| 32. | Being conversant with various teaching methods and techniques | 3.6 | Accepted |
| 33. | Use of adequate reinforcement responses | 3.5 | Accepted |
| 34. | Use of media instructional aids | 3.5 | Accepted |
| 35. | Giving them guidelines for acceptable and unacceptable behaviours | 3.8 | Accepted |
| 36. | Exhibit adequate classroom management and control | 3.6 | Accepted |
| | Grand mean | 3.28 | Accepted |

Table 2. Mean Scores of Respondents on Commitment to Teachers' Behaviours as a Way of Improving the Teaching of CME (No = 300)

| S/N | Items | \bar{X} | Remark |
|-----|--|-----------|----------|
| 37. | When CME teachers apply desired teaching behaviour, it will help in moulding students' characters. | 2.8 | Accepted |
| 38. | Help teachers build virtues like compassion love, maintaining peace, tolerance among students which are the precept of moral education | 3.6 | Accepted |
| 39. | Desired teaching behaviours help in building up good moral judgment which in turn helps strike balance between issues of conflict to avoid misbehaviour or uproar. | 3.1 | Accepted |
| 40. | Making the purpose of the lesson students' needs. | 3.8 | Accepted |
| 41. | Making the lesson elements practical and logical | 3.8 | Accepted |
| 42. | Making sure that your lessons appeal to the felt needs of the student. | 3.6 | Accepted |
| 43. | Using attractive illustration techniques that will catch interest. | 3.1 | Accepted |
| 44. | Adopting service learning approach | 3.9 | Accepted |
| 45. | Making the introduction clear and pointing to the study. | 3.1 | Accepted |
| 46. | Drawing a link between the lesson and the moral experiences around the students. | 3.6 | Accepted |
| 47. | Reviewing the curriculum of moral education to address the current moral crises. | 2.5 | Accepted |
| 48. | Setting aside few minutes for students to reflect on a particular trait you wish to impact | 2.8 | Accepted |
| 49. | Helping students to explore and pick the lesson or fact. | 2.9 | Accepted |
| 50. | Make use of programmed instruction | 2.5 | Accepted |
| 51. | Disciplining student through reasoning by making them feel others pain | 3.5 | Accepted |
| 52. | Devoting reasonable time to cognitive processes creating avenue for dialogue | 2.6 | Accepted |
| 53. | Use of concrete examples when necessary | 2.9 | Accepted |
| 54. | Inject challenges for students to confront at different stages of the class interaction | 3.0 | Accepted |
| 55. | Logical presentation of subject matter | 3.6 | Accepted |
| 56. | Appropriate selection of evaluation methods/techniques | 3.2 | Accepted |
| 57. | Adopting and combining teaching methods e.g. thematic and programmed instruction | 3.1 | Accepted |
| 58. | Improving the societal values of the subject | 3.2 | Accepted |
| 59. | Teachers being passionate about the job | 3.5 | Accepted |
| 60. | Demonstrating competence in instructional practices, assessment and management of instruction | 3.1 | Accepted |
| 61. | Making use of conflict resolution method | 2.8 | Accepted |
| 62. | Adopting cooperation learning strategies | 2.5 | Accepted |
| 63. | Applying the character moulding model | 4.0 | Accepted |
| 64. | Use of individualized instruction (e.g. advising students on the benefit of their action) | 3.0 | Accepted |
| 65. | Teachers' maintain strong personal and professional character | 3.8 | Accepted |
| | Grand mean | 3.1 | Accepted |

Goldman (1992) also shared the view that the behaviour of the teachers matter a lot in the learning outcomes and as such CME teachers should be embodiment of the moral teachings. Among the items list are teachers' personality or way of life as a major factor in teaching of moral education and as such teachers should watch students' behaviours. No wonder Anyanwu (2002) rightly affirms that where teachers are effective and competent, interest and performance are enhanced. This suggests that teachers' readiness, in order words, disposition to manipulate instruments to make lesson easy and interesting, and use of teachers' personality traits as instrument to carry out the professional commitments of shaping behaviours. The findings of Table 2 revealed various ways by which commitments in teachers' behaviours could help in improving the teaching of CME in secondary schools in South-East geopolitical zone.

The findings of Table 2 revealed various ways by which commitments in teachers' behaviours could help in improving the teaching of CME in secondary schools in South-East geopolitical zone. The respondents agreed that approaches like good code of conduct/practice, passion for job, adoption of good teaching behaviour, clearly stating and relating purpose of the lesson to learners need, making lesson element practical and logical, maintaining strong personal and professional character and demonstrating competence in instructional practices, assessment and management of instruction among others as ways by which commitments in teachers' behaviours could help in improving the teaching of CME. The finding is evident with the grand mean of 3.1 which is very high above the criterion mean of 2.5. The finding is captivating because teaching moral demands the wholesomeness of the teachers; his ability to interpret classroom interaction to achieve moral character, unbiased pass judgments, care and love students and ability to meet students' felt needs. By so doing, teachers become everything to students. A teacher of moral education is expected to be an excellent teacher whose life style is capable of moulding students' behaviours. CME teachers through expertise knowledge create a friendly environment that could enhance learning, create opportunity for learning to take place as well as fashion supportive activities that could help students internalize the learning experiences.

The results also revealed that teachers of CME could combine various methods like use of programmed instruction, applying character moulding model, individualized instruction and adopting service learning approach to improve the teaching of CME. Service learning approach involve activities like encouraging students to help one another either by mentoring and peer or cross age tutoring; while character moulding model involve living as an example or model. This is a situation whereby the teacher behave the way he wants the students to behave, create a welcoming environment for such learning to take place, provides opportunity for the students to experience it, encourages such learning through reinforcement, set observable goals; and measures the success achieved after the exposure. The above finding is in line with Njoku and Njoku (2014) who observed that an effective teacher must be approachable, considerate, respectful... eager to encourage learning, generous with praise and apply good network of resources in administering his duty. CME teachers with good teaching behaviours are masters of the contents and could always make appropriate use of skills to manipulate lessons thereby making difference in teaching. This however implies that great percentage of work of improving the teaching of

CME lies in the hands of the teachers hence commitment in teacher's behaviour becomes necessity and immediacy.

Educational Implications

The findings have implication for teachers, government and school management. The findings showed that improving teaching of CME could be achieved through commitment in teachers' behaviours. It implies that if teachers are professionally trained, provided with needed materials to work and exposed to regular seminars on dynamic nature of the subject; the teaching status and values of the subject will be better achieved. In this case the school management and government should sponsor re-training and refresher courses of CME teachers a regular practice, so that the subject will achieve the desired goals in the life of the learner. The educational implication therefore is that a commitment in teachers' behaviours is paramount in improving teaching of CME in secondary schools in South East geo-political zone of Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the finding:

- School management and government should always not only organize but encourage CME teachers by sponsoring attendance to seminars, refresher courses/workshops to keep abreast with the challenges of moulding behaviours especially in this dynamic world where moral values are changing.
- There is also need for school management to emphasize and implement effective teaching of CME by ensuring that all students adhere strictly to attend CME lesson and on time as a way of improving the teaching of the subject.
- Government should make the subject compulsory and a pre-requisite to gaining admission into high institution as this will improve students' interests and as well encourage teachers' effort.
- Only teachers who are professionally trained should employed to teach CME as this is the only way to ensure adequate teaching as a means of improving commitment in teaching of the subject.

Conclusion

The study identified commitment to teacher education as an effective strategy for improving the teaching and learning of CME. Various items were listed as a check list of teacher behavior module and were accepted as component of adequate and good teaching behaviour. Also teaching behaviour of teachers has been considered as a sure way of improving the teaching and learning of CME because the teacher constitute major factor in implementation of any given curriculum. Suggestions have also been made on how to use teacher behaviour approach to improve the teaching CME in South East geo-political zone of Nigeria.

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