

CHALLENGES WITH THE TEACHING OF CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ILORIN METROPOLIS, KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study examined the challenges and possible solutions to the problems of teaching Christian Religious Studies (CRS) in the secondary school curriculum. In recent times, the subject has faced a lot of challenges, ranging from inappropriate methodology used by teachers, use of obsolete instructional materials, and poor student performance in the national examinations. The researchers adopted a descriptive survey research design for the study, while the study area was Ilorin metropolis. The population of this study comprised all the CRS teachers in Ilorin metropolis. The population of CRS teachers is one hundred and forty (140): 42 male teachers and 98 female teachers. The entire population was utilised as the sample for the study. The data obtained were collected and subjected to descriptive statistics. The research questions were analysed using mean and standard deviation. The results of the study revealed that teachers are not using adequate instructional resources and methods for the teaching of CRS was based mainly on teacher-centred. And this has led to students losing interest in the subject. It was concluded that the level of students' interest is low. Therefore, it was suggested that teachers should use adequate instructional strategies in their teaching and make the subject more interesting to the students.

Keywords: Instructional Strategy, Resources, Methods, Curriculum

Introduction

The teaching of CRS in Nigerian schools dates back to the coming of Christian missionaries to the country in the 19th century. Ever since then, CRS has gained prominence in schools to the extent that it has taken a unique place in the school curriculum. Due to the value placed on the subject for bringing about religious and moral training, it is offered basically in the primary schools and at all levels of education. Edohe (2018) observed that CRS has been one of the most important subjects being taught in secondary schools. This is because the subject helps to streamline the thoughts, character, morals, and aspirations of the students. It also offers hope for the future, integrates, disciplines, and harmonises the individual to bring about a progressive society.

Teachers have the responsibility to teach the relevance of religion to life, encourage an understanding of obedience to God's law, and point the children to God so that Godliness becomes one of their

personalities. It has been observed that moral bankruptcy, cultism, rape, abortion and drug addition, can be attributed to lack of deep Christian religious studies teaching among the students. No wonder a survey conducted by Adama (2020) opined that the teaching given to the students only enables them to simply pass examinations rather than bringing about a change in behaviour and character. Onouvugbe & Mordi (2017) observed that CRS is not only a subject, but also a way of life, but what is not clear is whether the teaching of this subject has made any meaningful impact on the students who learn it and the society as a whole.

From all indications, the current teaching demands that the teacher must ensure that the classroom environment is lively for teaching and learning. Teaching and learning are currently geared towards child-centred activity. However, it was discovered that the cause of underachievement in Christian religious studies could be linked to an inappropriate method of teaching, a lack of instructional material and resources, and unqualified teachers at the secondary school level. Therefore, every attempt should be made to teach the subject in an interesting and lively manner so that students will derive the maximum benefit from the subject.

Ojo (2016) believed that the implementation of the CRS curriculum required the use of varied instructional techniques and resources to help these students imbibe the right attitudes to God and life, and the right conduct to self and to others. It should also be noted that the issue of instructional resources cannot be thrown overboard. A teacher needs these resources to support their method of teaching CRS. The reason for this is not far-fetched because seeing and doing things will make a person assimilate, understand, and remember topics learnt best. This is the essence of learning with instructional resources because it makes learning permanent in students' memories.

The teacher is recognised to be a key figure in making any type of curriculum successful. Therefore, a teacher of CRS must be knowledgeable and qualified than the students he teaches, that is, to teach as against the misguided opinion of some people that any believer can teach CRS without professional studies in CRS. Ovovughe (2017) stated that many teachers are well qualified to teach CRS but refuse to do their work as they should do it. Teachers' disposition and interest are another problem affecting the teaching of CRS in schools. Some individuals inadvertently enter the teaching profession and end up teaching CRS, often because they perceive the subject as relatively easy to teach or, more pragmatically, as a strategic stepping stone to more lucrative opportunities.

It was also observed that many students do not perform very well in the subject at the Senior School Certificate examination. Among the factors responsible for the students' poor performance in the subject is the inappropriate teaching methods adopted by the teachers. (Adewuya, 2003; Abdu-Raheem, 2010). By implication, the effective method of teaching CRS has not been identified. Onsongo (2012) suggested that teachers should be creative and innovative in whatever methods or techniques they use to help promote and sustain a harmonious teaching and learning environment. However, some teachers are not equipped with relevant skills to enable them to deliver the subject content effectively, making it difficult to select methods that would make teaching learner-centred and bring out positive behavioural change.

Statement of the Problem

Teaching and learning are taking a new dimension with the incorporation of digital and information technology. Innovations in terms of teaching and usage of instructional devices are being developed to current trends in education. CRS should not be left behind in this direction. Stakeholders think that the teaching of CRS should follow the new trend in pedagogy to overcome the challenges faced in the day-to-day teaching of the subject

Observations from previous studies highlight significant challenges in teaching religion. Njoku (2016) identified three pronounced problems: lack of well-trained teachers, poor teaching skills, and inadequate resource materials. Similarly, Onsong (2008) found that the teachers faced constraints in using life approaches to teach CRS in secondary schools in Nairobi East District, Kenya. Specifically, Onsong noted that teachers often relied on ineffective lecture methods due to inadequate resources, rather than utilising collaborative and engaging approaches such as group discussion, demonstration, class participation, drama, discovery method, and audio-visual. This suggests that the traditional lecture method may not be effective in teaching and learning in religion classes, and more innovative and interactive approaches are needed.

Among the factors responsible for the challenges faced in the teaching of CRS were attributed to inappropriate teaching methods by the teachers. Ugwu (2010) studied the influence of teaching methods on students' interest in CRS. The study found that those teachers of CRS use poor, boring, and obsolete methods such as memorisation of bible passages, dictation, copying of notes, and recitation in teaching. According to the study, these obsolete methods cause students to lose interest in the subject. Hence, the student would not register or offer the subject at the school certificate examination. Over the years, a major setback that has hindered the teaching of CRS in Africa has been the lack of teaching methods. According to Abdulhamid (2010), the lecture method used by teachers has made many students lose their interest in learning CRS and consequently may reduce students' enrolment in the subject area. This is because it is teacher-centred. The student may end up having low interest, which could lead to poor academic performance in CRS.

It was observed that many students do not perform well in SSCE in CRS, and the enrollment level is reducing by the day, partly because the method of teaching the subject matter is not good enough. Teachers need to use child-centred methods to achieve the stated objectives; however, this has not been fulfilled as a result of poor teaching and a lack of adequate instructional materials to motivate students. Charles and Harriet (2013) believed that general education in Nigeria has lost its salt, and the standard seems to have fallen and continues to fall. Morality seems to have been at its lowest ebb, such that students commit all sorts of crimes and behave as if they have lost focus. There seems to be moral decadence in schools and society at large. It is therefore necessary to look into the problems and challenges being encountered by teachers and students in the course of teaching and learning Christian Religious Studies in secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to find out the challenges facing the teaching of Christian Religious Studies, to identify and recommend the best methods that can facilitate teaching and learning, and improve the academic performance of senior secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Examine the extent to which instructional resources are available for teaching CRS among secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis.
2. Identify the methods used in the teaching of CRS among secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis.
3. Determine the disposition and willingness of students to CRS among secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

1. Are there available instructional resources for the teaching of CRS among secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis?
2. What are the teaching methods used in teaching CRS among secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis?
3. What are the dispositions and willingness of students to the learning of CRS among secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis?

Methodology

The research design adopted for the study was a descriptive survey. The design was considered appropriate for this study because it allowed the researchers to systematically gather respondents' opinions on the challenges confronting the teaching of CRS. The population of the study comprised all teachers teaching in senior secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis. In selecting the sample for the study, the researcher adopted a purposive sampling technique by selecting all 140 teachers teaching CRS in all the secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis. A researcher-designed questionnaire was used to gather information for the study. It was used to collect information on the availability of instructional resources, teaching methods, disposition and willingness of students for the teaching and learning of CRS.

Statement on availability of instructional materials consisting of 10 items attracted the response using Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA) 4, Agree (A) 3, Strongly Disagree (SD) 2, Disagree (D).¹ The questionnaire designed was validated by experts from Test and Measurement in the Department of Social Sciences, University of Ilorin. Using Cronbach's Alpha, the reliability of the questionnaire obtained was 0.86. Descriptive statistical technique of percentage, mean, and standard deviation was used.

Results

Research Question 1: Are there are enough instructional materials for the teaching of CRS secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis?

Table 1: presents the frequency and the distribution of responses on the adequacy of instructional materials for the teaching of CRS. Mean and standard deviation of the data collected and research question 1 were obtained and summarised in table 1 as shown below

S/N	TTEMS	SA	A	D	SD	X	SD
1	Objectives tally with the instructional materials used	42	48	23	27	2.75	1.087
2	Identify appropriate instructional material for teaching	30	49	36	25	2.60	1.016
3	Improvise instructional materials were not available	24	26	41	49	2.16	1.095
4	Surf the internet for instructional materials	25	30	38	47	2.24	1.103
5	CRS is too abstract for the use of instructional materials	51	36	22	31	2.76	1.167
6	Students are motivated with the use of instructional materials	60	21	39	20	2.86	1.127
7	Teachers possess the ability to use instructional materials adequately	16	40	34	50	2.16	1.041
8	Teachers see the use of instructional materials as a waste of time	52	31	22	35	2.71	1.207
9	It is easy to identify appropriate instructional material to teach CRS	69	26	24	21	3.02	1.128
10	Objectives stated are easy to achieve with the use of instructional materials	42	48	27	23	2.78	1.53

Mean 2.60

Table 1 shows the extent to which instructional resources are available for teaching CRS. As shown in the table, the highest mean value was 3.02 that is easy to identify appropriate instructional resources to teach CRS, followed by students being motivated with the use of instructional resources (2.86), and the objectives stated are easy to achieve with the use of instructional resources. It was further observed that the items with low values of mean on the extent to which instructional resources are available are: surfing the internet for instructional resources (2.24), improvisation of instructional resources was not available (2.16), and teachers possess the ability to use instructional resources adequately (1.041). This implies that teachers rely heavily on traditional teaching methods such as discussion, chalkboard and reading bible passages, and there is limited use of technology.

Research Question 2: What are the teaching methods used in teaching CRS?

Table 2: Teaching Methods used by Teachers

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	X	SD
1	Use of Socrates method	23	37	31	49	2.24	1.105
2	Use of chalkboard	32	47	25	36	2.54	1.109
3	Use of computer	27	44	23	46	2.37	1.134
4	Bible reading method	51	36	23	30	2.77	1.159
5	Use of bible maps	24	36	38	42	2.30	1.078
6	Discussion method	40	60	17	23	2.84	1.022
7	Drawing out the moral lesson from the bible passages	37	42	26	35	2.58	1.132
8	Application of life approach	21	36	39	53	2.18	1.101
9	Use of projectors	26	34	32	48	2.27	1.124
10	Use of charts and pictures						

Mean 2.45

Table 2 shows the teaching methods used in the teaching of CRS. The teachers used the following methods Socrates method(2.24); chalkboard (2.54); computer (2.37); bible reading (2.77); bible maps (2.30) discussion (2.84); drawing out lesson from bible passages (2.58); application of life approach (2.18); use of projectors (2.27); and use of charts and pictures(2.82). This indicates that teachers used the discussion method to a very large extent. Results also indicate that teachers use chalkboards, read bible passages, and use pictures and charts. However, the use of computers, bible maps, and life approaches was used to a very limited extent

Research Question 3: What are the dispositions and willingness of students to the learning of CRS?

Table 3: Disposition and Willingness to students to CRS

S/N	TTEMS	SA	A	D	SD	X	SD
1	Students engage in tutorial classes	32	46	23	39	2.51	1.128
2	Some want to make up for the number of subjects for school certificate exam	36	44	22	38	2.56	1.146
3	Students have interest in Christian Religious Studies	35	59	15	31	2.70	1.078
4	Students are from Christian families	30	64	19	27	2.69	1.017
5	Students always pass CRS with good grade	38	62	16	24	2.81	1.022
6	Reading stories of the bible interest the students	52	55	13	20	2.99	1.021
7	Attend CRS classes punctually	34	71	18	17	2.87	.920
8	Students choose the subject because of my friends	36	48	27	29	2.65	1.079
9	Teachers teaching the subject are accommodating	43	47	24	26	2.76	1.084
10	Environment is conducive for learning	43	56	19	22	2.86	1.029

Mean 2.74

Table 3 shows the disposition and willingness of students to study CRS. The grand mean rating of the responses of the respondents on the 10 items in the table range from 2.51 to 2.99, which are all greater than the cut-off point of 2.50 on a 4-point Likert scale. This finding indicates that all 10 items on the table are factors that determine the disposition and willingness of the students. The implications of the findings suggest that students are intrinsically motivated to learn CRS and see the relevance of the subject in their everyday lives

Discussion of Findings

The study aimed at finding out the challenges faced in the teaching of Christian Religious Studies, and it was discovered that CRS teachers faced a number of challenges which hinder them from achieving affective, cognitive and psychomotor domain objectives. They include a lack of resources, the use of the life approach method, concentration of application, and statement of the objective itself.

The study reveals that the common instructional strategies that were mainly used by the teachers in secondary schools are not yielding the desired results. There is minimal use of computers, projectors, and other digital tools, which hinders the effectiveness of teaching and learning. It was found out that teachers use two methods mostly, discussion and reading of the bible. Abdul-Raheem (2012) agreed with this finding that the discussion method was the most dominant method of teaching employed by CRS teachers. There is the neglect of life approach, which involves connecting biblical concepts to teaching and learning. The findings also corroborate that of Sindu (2016) and Njoku (2009), which revealed that CRS teachers mostly used chalk and talk as well as the lecture method in the Bungoma country in western Kenya and Ebonyi state of Nigeria, respectively.

Findings from the study indicate that students' level of interest in CRS is low. It also revealed that teachers tell stories during the lesson, use the bible reading method in teaching, and insist on memorisation of bible passages. These obsolete methods of teaching could be responsible for students' low interest in CRS. This study is also in line with the findings of Anih (2002), who reported that CRS is too boring because it involves a lot of bible reading and note taking.

In terms of students' willingness and disposition to the study of CRS, it was revealed that students' level of interest in CRS is low. This is in line with the findings of John (2011) and Kalu (2012) on students' interest in CRS over the years. This could be attributed to the teaching methods used for learning, which seem narrow and obsolete in approach. In fact, Ernest (1991) and Nweze (2007) affirmed that this constitutes a major problem in the teaching of the subject. However, this is in contrast to the findings of Onovughe & Mordi (2017), who reported on the attitude of students to CRS in the South-south region of Nigeria that students have a positive disposition towards CRS and were motivated to learn and see the relevance of the subject to their everyday lives. This seems to mean that the students are open to spiritual growth and development, which is a critical aspect of CRS education.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that the challenges confronting the successful implementation of the CRS curriculum lie with the methods used by teachers in the teaching and learning process. CRS teachers are not adequately provided with instructional materials and incorporate innovative methods, such as technology and life approach, into their teaching practices. The curriculum should be reviewed to ensure that it is relevant and engaging for students.

Recommendations

- Teachers of CRS should be encouraged to incorporate innovative methods into their teaching practices.
- The curriculum should be tailored to see the relevance of the topics to their everyday lives.
- CRS teachers should be more innovative and creative in teaching methods

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