

# THE CONTRIBUTION OF NATIONAL CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT CENTRE INTO THE TEACHING OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF BULAMAGI SUB-COUNTY, IGANGA DISTRICT

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The study investigated the Contribution of National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) into the teaching of Religious Education on academic performance in Primary schools of Bulamagi, Sub, County, Iganga District, Uganda. The study involved 42 teachers randomly sampled from 6 primary Schools in Bulamagi Sub-County; Iganga District. Descriptive research design was used during data collection and analysis. The study aimed at getting a clear view on the contributions of NCDC towards the teaching of Religious Education, the challenges hindering the teaching of Religious Education and what could be done to address the challenges hindering the teaching of Religious Education in primary school. The results showed that NCDC has designed the curriculum and syllabuses of Religious Education, published some text books for Religious Education, and organized sensitization workshops for teachers of Religious Education. However, some of the challenges were: few teachers attended sensitization workshops organized by NCDC and negative attitude of the teachers teaching Religious Education. Teachers take Religious Education as a minor subject so they do not make schemes of work and lesson plans and do not teach as planned by the NCDC. It is recommended that there is a need to have completely new teaching and assessment procedure of Religious Education that will focus on the three domains of learning: cognitive (head), affective (heart) and hands (psychomotor). Religious Education should be taught and examined as a separate subject and teachers should be inspected and monitored by the Inspectors to see that they prepare Religious Education and teach as planned by the NCDC.

**Keywords:** National Curriculum Development Center, teaching, Religious Education, examination.

## Introduction

In Uganda National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) is a body working with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology responsible for designing curriculum and syllabuses of all subjects including Religious Education in Uganda (Kateeba, 2012). The foundation that nurtured the growth of the teaching of religious education was laid down by the early Christian Missionaries who combined the introduction of Christianity among the Africans with education (Ssekamwa, 1997).

However, previous studies have shown that religious education has encouraged children to learn from various religious beliefs, values and culture while at the same time, exploring their own beliefs regarding their religion (Dinama, 2013). Religious education is a good preliminary point and a fundamental way to meet explicit requirements as this will help to caution learn-

ers all the way through until they graduate to the next level. The greatest challenge and opportunity today is how to provide a sufficient number of suitably trained and committed teachers of Christian Religious Education in both Primary and Secondary Schools (Rugendo, 2012).

According to Kateeba (2012), the Director NCDC noted that Social Studies (SST) with Religious Education (RE) form one Paper of 100 marks. The Paper has two sections A and B. Section A has 40 questions which carry 40 marks while Section B has 15 questions carrying 60 marks. The number of items for SST in section A are 35 while RE has five questions. Section B has 10 questions for SST while RE has five questions. The percentage of RE is 25% and SST is 75% of the entire Paper. This is challenging in the 21st century where teachers have neglected the teaching of Religious education because it has a low percentage in the final Examination and concentrated



on social studies which has high percentage.

The teachers' negligence in preparations and the teaching of Religious Education is working towards the failure of the mission of the church of Uganda as far as Education system is concerned. Teachers are targeting good performance in the final examination Cognitive (head) neglecting the affective (heart) and hands (psychomotor). This has contributed to moral decline amongst the learners in primary and post primary because they have not developed spiritually.

This is also affecting the achievement of the aim of NCDC which states that; the teaching of Religious Education in Primary School is to inculcate moral ethical and spiritual integrity, tolerance and human fellowship amongst the learners. The attitudes people have towards the teaching of Religious Education has led to the decline of moral amongst the learners and has a result affected the academic progress of learners.

### Statement of the Problem

In East African countries there is freedom of worship and this has affected the teaching of Religious Education in Schools. The Education Act of Uganda assumes that Religious Education and worship will be provided in all Schools and shall form part of the curriculum in primary and post primary Schools (Government of the Republic of Uganda, 2008). The Anglican Church of Uganda (2016) emphasizes that Christian Religious Education (CRE) shall be compulsory and part and parcel of the examinable curriculum in the Church of Uganda Primary and Post Primary Schools. According to Anglican Church of Uganda (2001), it is the role of the school chaplain to see that Religious Education is being taught in a school and by a believer who is a professional teacher. However, preliminary investigation as per reviewed literature reveals that the teaching of Religious studies as planned by the NCDC has been ignored by most of the teachers.

The following reasons are given by teachers for not preparing to teach Religious Education as planned by the NCDC: It is examined together with social studies and carries only 25% marks of the final examination in Primary leaving examination (PLE) and there is also increasing diverse attitudes to religious education in the classroom since the Government of Uganda had decided to scrap it off from the Ugandan Education Curriculum. Many stake holders face the controversy of "should religious Education be

taught as a subject at schools?" As a result, many administrators and teachers are making efforts in searching for an appropriate relationship between Religious Education and curriculum design in order to ensure that Religious Education is taught in all schools. There was a need therefore, to examine the contribution of National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) into the teaching of Religious Education in primary schools.

### Research Questions

1. What are the contributions of National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) towards the teaching of Religious Education in Primary Schools in Bulamagi Sub-county?
2. What are the challenges hindering the teaching of Religious Education in Bulamagi Sub-county?
3. What could be done to address the challenges hindering the teaching of Religious Education in primary school in Bulamagi Sub-county?

### Research Methodology

Descriptive research design was used to describe the contribution of National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) into the teaching of Religious Education in Primary Schools. Forty two (42) teachers from six (6) primary schools of Bulamagi Sub-county, Iganga district were randomly selected and participated in the study.

### Ethical Considerations

The researcher put two ethical issues into considerations and these were informed consent and confidentiality. The researcher informed the respondents about the purpose of the research so the respondents were stimulated and participated willingly. They were informed about the objectives of the study and so forth. Moreover, the researcher did not disclose the names of the respondents during the research process. All issues concerning the researcher and the respondents were not revealed to anybody outside the circle and also assured the respondents that the data collected will be used for academic purpose only. Before data collection started, the researcher obtained a letter of introduction from the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton Dean of School

of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences and permission to conduct research in Iganga District, Uganda. Since Bulamagi Sub-county Primary Schools fall under the jurisdiction of the area District Education Officer, the researcher obtained permission from his office to collect data from the Schools. The researcher obtained permission from the headteachers to collect data from the teachers.

### Findings of the Study

Attendance of Primary Teachers on Seminar Organized by Department of Education of Central Busoga Diocese about the teaching of Religious Education.

Table 1  
*Frequency of Teachers' Attendance*

Teachers Who Attended	Teachers Who Did not Attend
12/42 (29%)	30/42 (71%)

Table 1 shows the responses on the contribution of National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) into the teaching of Religious Education on academic performance in Primary schools of Bulamagi, Sub, County, Iganga District, Uganda. The table shows that only 12 teachers out of 42 represented by 29 % attended the Seminar organized by the Department of Education of Central Busoga Diocese about the teaching of Religious Education. 30 out of 42 teachers represented by 71% did not attend the seminar on the teaching of Religious Education. The findings also revealed that teachers have negative attitude towards the teaching of Religious Education. Teachers who attended the workshop accepted and said that teachers of Religious Education stopped some time back to make schemes of work and lesson plans for Religious Education. The results of this study concur with the statement of Zziwa (Lukwago, 2013) who said that the root cause of moral decline is teachers' negligence into the teaching of Religious Education. He further said that in order to regain morals among the young generation schools must go back on the basics and teach religion.

### Seminar Topics Discussed in Seminars

Table 2

*Seminar Topics*

1. Methods of Teaching Religious Education
2. Preparation of Materials for Teaching Religious Education
3. Modes of Assessment in Teaching Religious Education
4. Things Done During Leisure Time
5. Challenges Hindering the Teaching of Religious Education
6. How to Improve Teaching and Learning in Religious Education
7. Excelling in God's ministry and Serving Others
8. Making Appropriate Learning Aids
9. Tips on How to Improve Teaching and Learning
10. Schemes of Work, Lesson Planning, Tutorials and Demonstrations
11. Jesus Promise of the Holy Spirit, Gifts of the Holy Spirit



Table 2 shows the topics that were discussed during the seminar: methods of teaching Religious Education, preparation of materials for teaching Religious Education, modes of assessment in teaching Religious Education, challenges hindering the teaching of Religious Education, and how to change teachers' attitudes towards the effective teaching of Religious Education in primary schools. The findings concur with the research conducted by Dinama (2010) who observed that Religious Education teachers possessed poor assessment skills and this is reflected in poor performance in tests and end of term examinations. He further said that in addition to inadequate pedagogical knowledge and assessment skills, teachers have a challenge of inadequate reference textbooks.

### **Contribution of NCDC in the Teaching of Religious Education**

The findings revealed that: NCDC had contributed towards the teaching of Religious education. In 2007, the Ministry of Education and Sports through the National Curriculum Development Center (NCDC) introduced curriculum reforms at the primary School level. The reforms were as a result of recommendations from various Education Research studies such as National Assessment of progress in Education (NAPE) and Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) and the findings of the Uganda Curriculum Review Report.

For the primary cycle, NCDC designed the curriculum and syllabuses for Christian Religious education and Islamic Religious education. It was rolled out and is to be implemented in all Primary Schools in Uganda. It is also evidenced that all Schools in Bulamagi Sub-county have curriculum and syllabuses for Religious education for the entire primary cycle. NCDC has published some text books for Religious Education both Islam and Christianity following the new curriculum. The findings revealed that all Schools in Bulamagi sub-county were given text books for Religious Education for lower and middle primary approved by the NCDC.

Sensitization workshops about the use of curriculum have been organized in some parts of the country by the Center Coordinating tutors (CCT) on behalf of the NCDC. In Bulamagi sub-county the teachers who were interviewed said that they had a workshop when they had just introduced the curriculum. The teaching of Religious Education teachers said that no one including the Inspectors monitors the performance of Reli-

gious Education.

The results of Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) by the Ministry of Education and Sports for the period 2007-2010 indicate that introduction of the curriculum reform had led remarkable increase in learners achievements especially in literacy for both English and local language, Religious Education, numeracy and life skills. This trend of achievement guided the completion of the upper Primary Curriculum review process (Kateeba, 2012).

Both Christian Religious Education (CRE) and Islamic Religious Education (IRE) are examinable at all levels of Primary Cycle. They are fully catered for in the curriculum though given limited time. Christianity and Islam are the major religions in Uganda and they have a lot in common. The teachers of Religious education in Bulamagi sub-county they agreed that they are supposed to teach the two parts of Religious education and Pupils are given chance to choose the part to answer in examination either Christian Religious Education or Islamic Religious Education.

The Education policy of the Anglican Church of Uganda (2016) assumes that Christian Religious Education (CRE) shall be compulsory and part and parcel of the examinable curriculum in the Church of Ugandan Primary and Post Primary Schools. Wright and Arthur, (2010) said that Christian leaders need to ensure that their institutions have a curriculum that offers Christian insights and values, research that advances the declared Christian purpose of the Institution and a significant proportion of staff and students who make up the community who are willing and able to contribute to its values and mission. Otherwise the core of the institution's identity could be defined by external secular agencies and government.

The national curriculum handbook asserts that; NCDC provides an opportunity to address the need to nurture an appreciation of & respect for social, cultural and religious diversity. In the same handbook stated that Religious Education makes distinctive contributions to school curriculum by developing people's knowledge & understanding of religion, religious beliefs, practices, languages and traditions & their influence on individuals, communities, societies and cultures. This is in line with the findings of the study where the respondents explained the purpose of teaching Religious Education as the way of developing learner's knowledge to understand religion, beliefs and customs of a given society.

The NCDC, through the teaching of Religious



Education as planned, enables pupils to consider and respond to a range of important questions related to their own spiritual developmental questions concerning the meaning and purpose of life. The findings also revealed that learners and stake holders have many unanswered questions affecting their life situations and this could be answered through the learning and teaching of Religious Education in schools.

The National Institute of Education (2014) asserts that Religious Education is concerned with the deep meaning of their experiences and how this helps learners give purpose to their lives. It provides opportunities to explore make and respond to the meaning of those experiences in relation to the beliefs and experiences of others as well as to ones' own experiences. The findings of the study also revealed that in schools where teachers have tried to teach Religious Education learners have started gradually to understand how to leave morally in this world in relation to believes and experiences as stated by learners as well as their teachers. The National Curriculum promotes the holistic development of the child. It focuses on enhancing students' spiritual, moral, social, cultural, physical and mental development, and thereby the overall wellbeing of the individual.

### **Challenges Hindering the Teaching of Religious Education in Primary Schools**

Teachers of Religious Education complained of inadequate curriculum, syllabuses and Religious Education text books. The findings revealed that schools were given the curriculum, syllabuses and text books but some teachers claimed to have lost the text books and they don't where to get them as they are not sold anywhere and even some syllabuses and curriculum for some schools got lost.

Teachers in Bulamagi Sub-county focused their greatest attention on measuring written works especially in cognitive attainment rather than affective and psychomotor behavior. This loses the major aim of teaching Religious Education which is about to inculcate moral ethical and spiritual integrity, tolerance and human fellowship (Kateeba, 2012). The aim of teaching Religious Education is in line with the aims of primary education in Uganda which endeavors to develop and cherish the cultural, moral and spiritual values, life skills and to appreciate the richness that lie in the varied and diverse culture and values as well as life skills.

Inadequate induction training and refresher

courses for teachers of Religious studies were observed during the interviews. Teachers of Bulamagi sub-county claimed to have not inducted on how to teach Religious Education following the New Curriculum and this has affected the teaching Religious Education in Primary Schools as planned by the NCDC.

Negative attitude of teachers and learners of Religious Education on the subject. Teachers take Religious education as a minor subject so they don't make scheme of work and lesson plans. Religious education is also examined together with social studies and given the least marks that is 25% of the final examination. This has also affected the teaching of Religious Education as many teachers are targeting high grades. Therefore, they concentrate on the part of Social Studies which has 75% in the final Examination. This concurs with the findings done by Ndarwa (2007) who said that pupils nowadays are groomed to be intellectual giants in science and technology with little or no interest in the moral growth, this he referred to as spiritually dwarfism. She maintained that when the children /pupils grow older, they may create an avenue to close the spiritual vacuum. Some of the pupils may join secret cults to perpetuate evil in diverse forms. In this way the goals and objectives of including CRS in the school curriculum has been jeopardized.

According to Copley (2008), said that the challenges facing religious education depends largely on three factors: The first and second factors are the teacher who teaches & the student who is the recipient, the third factor is the method used in delivering the teaching. His findings are also some the challenges found in Bulamagi sub-county where teachers have negative attitude towards the teaching of Religious Education and many are not equipped with knowledge and skills of teaching the subject.

Religious Education is not assessed like other subjects because teachers do not possess adequate assessment skills. The results are in line with the findings of Dinama (2010), who observed that Religious Education teachers possessed poor assessment skills and the cause and source of this could be that teachers are not inducted on the skills of teaching of Religious Education and this is reflected in poor performance in tests and end of term examinations. He further said that in addition to inadequate pedagogical knowledge and assessment skills, teachers lack collaboration with one another could also be the cause hindering



the teaching of Religious Education.

Negative comments by some stake holders influence the attitudes of the learners towards the learning of Religious Education. This has affected the academic performance of some learners and contributed to increased Immoral and evil behaviors, such as corruption, murder, rape, defilement among others in the current young generation (Lukwago,2013). The findings also revealed that the freedom of religious choice has an impact on the teaching and learning of Religious Education. Bulamagi sub-county has different sects like Moslems, Catholics, Anglican Christians and the Born gain Christians. Teachers who were interviewed said that Islam verses Christianity has affected the learning of the subject.

During interviews teachers of Religious Education shown negative interest of the subject and some said that there is inadequate instructional materials and textbooks for Religious Education. Studies by Adukwu and Gbenda (cited in Njoku & Njoku, 2015) revealed poor teaching methods, lack of concrete instructional materials and poor interest in the subject as problem facing the teaching of Christian Religious Education. One could wonder why students lose interest on the subject irrespective of its relevance. Could it be as a result of government's lack of commitment? Subsequently, there has been rapid grow of social ills among students across the country (Njoku, 2012).

### **Ways to Address the Challenges Hindering the Teaching of Religious Education**

The respondents gave various ways to address the challenges hindering the teaching of Religious Education. There is a need to change teachers and learners' attitude towards the subject. The research done by Kutto as cited by Amugah (2017) on overcoming challenges facing the teaching of CRE in Eldoret Municipality discovered that both teachers and learners have negative attitude towards the subject since it affects effective implementation of the subject in the Curriculum. This is similar to the findings of the study in Bulamagi sub-county where teachers also have negative attitude towards the teaching of the subject.

Religious Education as a subject must be given equal consideration like other subjects taught in primary. For example, Science, English, Mathematics and Social studies. This solution is similar to observation by Ndarwa (2007) who said that Christian Religious Education (CRE) as a subject must be considered as

important as any other subject within the curriculum hence be given equal consideration as given to the Social Studies, English, Mathematics and science during the curriculum implementation process.

There is a need to change stake holders' mindset towards Religious Education as a subject. Onsongo (2008) said that the success of any curriculum innovation depends on the attitude of the teachers towards the implementation.

There is a need of regular refresher courses and workshops for teachers of Religious Education to equip them with new approaches and methodology on teaching value. The result of the study concurs with Nzomo's study as cited by Kutto (2013) comments that teachers need to upgrade their teaching skills to keep up with demands of the first changing society. The findings also revealed that; teachers don't make schemes of work and lesson plans for Christian Religious Education because they don't have references books and some they are not conversant with the new format of planning according to the new curriculum. This finding is in agreement with Njoku (2012) who said that teachers need to upgrade their teaching skills in order to keep up with the demands of the fast changing society.

The respondents however agreed that approaches like adoption of good communication skill, good code of conduct / practice, strong emphasis on the importance of teaching Religious Education, appropriate use of student-centered methods and techniques, love for student and passion for the job will enhance effective implementation of teaching of Religious Education in Primary schools.

All stake holders this includes teachers, parents and learner's policy makers should sensitize them to love the subject. The teachers play a key part of making learners to have interest in the subject. This is possible when teachers have passion for their job as well as being just and equitable. This is in line with the assertion of Njoku and Njoku (2014) who observed that an effective teacher must be approachable, considerate, has respect for all, promotes value diversity, fairness, encourage pupils to learn, generous with praise and apply good network of resources in administering his duty. Teachers with deep knowledge of the subject are masters of the contents and could always make appropriate use of skills to manipulate his lesson thereby making effective implementation of the subject possible. Ucha (cited in Njoku & Njoku, 2015) pointed out the importance of societal values on the teaching

of Christian Religious studies by revealing that the way society and parents view the subject affects the students' choice and interest; and advocate for positive view of the subject so that its desired goals in the life of the learner would be achieved especially now that society is at the cross road in terms of moral decadence. This implies that the teachers, parents and society at large needs to be positive concerning the teaching and learning of CRS, if the subject must achieve its major goals in the learners.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, NCDC has greatly contributed to the teaching of Religious Education in Primary Schools through designing of curriculum & syllabuses, publishing and supplying text books of Religious Education to Schools. Religious Education is important in that it improves child's morals and as a results leads to the improvement in academic performance. However, teachers in Bulamagi Sub-county focused their greatest attention on measuring written works especially in cognitive attainment rather than affective and psychomotor behavior. The study also identified various challenges hindering the teaching of Religious Education in Primary Schools and the challenges ranging from poor understanding of pedagogical and theological aims of the subject, societal moral decadence, lack of passion and love for students and the job, poor communication technique to vast and abstract nature of subject. Solutions to these inadequacies have also been sought; hence they need to adhere strictly to the demands of stakeholders in education of children, because factors affecting teachers' preparation and execution of their duties effectively jeopardize the major aim of teaching Religious Education which is about to inculcate moral ethical and spiritual integrity, tolerance and human fellowship.

### Recommendations

There is a need to have completely new teaching and assessment procedure of Religious Education that will focus on the three domains of learning: cognitive (head), affective (heart) and hands (psychomotor). This will help to develop human being intellectually, emotionally, physically, spiritually and socially acceptable in the society.

Religious Education should be taught and examined as a separate subject. This may help to bring

teachers on board and begin to prepare and teach the subject effectively. This calls the support of the government and all stake holders including the foundation bodies of the schools. In other words, greater emphasis on the importance of the subject is required. The subject should be made compulsory at all levels of education system in Uganda.

Teachers need to be inspected and monitored by the Inspectors from the Church and the Government to see that they prepare Religious Education and teach as planned by the NCDC and Periodic workshops should be held for teachers on how to teach Religious Education and its purpose.

The Ministry of Education and Sports working hand in hand with the NCDC should ensure that regular workshops and trainings for all teachers of Religious Education are conducted to empower them with the new methods and skills of handling the subject.

The syllabus of Religious Education should match with the new knowledge and skills that have come up within the new curriculum innovation. The Ministry of Education and Sports should revise the Religious Education in terms of the content, time allocation and put in place appropriate strategies to minimize teachers and learner's bias towards the subject.

Teachers of Religious Education should be encouraged to attend workshops and seminars about the subject because the job of molding human behavior is dynamic; hence regular attendance to seminars will equip them, with new approaches and methods for effective implementation of Religious education curriculum among pupils in primary Schools. The teaching of Religious Education is dependent upon teacher's skills and knowledge.

The school administration should be encouraged by the managers and inspectors to give full support to the teaching of Religious Education in terms of provision of instructional materials and allocation of adequate time to the teaching of the subject.

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