

**APPROACHES TO TEACHING OF VALUES IN  
RELIGIOUS AND MORAL EDUCATION IN SELECTED  
COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN GHANA**

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**Abstract**

The teaching of Religious and Moral Education as a course appears to be problematic in the Colleges of Education. This research work was undertaken in some selected Colleges of Education in the Eastern Region of Ghana to overview tutors' approaches of teaching of values in Religious and Moral Education as a course. The study used sequential mixed method survey and the sample size was 344 respondents – 336 pre-service teachers and 8 tutors from the chosen Colleges of Education. Questionnaire and semi-structured interview guide were used to collect data. Deductive and inductive data analyses and interpretation were used in discussing the responses from the respondents. Major finding of the study was that the most effective approach to teaching of values in Religious and Moral Education is values clarification. It was recommended that stakeholders of education take note of this finding and promote the use of values clarification for the teaching of values in Religious and Moral Education.

**Keywords:** values education, religious and moral education, values clarification, approaches, colleges of education.

## **Introduction**

The curriculum for Religious and Moral Education was designed to supplement religious and moral training people acquire from their various homes and religious affiliations. The course was introduced into Ghana Education Curriculum in 1999 and it was made compulsory for all students by the Ghana Education Service. This initiative was challenged when the subject was taken out from the basic school curriculum in 2007 educational reform. This decision did not go down well with opinion leaders of the nation, especially, religious leaders. They spoke against the decision and asked for its re-introduction into the basic school curriculum. The situation opened the subject up for deeper reflections on its impact in the lives of pupils and students. Teachers, parents and other stakeholders of education expressed their opinions on the issue. The decision was reversed by the then government and the subject was re-introduced (Owusu, 2014). If the government of the day had succeeded, it suggests that the subject would have been removed from the Colleges of Education curriculum since the products of the Colleges teach at the basic schools of the nation. The removal of the subject from the basic school curriculum may be that the subject was not achieving its aim. This study attempts to overview the Religious and Moral Education methods of teaching as a course in some selected Colleges of Education in the Eastern Region of Ghana using RME tutors and students for their perceptions on the impact of the subject.

## **The Importance of College-Based Values Education**

What is important to say, in many ways against the conventional wisdom, is that a school is clearly the best place where values education can happen. While this is not to pitch the school against other social agencies of home, peers, religion, media, etc., it is to boldly assert that, for most people, these agencies tend towards narrowing of lifeworlds and towards pressure to conform to those lifeworlds, to compound the sense that “we’ve got it right!”. The

school's bolder role should be to stretch the comfort implied by this and to open minds to the breadth of lifeworlds. Ideally, this will be done carefully and with the support of other agencies, especially the home, but one should not be surprised if there are occasional tensions between the role of the school and the other agencies. Like the other agencies, the school's role is a distinctive one and much of the substance of this role is to be found in a comprehensive Values Education pursuit.

Perspectives like those of Dewey (1929) and Habermas (1935) help to illuminate why it is that issues of trust, care, respect and acceptance are so vital if Quality Teaching is to have its full effects (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Loudon et al., 2004; Rowe, 2004). Furthermore, these perspectives underline just why the Values Education pursuit must be grasped by teachers, schools and systems as being central and pivotal to their endeavours, rather than being on their margins. Again, it is worth re-stating the central proposition of this paper; namely that Values Education has the potential to go to the very heart of what it is that teachers, schools and educational systems are about. It certainly has potential to provide the missing link for Quality Teaching.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In Ghana, Religious and Moral Education was introduced into the schools' curriculum by the Ghana Education Service (GES) and made compulsory for all students since 1999 (Ministry of Education, 1999). Decades on, it is expected that the nation would have realized some of the benefits of the purpose for which it was introduced. It is expected that through the teaching of Religious and Moral Education, the nation would produce responsible citizens having the necessary values needed to drive its development. This implies that most of the students that have passed through the school system and Colleges of Education would have had their moral and ethical make-up developed sufficiently enough to enable them participate actively in the nation's development activities.

Asare Danso (2010) noted that despite the goals and purposes of Religious and Moral Education (RME), the expected outcomes of learners after their contact with the subject appear unachieved. The majority of the Ghanaians appear to be putting up behaviours contrary to the goals and objectives of the course, resulting in the stagnation of the progress of the nation's fight against corruption. All these misbehaviours have both educational and social implications which need to be addressed. Some of the people have attributed the problem to the approaches teachers use in teaching values in Religious and Moral Education. There is therefore the need to investigate the approaches teachers use in teaching Religious and Moral Education as a course as a way of addressing the problem.

#### **The Objectives of the Study are:**

1. to investigate how teachers approach the teaching of values in Religious and Moral Education as a course in Colleges of Education in the Eastern Region of Ghana.
2. to assess the approaches teachers consider as appropriate /effective in the teaching of values in RME in Colleges of Education.

#### **Research Questions**

1. What are the approaches teachers use in teaching values in Religious and Moral Education as a course in Colleges of Education in the Eastern Region of Ghana?
2. What approaches do teachers consider as effective in the teaching of values in Religious and Moral Education in Colleges of Education?

#### **Literature Review**

##### **Empirical Studies on Values Education**

Values education is known internationally by a number of names, including Moral Education and Character Education, among others. Each variant has a slightly different meaning, pointing to one or other

distinctive emphasis. Each variant is nonetheless united in the common belief that entering into the world of personal and society. All values is a legitimate and increasingly important role for teachers and schools to play. This is not an attempt to supplant the influences of the home but rather to supplement them and, where necessary, to compensate for them. International research into teaching and schooling effects is overturning earlier beliefs that values were exclusively the preserve of families and/or religious bodies and that, as a result, schools function best in values neutral mode. This research is not only pointing out the void of such a belief but the potential for it to lead to diminished effects in all realms of student-achievement, including academic attainment. In fact, it could be asserted that, in a sense, teaching and schooling that function in values-neutral mode might actually serve to undermine the potential effects of other socializing agencies, including families.

### **The Positive Impact of Values Education**

Carr (2006, 2007, 2008, and 2010) has argued persistently that values and effective teaching are inextricably interwoven and that, in that sense, values education goes to the heart of the role of the teacher and effective learning for the student. He focuses especially on the issue of relationships and the moral mentoring of the teacher as being central to teaching as an inherently relational profession. There is more than a hint of Dewey (1916, 1929) and Peters (1981) in such postulations and, furthermore, recent empirical studies have provided confirming evidence of them.

Among these studies are those of Benninga et al. (2006, 2010) that, using the California Academic Index as a guide, were able to show a correlation between high quality values (character) development and strengthened academic achievement. Rowe (2004) provides explanation and evidence for a similar correlation in his linking 'performance character' and 'moral character' as integrally related in the development of personhood. Peters (1981) offers further evidence

of these joint effects in showing that it is the teacher who both provides quality content in the context of effective pedagogy and establishes good relationships with students who enjoy the greater academic impact. In other words, establishing positive relationships with students is itself part of effective pedagogy and, in a circular effect, high quality teaching has its own positive impact on strengthening student-teacher relationships. In confirming this twin effect, Peters (1981) cites results of a study that shows positive relationships among students are an inherent feature of teachers achieving optimal results. Studies that provide both fortified conceptual proffering and empirical verification of the inherent interconnections between values education and holistic student wellbeing, including academic enhancement, are growing in number and scope (Nucci & Narvaez, 2008; Lovat, 2011; Lovat et al., 2010a, 2011a, 2011b).

### **The Australian Study**

Much of the evidence referred to above has also been captured in the research and practice of the projects emanating from the Australian Values Education Program. The program was federally funded, beginning with a pilot study in 2003, followed by the development of a National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools ['National Framework'] (DEST, 2005) that identified the developing research links between values education and good practice pedagogy and proposed a set of guidelines based on these links.

The programme then issued in a range of research and practice projects from 2005 to 2010, the most crucial of which were the two stages of the Values Education Good Practice Schools Project ['Good Practice Schools'] (DEST, 2006; DEEWR, 2008), the Project to Test and Measure the Impact of Values Education on Student Effects and School Ambience ['Testing and Measuring'] (Lovat et al., 2009) and the Values in Action Schools Project (DEEWR, 2010).

Within the two stages of 'Good Practice Schools', 316 schools organized into 51 clusters across the country, involving approximately 100,000 students, 10,000 teachers and 50 University academics, engaged in a variety of approaches to values education, all guided by the central principles enunciated in the 'National Framework'. Findings were disseminated at annual national forums that included keynote addresses from the two authors (Lovat at the 2005, 2006 and 2009 events and Hawkes at the 2006 and 2007 gatherings).

Findings from stage 1 (DEST, 2006) illustrated that a sound values education can be a powerful ally in the development of good practice pedagogy, with positive effects being demonstrated across a range of measures, including persistent reference to the improved environment of learning and greater student attention to the regular academic work of the classroom: We ... found that by creating an environment where (the) values were constantly shaping classroom activity, student learning was improving, teachers and students were happier, and school was calmer. (p. 120)

The Executive Summary of the report concluded that, based on the evidence, values education has potential to impact positively on the total educational environment of a school, resulting in a number of features, including strengthened teacher-student relationships, classroom climate and ethos, student attitudes and behaviour, student knowledge and understanding and student achievement. The Stage 2 Report (DEEWR, 2008) identified clearer and more sophisticated links between the rollout of values education and the effects on both student behaviour and performance.

### **Methodology**

The research design adopted for the study was sequential explanatory mixed method approach. The population of 1409 consisted of all tutors and pre-teachers of four Presbyterian Colleges of Education in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The sampled size made up of 344

respondents (8 tutors and 336 pre-service teachers) purposely chosen through lottery random sampling technique. A questionnaire and semi-structured interview guide were used to collect data from the students and tutors respectively for the study. The researcher collected a letter of introduction from the Head of Department of Psychology. Copies of the letter were given to Principals of the selected Colleges. They in turn informed the RME tutors and the students of the intent of the study and an occasion was arranged for the administration of the questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered to the respondents on the agreed date and collected on the same day. The respondents' rate was 100%. The Cronbach Co-efficient calculation was 0.92. Data collected were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

**Table 1: Distribution of Pre-Teachers' Responses on Approaches of Teachers in Teaching of Values in the Colleges of Education**

Statement	SA	A	SD	D	NA
Values clarification as an approach	33.0%	61.8%	1.6%	3.1%	0.5%
Values analysis as an approach	38.7%	55.1%	1.3%	3.0%	1.9%
Moral development as an approach	38.7%	54.8%	3.3%	1.0%	2.2%
Modelling as an approach	40.9%	50.6%	0.3%	7.6%	0.6%
Discussion as an approach	42.3%	50.2%	0.6%	6.0%	0.9%
Group activities as an approach	36.3%	54.8%	0.9%	7.4%	0.6%
Story Telling as an approach	47.7%	45.2%	1.9%	4.6%	0.6%
Role play as an approach	48.0%	44.6%	3.4%	3.4%	0.6%
Values inculcation as an approach	40.8%	46.7%	1.8%	6.2%	1.5%
Field trips as an approach	5.6%	15.2%	30.1%	47.2%	1.2%

Source: Field Data, July 2016



Table 1 indicates that 61.8% representing the majority agreed that values clarification was the most important approach for teaching values in RME. It was followed by 33.0 strongly agreed, 3.1% disagreed, 1.6% strongly disagreed respectively. Not applicable marked 0.5%. The results suggest that values clarification is the most important among the approaches of teaching values in RME. This result could be due to the flexibility and learner-centered approach to the use of the method. This finding is consistent with what Asare-Danso (2010) posits that values clarification is the most modern and dynamic method of teaching values.

Similarly, responses from the interviewees indicated that there are many approaches in teaching values in RME in the colleges of education. When an interview question on the same theme was posed, interviewees responded as follows:

...values clarification is a very good approach for teaching values, except that it does not encourage a search for consensus, thereby providing a common solution to a problem. [KPCE, pre-service teacher2]

For me, I am for values clarification, but my challenge is that it relativizes moral issues. It does not make a distinction between what is moral and non moral. It claims to be value neutral. [PCE, pre-service teacher1]

The findings from the tutors suggest that despite values clarification advantages, it has its criticisms. However, it is the approach that should be promoted in the colleges since it is easy to learn and easily accessible to pre-service teachers. Scholars whose work are associated with this approach are: Rath, Harmin & Simon (1966), and Simon, Howe and Kirschenbaum (1977). One can conclude that values clarification approach should be promoted and used for the teaching of values because of its numerous advantages for learners and teachers.

The second most important approach was values analysis. This approach was represented by 55.1% agreed, 38.7% strongly agreed. The rest were, 3.0% disagreed and 1.9% strongly disagreed. Not applicable was 1.3%. This result means that values analysis is one of the approaches for teaching values in RME. This finding might be as a result of the use of scientific application in this approach. In much the same way, majority of the interviewees held up for values analysis as a good approach for teaching values. This approach was running through the themes generated when a similar question was posed to interviewees. Two of the statements are below:

“It has to do with using logical reasoning and scientific investigations to deal with issues that require value judgment. This is by the use of methodical and precise form to explain issues of values to the learner.” [APWCE, pre-service teacher 1]

For other “I see values analysis to be more of social than individual and it involves analysis of situations or issues, which require people to make informed choices and value judgement” [KPCE, pre-service teacher2].

This approach is associated and developed by Social Sciences educators like Scriven (1966) and Bond (1970). Scriven and Bond’s arguments show that values analysis has to do with social values than other values. Also, it uses common sense in its examination. Conclusively, the finding from the results suggests that values analysis is a good approach for the teaching of values in RME because of its promotion of social values in pre-service teachers. This approach could imbue in teachers the sense of relating well with one another, as well as developing love for the teaching of values in RME.

The third approach selected by respondents was moral development. The approach was represented by 54.8% of the respondents agreed. It was followed by 38.7% strongly agreed, 3.3% disagreed, not applicable was 2.2% and the least score was 1.0% who strongly

disagreed. The result indicates that moral development is one of the approaches of teaching values in RME. This result could be due to the assumptions that moral development touches on students' feelings and behaviours. The majority (5) out of (8) of the interviewees confirmed that moral development as an approach for teaching values was appropriate. One of the statements of the interviewees is captured below:

“...for moral development, a person acts based on his feelings, thoughts, behaviour and experiences”. [PCE, pre-service teacher2]

A pre-service teachers from APCE supported the finding but stated one of the weaknesses of moral development. He posits that:

“...moral development is the application of ethical principles to moral situations in life, but it is purely based on moral values at the expense of other values.”  
[APCE, pre-service teacher3]

In other words, moral development as an approach uses ideals that are classified as right to solve or deal with issues of morality. However, moral development has a weakness of only advancing the cause of moral issues as against other values. Advocates of this approach include Kohlberg (1969, 1984), Piaget (1932, 1962), Erikson (1950) and Loevinger & Wessler (1970). It can be gathered from the responses from the tutors that moral development employs ethical principles to solve moral issues. This approach has positive impact on teachers' moral behaviour. This in effect could help to complement the strengths and weaknesses of other approaches used in teaching values in RME in Colleges of Education.

**Table 2. Distribution of Pre-Service Teachers' Responses on Effective Approaches in Teaching Values**

Statement	SA	A	SD	D	NA
Values clarification as an approach	55.7%	40.3%	0.6%	3.4%	0.0%
Values analysis as an approach	40.2%	54.8%	4.4%	14.9%	0.6%
Moral development as an approach	40.7%	53.6%	1.3%	4.5%	0.0%
Inculcation as an effective approach	40.3%	50.3%	1.3%	8.2%	0.0%
Action learning as an effective approach	44.4%	49.4%	0.6%	5.0%	0.0%

Source: Field Data, July 2016

The data in Table 2 shows that 55.7% strongly agreed that values clarification is the most effective approach for teaching values in RME. Those who agreed were 40.3% and 3.4% disagreed. The rest were, 0.6% strongly disagreed and not applicable was nil. The scores imply that values clarification is the most effective approach of teaching values in RME. The reason could be that the approach promotes active student-participation in moral education. During the interviews, a question posed to interviewees was: Among the approaches of teaching values, which one do you consider effective? In response, all the eight (8) interviewees responded that it is values clarification. Two of the statements are captured below.

... It is a modern way of teaching values, notwithstanding, the same value can support contradictory positions, this would happen when people who are in favour of or against an issue insist that they have all acted upon their choices or claim

and for that matter, the entrenched position they may have taken is of value to them. On the part of teachers, values clarification has the satisfaction of considering openly very important issues concerning individual life goals. An example of values clarification is Ranked Order. Ranked Order Strategy could be used to compare personalities in the various religions. Students may be asked to rank the personalities according to their choices and justify their answers with values students perceive as individuals. [PCE, pre-service teacher2]

In support of the earlier submission, Abetifi pre-service teacher asserted that for values clarification, teachers' views are not final or imposed on the students. The teacher rather acts as a facilitator, trying to help the students to clarify their values by thinking through some of the moral confusion that may go through in their minds. Suitcase Strategy among others is an example of values clarification. By suitcase strategy I mean a suitcase is given to students and they are to fill it with good moral values. Each student may be asked to write one moral value on a piece of paper and drop it into the suitcase, which may be represented by a small box. The teacher then collects what the students have written and reads them to the hearing of the class. The values are then listed on the Board for discussion. [APCE, pre-service teacher3].

The responses from the interviewees indicate that values clarification has merits as well as demerits. The merits among others are that, in values clarification approach, a teacher rather acts as a facilitator, trying to help pre-service teachers to clarify their values; it is easy to learn and easily accessible to teachers and students; it is learner

centred and participatory. On the other hand, there are some demerits. These include, the same value can support contradictory positions and it does not give room for consensus building, which provides a common solution to a problem.

In spite of the limitations of the values clarification approach for teaching of values, its strengths outweigh the weaknesses because of its paradigm shift from a "content approach" to a "process approach" to the teaching of values (Raths et al, 1966). Content approach stresses on what one holds as a value and process approach looks at how or the process: choosing, prizing and acting. Values clarification approach needs to be encouraged in RME lessons, particularly in the teaching of values to make values education lessons lively and participatory.

## **Conclusions**

The study identified five approaches used in teaching values in Religious and Moral Education. Values clarification, values analysis, moral development, modelling and action learning are key approaches for the teaching of values in RME. While field trips and values inculcation are the less approaches for teaching, values. Values clarification is identified as the most effective and key approach for teaching values in RME.

## **Recommendations**

From the findings and conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations are made to help improve upon the teaching of values education in the Colleges of Education in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The recommendations are made to create formal and professional awareness of values education in the Colleges of Education.

The Governing Councils of Colleges of Education through their Academic Boards should make it a policy for teachers to use approaches such as: Values clarification, values analysis, moral development, modelling and action learning for the teaching of values in Religious and Moral Education.

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