

THE CURRICULUM IN A CHRISTIAN SCHOOL: WHAT MAKES IT CHRIST-CENTERED

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Abstract

The demand for Christ-like character that transforms society has made Christian education more relevant in the 21st century. Moral decadence is rife, giving rise to the call for religion in the curriculum (Donovan, 2017). A Christ-centered curriculum is inevitable if students are to develop faith and the character of Christ through the integration of content and pedagogy. However, there is little information available concerning what makes the curriculum Christ-centered (Dernlan, 2013). The purpose of the study was to explore what makes the curriculum Christ-centered in a Christian School. The developmental faith theory by Fowler (1981) and corroborated by Love and Talbot (2000). It states that students are influenced by the academic environment where the curriculum serves as a pillar to the foundation of faith. This case study used data gathered through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observation, and document analysis. The study was conducted at an international Christian high school in Southeast Asia. A total of 13 individual participants and 2 groups participated in this study. The data analysis was done by identifying patterns and themes, noting links and differences to the forming of concepts explaining the case study. The findings indicated that a curriculum based on Christ makes it Christ-centered. The character of the curriculum designers is molded by Christ who has a vision of building good student character. Christ-centered curriculum content has a connection with Christ and is founded on faith. Teachers who teach such a curriculum must show good character and help high school students to develop faith.

Keywords

Curriculum, Christ-centered, Christian school, Case study, High school students, Integrating content and pedagogy, Faith

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INTRODUCTION

One of the main aims of teaching is to boost the understanding and learning of students. Integrating the content and pedagogy of a Christ-centered curriculum in the classroom can help students learn, understand the biblical worldview, and develop faith in Christ (Manning, 2012; Smith, 2018). A Christ-centered curriculum is based on a biblical worldview of Christ (Scifo, 2018). The biblical worldview of Christ means that the contents of the whole curriculum should be based on and explained using the Bible (Flynt, Flor, & Overstreet, 2017; Garcia-Huidobro, 2017; Scifo, 2018). A Christ-centered curriculum is, therefore, made up of a series of materials based on a biblical worldview of Christ, required for a Christian school to lay the foundation of learning (Boeve, 2012; Harris, 2004; Scifo, 2018).

There is a general call for society to revert to values that lead to the development of civic virtues such as faithfulness and service for the good of society and care for others (Barb, 2017; Hartley, 2004; Kaźmierczak, 2017). The call is epitomized in a statement by Donovan (2017) who remarked, “Indeed, the court itself has suggested that there might be room for religion in the curriculum” (p. 210). He was discussing how religion could be re-introduced in the curriculum of public schools after it was outlawed some years back in the United States by the courts. Private Christian institutions have religion in their curriculum and can lead the call to Christlikeness. but there is still a need for Christian schools to strengthen their role in helping students in their faith development (Hartley, 2004). A well-thought-out plan of Christian education can work better through a Christ-centered curriculum (Hoffman, 2018).

Many Christian schools have a well-thought-out mission statement, but an impeccable mission statement alone cannot develop faith in students (Fuller & Johnson, 2014). Christian

schools must engage in thorough planning of their curriculum and pedagogy to reach their goals. Anything less than that is putting into jeopardy the aim of establishing the school (Dernlan, 2013). The problem is that a Christ-centered curriculum has not been well-defined in many Christian institutions leading to its misapplication in such institutions. There is also little information available concerning what makes the curriculum Christ-centered (Dernlan, 2013). This has led to the use of any curriculum in many Christian institutions, whether Christ-centered or not. The purpose of the study is to explore what actually makes the curriculum Christ-centered in a Christian School.

High school students, in their adolescence age, are more inclined to build their faith as depicted by the developmental faith theory by Fowler (1981) and corroborated by Love and Talbolt (2000). During the adolescence stage, most high school students are greatly influenced by the academic environment where the teacher plays a vital role as a spiritual guide and the curriculum as a pillar to the foundation of faith (Banez, 2016; Christie & Christian, 2012). Fowler (1981) proposed that faith development evolves in stages in the lives of humans. Stage three of Fowler's (1981) theory states that personal belief, identity, and faith development, are influenced by relationships formed with either peers or teachers who are outside the family. This makes a Christ-centered curriculum a pillar in Christian education.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

An important part of research is reviewing related literature to the current study. This gives a supportive base and builds on existing knowledge. This section deals with the literature related to this study.

What makes a curriculum Christ-centered

Curriculum can be described in many ways. English (2010) describes the curriculum as “the content of schooling in all its forms” (p. 4). The Curriculum is the total learning opportunities and student experiences that happen in an educational environment (Hall & Smyth, 2016; Hollingsworth, 2017). It is the lessons of academic content espoused in an educational institution or in a particular course or program (Beck, 2018). While Young (2013) says curriculum gives knowledge, brings about development, and gives meaning and hope to humanity, Pinar (2011) sees curriculum differently and describes it as what can be recollected in the past, what the present holds, and what the future will be for humans. Curriculum can be said to be a plan for learning in schools or all other activities in a school where students learn. A curriculum serves as a source of knowledge obtained from, and about the past, so that future generations can develop the knowledge gained and improve upon it (Maudlin, 2014; Young, 2013).

The Curriculum is very important for the running of any academic institution. It determines the success or otherwise of students in their learning. Through the curriculum, students are able to cultivate knowledge that makes them useful to their communities, thereby achieving the goal of education. In view of this, a curriculum must have a series of materials with good guidelines as teaching aids (Barn & Mahdany, 2017; Beck, 2018; Guzman, 2015; Maudlin, 2014; Pinar, 2011; Young, 2013). For such a curriculum to become Christ-centered, it must be based on a biblical worldview of Christ. The biblical worldview of Christ means that the contents of the whole curriculum should be based on, and explained using the teachings of the Bible about Christ (Flynt et al., 2017; Garcia-Huidobro, 2017; Scifo, 2018). Schultz and Swezey (2013) on the other hand describe a Christ-centered curriculum as measured “by a lifestyle of character, leadership, service, stewardship, and

worship” (p. 228). In their view, a Christ-centered curriculum affects every aspect of a student’s life and can help them to develop faith.

Van der Walt (2012) gives a different meaning of what constitutes a Christ-centered curriculum. He says that a Christ-centered curriculum is a stewardship. According to him, a stewardship Christ-centered curriculum should teach students to care for their neighbors instead of focusing on the academic score they will receive in school. Van der Walt (2012) is of the opinion that the greatest achievement of student learning is acquiring knowledge to live a life of value centered on finding their purpose, to which they have been called to lead.

According to Knight (2016), a Christ-centered curriculum goes beyond just having a religion class separately from other classes. A Christ-centered curriculum requires that all subjects should be taught in the light of an existing God who has revealed Himself to humans through Jesus Christ. Christ is integrated into every aspect of the school curriculum, presenting Him as the center of all knowledge. Christ must permeate the entirety of the curricula (Boeve, 2012; Flynt et al., 2017; Garcia-Huidobro, 2017). Finally, when a curriculum is made Christ-centered, it ultimately encourages students to build a relationship with God that prepares them for service to humans on this earth and in the future world expected to be established by Christ (White, 1952).

Different descriptions by various authors on what makes a curriculum Christ-centered have been espoused, but the idea of White (1948) in *Proper Education* aligns with this study on what a Christ-centered curriculum means. She explained that the curriculum should be centered on Christ. When the curriculum is based on Christ, students will be balanced in their training of head, heart, and hand (Anderson, 1975; Greenleaf, 2005; White, 1948). The purpose of education will then be fulfilled as students defend the teachings of the Bible about Christ.

Christ-centered curriculum and integration of faith and learning

A Christ-centered curriculum and integration of faith and learning are all geared towards impacting learners in their worldview of faith (Beardsley-Hardy, 2017; Daniels & Gustafson, 2016; Knight, 2017; White, 1952). The end product of the two seeks to transform the lives of students and draw them closer to Christ (Daniels & Gustafson, 2016; Guptill, 2004; Larson & Larson, 1992; Wilkerson, 2015). A Christ-centered curriculum and integration of faith and learning are important and needed in the classroom to aid teachers in positively impacting the faith of students (Schultz & Swezey, 2013).

Christ-centered curriculum

As already stated, What Makes a Curriculum Christ-centered; the curriculum must have series of materials with good guidelines as a teaching aid (Barn & Mahdany, 2017; Beck, 2018; Guzman, 2015; Maudlin, 2014; Pinar, 2011; Young, 2013). The materials must be based on a biblical worldview of Christ. The contents of the materials that form the curriculum should be based on and explained using the teachings of the Bible (Flynt et al., 2017; Garcia-Huidobro, 2017). A Christ-centered curriculum is, therefore, made up of a series of materials based on a biblical worldview of Christ, required for a Christian school to lay the foundation of learning (Boeve, 2012; Harris, 2004; Scifo, 2018). The learning is expected to result in faith development in students in the school (Schultz & Swezey, 2013). As students develop in faith, they are prepared and enabled to experience the Christian faith and develop the character of Christ (Semenye, 2013).

Integration of faith and learning

The term Integration of Faith and Learning (IFL) has been widely used by Protestants and Catholics to describe Christian

education (Beck, 2008). The emergence of IFL was in response to the lack of biblical truth in the curriculum of Christian schools in the United States, after the Second World War (Badley, 1994; Beck, 2008; Clark, Johnson, & Sloat, 1991). IFL was meant to address the shortcoming in Christian education (Badley, 1994; Beck, 2008; Clark et al., 1991; Glanzer, 2008; Jacobsen, Jacobsen, & Sawatsky, 2004; Marsden, 1994; Ponyatovska, 2015; Ribera, 2012; Thomas, 2011). The term IFL was coined by Gaebelein (1968) to describe Christian education (Badley, 2009).

Various definitions of IFL and what it involves have been given by Christian educators from different groups of denominations (Akers & Moon, 1980; Gaebelein, 1968; Glanzer, 2008; Korniejczuk, 1994; Nwosu, 1999; Ribera, 2012). But IFL for this study is based on Rasi's (2000) definition from the SDA perspective. He says that IFL is a "deliberate and systematic process of approaching the entire educational enterprises, both curricular and co-curricular from a biblical Christian perspective" (Rasi, 2000, p. 40). This definition makes it clear that IFL transcends classroom activities. The learning and training of students in all school activities are connected to Christ so that whatever contents are learned becomes an integral part of the student's life-long experience of faith. Faith and learning are naturally intertwined (Badley, 1994; White, 1952).

In making IFL practical, Taylor (2005) mentions four instructional strategies, which can be employed by teachers for effective learning of students. The first strategy is contextual, which has three methods, (a) tactical, (b) ornamental, and (c) environmental. Tactically, IFL takes place when the policy, philosophy, and academic programs of a Christian school are formulated biblically (Taylor, 2005). When school classrooms, bulletin boards, and pavements are all well decorated with biblical quotations and pictures, the ornamental strategies are fully utilized to portray Christ (Taylor, 2005).

Environmental strategies happen when the relationship between teachers and students is cordial, healthy, and peaceful. The peaceful atmosphere becomes conducive to faith development (Taylor, 2005; Wilkerson, 2015).

The second strategy listed by Taylor (2005) is illustrative, which involves (a) analogous, (b) narrative, and (c) exemplary. Analogous is when IFL practitioners use spiritual and professional linkage in their teaching just like Jesus who used parables when He taught. When biblical stories are told to relate to what is being studied inside or outside the classroom, the narrative strategy has been used (Roller, 2013). The exemplary strategy happens when the IFL teacher is a good model for the students just like Jesus was a model to His followers (Taylor, 2005; Wilkerson, 2015). The teacher's attitude and behavior are closely watched by students who tend to imitate him or her. The teacher's good example for the students can shape their lives for the future.

The conceptual strategy, which is the third on the list, has (a) textual, (b) thematic, and (c) valuative strategies. The textual strategy involves using Bible passages to illustrate an important point in the contents being taught. The thematic strategy is when students can critically think and form worldviews that are Christ-centered about the subject being discussed (Roller, 2013; Taylor; 2005). In the valuative strategy, topics that are controversial, such as abortion or euthanasia could be researched by students from different angles, and the reason behind each angle is discussed in terms of biblical principles. Their ethical reasoning will help them to develop a biblical position (Taylor, 2005).

The last strategy, which is experiential includes (a) personal, (b) inter-relational, and (c) declarative. When students are encouraged to have a personal relationship with God through chapel services, counseling sessions, and personal time with God, a personal strategy has been employed (Roller, 2013; Taylor, 2005; Wilkerson, 2015). Through inter-

relationships with others, students can collaborate in their learning to become effective. Finally, the declarative strategy happens when students can witness to others what they have been able to learn in school. When students are convinced about a subject discussed, they become excited to share their new knowledge with others (Wilkerson, 2015).

Summary of Christ-centered curriculum and integration of faith and learning

Given what has been discussed in this section concerning Christ-centered curriculum and IFL, it is explicit that both are the same. A Christ-centered curriculum is made up of a series of materials based on Christ, required for a Christian school to lay the foundation of learning (Scifo, 2018). On the other hand, IFL builds on the foundation established in the Christ-centered curriculum to include instructional strategies needed to impart knowledge in curricular and co-curricular activities from a biblical point of view (Rasi, 2000).

METHODOLOGY

A well-planned methodology ensures that an organized approach is followed in the course of conducting a study since specific content is outlined by the researcher (Wa-Mbaleka, 2018). The content outlined for this study includes the following components: (a) research design, (b) research context, (c) sample and sampling procedure, (d) description of the participants, (e) data collection methods, (f) data collection procedures, (g) data analysis, (h) trustworthiness, and (i) ethical considerations. The aim of this study is to explore what makes a curriculum a Christ-centered one.

The methodology that was used for this study was qualitative. Qualitative research today presents researchers with an alternative to the traditional form of research, which is quantitative (Creswell, 2008). The design for this study was a case

study. Case study research is the study of cases within a real-life bounded system over time through comprehensive data collection using different sources of information (Creswell, 2013).

Research context

This study was done at a high school in Southeast Asia. The study explored what makes the curriculum Christ-centered. Given the ethical considerations behind this study, the high school was not mentioned. The boundary of this case study was an international Christian high school.

Sample and sampling procedure

The main participants of this study were made up of 4 renowned educators who are curriculum specialists and have been using a Christ-centered curriculum for many years in teaching and mentoring teachers. They were interviewed about their experiences in developing a Christ-centered curriculum.

Similarly, 4 teachers from the selected high school who have been trained and using Christ-centered curriculum and have the knowledge of the content of an academic subject including the skill to teach to the understanding of students, were interviewed and observed during teaching for a month. The selected teachers, with at least a first degree in education, were all Christians dedicated to the training of adolescents to know Christ. To ensure that what they do enhances faith formation or otherwise, 4 high school students from Grades 11 and 12 were interviewed and 2 focus group discussions, made up of 6 high school students in each group of the selected high school teachers were also conducted. The teachers and students used in this study come from the same high school. Their school is established and managed by the educational institution where all the mentors work. Finally, the curriculum administrator of

the selected high school was interviewed to ascertain how a Christ-centered curriculum is put together.

Purposive sampling was used to select participants from the different categories. Purposeful sampling in case study research helps the researcher to select and learn from the most promising participants on the phenomenon under study. This is because they have knowledge of the phenomenon and could answer questions satisfactorily (Merriam, 2009). For this purpose, the criteria for selecting mentors as participants of this study was by their experience of using a Christ-centered curriculum and mentoring teachers for 10 years or more. In addition, teachers who had 5 years of teaching experience and students in Grades 11 and 12 were selected to take part in this study.

Data collection methods

Data collection methods in qualitative case studies are multiple. The data collection methods include interviews, observation, document and record analysis, and physical artifacts (Creswell, 2013). To test the acceptability of the interview protocol and guide, a pilot test was conducted with three participants who were not part of this study but with interest in a Christ-centered curriculum. The pilot test helped me know where to probe for more clarification during the interview with participants of this study.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness indicates how a researcher is able to convince readers that the findings of the study are credible. Trustworthiness, therefore, deals with the validity and reliability of the research undertaken to prove to the reader that the data analyzed has credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). The study underwent five attributes of credibility, transferability,

dependability, consistency, and confirmability to ensure its trustworthiness.

Data analysis

Qualitative case study research gathers a large amount of raw data. It is, therefore, important to keep the data in a planned and timely manner. Creswell (2013) maintains that doing a case study analysis comprises giving a comprehensive description of the case and its setting. He emphasized that if the description follows a pattern of events, the multiple data sources can be analyzed to show how the case developed. All the data were coded, and preliminary meaning was generated. The data analysis was done by identifying patterns and themes, noting links and differences to the forming of concepts explaining the case study (Stake, 2010).

RESULTS

A Christ-centered curriculum, as the name depicts, must have Christ at its center. The participants of this study, however, expressed diverse views on — *what makes curriculum Christ-centered*. In their responses, they explained that a Christ-centered curriculum is about the Bible, Christ, the teacher's character, and faith. The theme that emerged was *Christ in all spheres*.

The theme emanating from the data was Christ in all spheres. The participants were of the view that aside from the curriculum, every possible avenue should be centered on Christ so that the development of faith in high school students could become possible. This theme is supported by the theory of the theological-psychological approach (Loder, 1998). The theory states that adolescents develop faith and their identity at that level of age; hence, a curriculum with Christ at its center will help high school students who are mostly adolescents to establish a good spiritual foundation. To buttress the point

that Christ should be showcased in all spheres, participants said a Christ-centered curriculum is made possible through, (a) Christ as the center of the curriculum, (b) character building, (c) character of the curriculum designer, (d) connection of the curriculum content with Christ, (e) foundation of faith, and (f) teacher's character. The above categories according to participants ensure that Christ permeates every aspect of the class.

Christ as the center of the curriculum

Referencing Christ plays an important role in a Christ-centered curriculum. Biblical references to Christ are needed if the curriculum is to be centered on Christ (Vanden, 2016). This fact was emphasized by Mentor 1. According to Mentor 1, Christ being at the center of the curriculum ensures that a teacher incorporates Christ in all avenues in class.

Biblical relationships in the content, the way it points Christ throughout is a very deliberate way of including integration in the written work, in the course outline, the objectives, the lesson plans, if it's an online class throughout the lecture that you write, throughout the places that you can incorporate biblical ideas of Christ and belief systems into the written curriculum. (Folder 1, IDI-M1, p. 1)

On his part, the Curriculum Administrator stated that the goodness of Jesus should pervade every aspect of the curriculum including the whole school. When Jesus is magnified in all aspects of a school, there is Christ-centeredness (Gabriel, Woolford-Hunt, & Hooley, 2016).

Jesus should pervade every aspect of the school. Jesus and His teachings are talked about and practiced in every classroom, in every lesson, in every aspect of the school, especially in the high school. (Folder 2, IDI-CA, p. 1)

To prove that a Christ-centered curriculum has Christ as its center, the curriculum administrator produced a science textbook, which had many Bible quotations referencing Christ.

The themes in the textbook were linked with Bible themes to provide a biblical explanation of the lessons in the textbook. A Bible quotation in the science textbook provided by the curriculum administrator to support lessons on creation read,

The Bible says in Isa 43:1 that God has redeemed us and calls us by name. (Folder 5, DAG, CA, p.19, 1st para.)

Throughout the science textbook provided by the curriculum administrator, Bible text references were provided to explain the biblical worldview of the themes of the curriculum. Teacher 4 was emphatic on how the Bible was used in his class. He stated that biblical principles guided every lesson he taught in class because it will be of benefit to the students in the future.

When I teach the class, I make sure that there is truly a biblical principle in every lesson I teach. If students should ask the question, why do I include some biblical principles in the Bible, even though I don't teach Bible subjects, I explain to them that what they learn is not temporary but it's for the future. (Folder 2, IDI-T4, p. 19)

In my observation notes on how Teacher 4 taught in class, I recorded that he was,

Always making reference to the Bible and Christ, and instilling values in the lives of the students. (Folder 5, OG-T4, p. 18)

This statement buttressed the point Teacher 4 made, that when he teaches, he made sure that the principles of the Bible are included in his lessons (Manning, 2012). Confirming that biblical values were made part of their lessons in class, some student participants of this study mentioned that when a Christ-centered curriculum is being taught in class, they see it as God's character being reflected.

Christian education is like an education that reflects God's character or the teaching of the Bible, an education that

reflects God's character and teaching of Christ-like character. (Folder 3, IDI-FGD, S1, G12, p. 17)

It sounds good and cool to see that someone is able to put together the Bible and what we have learned in class. (Folder 3, IDI-S1, G11, p.1)

Supporting the assertion that when the Bible is at the center of the curriculum with an emphasis on Christ, it becomes Christ-centered, Cafferky (2017) made it clear that "through its grand themes, the Bible presents a foundation for learning in all disciples" (p. 1). Gettys and Plemons (2017) emphasized that it is important for a Christian institution to have an established biblical worldview in all courses to introduce students to Christ.

Character building

A Christ-centered curriculum should be able to help build the character of students (Almerico, 2014). The participants intimated that character building is the purpose of a Christian institution and this is what makes the curriculum Christ-centered. The participants, stating the importance of character building through a Christ-centered curriculum, said that teaching students to be of the right behavior in and out of the classroom should not be neglected. Obtaining good grades is important, but helping students exhibit good behavior should be cherished by teachers.

For me, it is when you are being taught more about your behavior instead of your performance in class such as grades. Mostly, it is about grades, but in a Christian environment, you will be taught more about on your behavior, how you behave, outside or inside school. (Folder 3, IDI-FGD, G12, S2, p. 17)

According to Mentor 1, instilling good morals in high school students is the prime purpose of Christian education. To her, Christian institutions should not exist if they fail to

achieve their prime purpose, which is instilling good morals in students.

The main purpose of our classes is character building, content is just a tool, so if we are not looking at the prime purpose, which is instilling good morals in students, we are just doing what the world does and nothing more than that we don't need to exist as an institution. (Folder 1, IDI-M1, p.1)

In the science class of Teacher 2, the students did an experiment called Cup and String Telephone. After the experiment, the students were asked to write a reflection journal on what they learned in class by responding to the question, how will you connect the experiment with your relationship with Jesus? The journal of two students read,

If you go closer to God, you will hear Him clearly, but if you go further away from Him, you will not hear Him. (Folder 5, DAG-T2, p. 9)

The string is like a connection with God, if Satan holds the middle of the string, we will no longer be connected with God. We need to always pray to be connected with God. (Folder 5, DAG-T2, p. 9)

The values shared in the class indicated the building of character at that stage of student development. That made the curriculum Christ-centered. In describing the importance of character building in students, Almerico (2014) declared that “it is a deliberate effort to develop noble character and cultivate core virtues that are worthy for the individual and society as a whole” (p. 2). Character building is necessary for people to be responsible citizens, and also the foundation of people who are confident and reliable (Almerico, 2014; Cafferky). Character-building themes should be incorporated into the curriculum, not only in Christian institutions but in public schools as well (Cafferky, 2017).

The character of the curriculum designers

One of the intriguing categories that emerged was the character of the designer of the curriculum. Participants argued that a Christ-centered curriculum cannot materialize if the authors of the curriculum are not themselves in tune with Christ. The curriculum designers must be Christ-centered persons to be able to author a Christ-centered curriculum. Without the designers being Christ-centered persons, the impact of Christ will not be felt in the curriculum (Boeve, 2012). The participants expressed that curriculum designers must be biblically based and must put Christ above everything.

The person cannot make a good Christ-centered curriculum. It will be something written on paper, which does not have value, so the values of the person, if not Christ-centered or biblically-based, then whatever he said is superficial and does not have much value. Therefore, for any Christ-centered curriculum, one must be a Christ-centered person, one who puts Christ above everything and one who has learned from the life of Jesus Christ. That person only can make a good Christ-Centered curriculum. The person preparing the curriculum must have Christian values. You cannot ask anybody to make a Christ-centered curriculum, it doesn't work without Christian values. (Folder 1, IDI-M2, p. 6)

Mentor 2 emphasized that Christian values in curriculum designers will reflect in their work.

If there are truly Christian values in a person, they will automatically be translated because once you have those values internalized, and you have become a Christ-Centered person, that will show in all walks of your life. And so when you sit to make a curriculum, it will automatically be seen that it is there in the curriculum. (Folder 1, IDI-M2, p. 6)

The Curriculum Administrator also stressed the importance of the link between the designers of the curriculum and the curriculum itself. The designers must have a dynamic and close

relationship with God, which will have an impact on the curriculum. In this way, the curriculum could be referred to as a Christ-centered curriculum.

A curriculum becomes Christ-centered when the creators have a dynamic and close relationship with Christ. (Folder 2, IDI-CA, p. 1)

Touching on the importance of being a Christ-centered person to be able to create a Christ-centered curriculum, Raveloharimisy (2017) was of the opinion that designers of a Christ-centered curriculum must themselves be Christians first. Designers of the curriculum must not only be a Christian in name but a Christian with a relationship with Christ. When Christ does not dwell in a human being, no one will see Christ in him. Christ is seen in the curriculum when He resides in its creators.

Connection of curriculum content with Christ

Some participants were of the view that connecting the curriculum to Christ makes it Christ-centered. When Christ is not connected to the curriculum, its essence is lost. All efforts should, therefore, be geared toward making Christ part of the curriculum by pointing to the teachings of Jesus (Knight, 2016).

For my curriculum to be Christ-centered, it should always point to the teachings of Jesus. I don't talk about Jesus at the end, no, Jesus should be part of the discussion, he should be there. In my head, the picture should be there from the beginning because the essence of what was going to be discussed is not in the right place when we don't start with Christ. (Folder 2, IDI-T3, p. 15)

Teacher 2 stated that the presence of God is felt when teaching a Christ-centered curriculum and this encourages him to connect the curriculum to Christ.

It is not difficult for me to connect my curriculum to a Christ-centered lesson because, I think every time you look at your lesson, every time you see your students, you will always see that God is good and He is there whenever we have classes. (Folder 2, IDI-T2, p. 11)

Relating how a teacher taught a Christ-centered curriculum in class, a student said the teacher would always make an effort to connect the lesson to Christ or the Bible.

He tries to relate everything back to Christ or the Bible. (Folder 3, IDI-S3, G12, p. 6)

In my observation of Teacher 3 in his business communication class, he asked students at the end of the lesson to make connections of what they learned to Christ. He had earlier stated that he teaches by always pointing to Jesus. I noted the following,

The teacher made connections with Christ at the end of the lesson. Students were asked to link what they learned to the values of Christ. (Folder 5, OG-T3, p. 13)

My observation statement above supported the teacher's statement that he always points to Christ in his class lessons. According to Knight (2016), a Christ-centered curriculum goes beyond just having a religion class separately from other classes. A Christ-centered curriculum requires that all subjects should be taught in the light of an existing God who has revealed Himself to humans through Jesus Christ, His Son. Christ is integrated into every aspect of the school curricula, presenting Him as the center of all knowledge.

Connecting the curriculum to Christ makes it Christ-centered. Christ is made the focus of what is being learned. The virtues He portrayed are learned and cherished by students. When a curriculum is connected to Christ, students are empowered to link their lives to what they learned from Christ (Jones et al., 2017).

Foundation of faith

Faith development in students is crucial at their adolescent age (Hartley, 2004). This is why some participants of this study reiterated that the curriculum should address faith at the high school level. The participants held the view that when matters of faith are addressed in the curriculum by pointing to the faith of Christ, it sets a good foundation to build faith. According to teacher 3, matters of faith can be addressed through object lessons.

The student should feel in the lesson that there is something that is significant, so in my lesson, I put an object lesson pertaining to faith. (Folder 2, IDI-T3, p. 15)

The Curriculum Administrator inferred that strategies that promote faith and Christ should be explicitly or implicitly connected to the curriculum.

As the curriculum is being crafted, the base or the foundation should be faith. Points in the curriculum that could be explicitly or implicitly connected to faith or faith lessons should be identified. Strategies that promote faith and Christ should be matched to these points. (Folder 2, IDI-CA, p. 1)

A student confirmed how a curriculum connected to faith builds a good foundation in Christ. According to the student, faith is developed when they are guided and encouraged to pray.

It helps a lot in my faith because teachers, before the lesson always ask us to pray, or give advice on how God will help. (Folder 3, IDI-S3, G12, p. 6)

Discussing the importance of establishing faith in the curriculum, Taylor (2017) made it clear that it helps students to “develop faith in Him and His plan for their lives” (p. 5). Gettys and Plemons (2017) established that the foundation of faith in curriculum can potentially help students to come to terms with a biblical worldview of Christ. The faith-based

curriculum also helps students to be guided by the Bible as they make critical decisions in their lives.

Teacher's character

The teacher's character came up many times as participants of the study were convinced that teachers play an important role in the faith development of students. Although a direct question was not asked pertaining to a teacher's character and how it is linked to a Christ-centered curriculum, participants mentioned it as being one of the central points of making curriculum Christ-centered. In describing how a teacher's character makes the curriculum Christ-centered, the mentors said teachers' attitudes are crucial in and out of the classroom. Their positive attitudes can inspire and be a blessing to students.

Now if the curriculum is looked at as an experience or outcome, then we have as the teacher teaches, the written plan is still implemented, that's good, but there are instances when your body language, and your words spoken can edify or bless the students. (Folder 1, IDI-M1, p. 1)

Teachers could become good role models to students by exhibiting understanding, having the willingness to help students in difficult situations, and showing unconditional love to them. As students see teachers portraying such characters, they are encouraged to emulate them because teachers' actions match their words. Teachers with such positive attitudes show Christlikeness (Adamiak, 2018).

The life of the teacher, how you treat your students, how you interact with your colleagues, everything is being watched by the student. Going a second mile, understanding the problems of your students, your willingness to forgive, your willingness to take time to understand the difficulties of children. Your willingness to provide for those who need extra help and those who may be challenged one way or the

other, once you take care of those needs and when they see these things in you, your helping nature, they will know that the faith is practiced in your life. And so it will become a challenge for them to emulate your life because it shows Christ-likeness. And that is the integration of faith. (Folder 1, IDI-M2, p.8)

Mentor 3 explained that high school age is critical because students tend to pick up things quickly. According to him, students can decipher whether a teacher is being a hypocrite or not.

It's evident that your character, what you do, what you say, and whether those things match is important to young people, particularly you talking about high school academy age. They pick up those things quickly, especially because they know what hypocrisy means and they know when they see somebody doing things differently and they reading their Bibles when they go to church when they see somebody do things differently than what they have said than what they have been taught. So yes, the character is important; if it isn't important then I don't know what else is. What you do, what you say is tremendously important to them. (Folder 1, IDI-M3, p. 15)

Teachers supported the idea that their characters could play a major role in making curriculum Christ-centered. They, therefore, want students to see Christ in them and be good role models to them (Celic et al., 2016).

As a teacher, as an English teacher, even before I teach the lesson, I want my students to see Christ in me. For me, I think showing true example is even more effective than teaching the lesson itself. (Folder 2, IDI-T2, p. 11)

Teacher 3 was of the opinion that modeling goes far than teaching reputation because students tend to behave like their teachers.

The students also see how you model in the classroom. Modeling is very important. In fact, I have been here for some time now and I found out that my modeling goes far than my teaching reputation. Students come to me and say, teacher, what you did for me when I was having this challenge really helped me to find myself. So as a Christian teacher, I must model, modeling is very important. (Folder, 2, IDI-T3, p.16)

Students confirmed what teachers' characters meant to them. They said teachers' characters and lives they live meant more to them than the subjects they teach. This is a form of a hidden curriculum because; teachers affect the learning and belief systems of students. It is a demanded norm expected by social beliefs of the students.

For me basically, it's not really on the subjects they're teaching, but on their character and how they portray their lives the lives. (Folder 3, IDI-S2, G11, p. 4)

The way the teacher teaches is very humbling and the attitude is very Christlike. (Folder 3, IDI-S4, G12, p. 10)

It is important for Christian teachers to have the spirit of God to be good examples for students. Having the spirit of God is essential since character formation hinges on divine values (Taylor, 2016). Teachers in the classroom represent Christ as an example for their students. Raveloharimisy (2017) pointed out that "students have high expectations for teachers to live up to their faith because they learn better with what they see than what is told to them" (p. 4). Teachers in the discharge of their duties must make sure that their characters are in tune with their behavior in class.

Christ being showcased in all spheres was visible in the school where this study was conducted. I observed four teachers in four different classrooms. In each of the classrooms, they had different Christian materials depicted on the wall. In one classroom, the 10 commandments of the Bible and pictures of

Jesus were displayed on the wall (Folder 5, OG, p. 6). Inspirational messages from the Bible like Grow in Christ and Trust in the Lord Always were also displayed in the classrooms (Folder 5, OG, p. 6). Another classroom had a place created as a prayer corner where students could go to have their devotion (Folder 5, OG, p. 6). Christ was displayed in all avenues in class.

Theoretical implications

Christ being in the center of the curriculum and in every sphere of the school, is based on the theory of theological-psychological approach to curriculum (Loder, 1998). The theory explained that adolescents develop faith (theological) and their identity (psychological) at that level of age; hence, a curriculum with Christ at its center will help high school students who are mostly adolescents to establish a good spiritual foundation. The theory further intimates that adolescents are in their age of disequilibrium, which is a good period to search for God. As adolescents self-examine themselves and reflect, it possibly opens an avenue for them to develop in faith through an opportunity of being taught with a Christ-centered curriculum.

Practical implications

Christ should be the main reference point when a lesson is being taught. He should be the main yardstick to measure all the themes in the lesson being taught. The practical reality is that images of Christ and inspirational Bible quotations should be displayed inside and outside classrooms.

CONCLUSIONS

A Christ-centered curriculum requires that all subjects should be taught in the light of an existing God who has

revealed Himself to humans through Jesus Christ. Christ is integrated into every aspect of the school curriculum, presenting Him as the center of all knowledge. A Christ-centered curriculum has benefits for students in Christian institutions. First, it offers high school students the opportunity of knowing Christ. Students can compare what they studied to the character of Christ. This gives students an alternative to which they can compare and contrast so that they make a value choice in life. Second, a Christ-centered curriculum is a way of introducing high school students to Christ. Encountering Christ at the high school level, which is normally the adolescent age, is the right stage in their lives to know about Christ. At the adolescence stage, high school students are highly open and receptive to new information.

Recommendations

1. School administrators must organize regular workshops and seminars on Christ-centered curriculum training so that teachers will be abreast with current developments in teaching and learning.

2. Teachers should endeavor to practice Christ-Centered teaching daily in the classroom. There should be class devotion before the lesson starts. Students should be encouraged to lead out in conducting class devotions.

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