

# Christians Schools: Challenge of Integrating Faith in Learning

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**Abstract:** - Private Christian schools are not just helping the Government of Kenya to provide quality education to its citizens. They have to ensure that they also fulfill their primary purpose as Christian learning institutions. Christian schools exist to produce holistic learners who will be cherished by all the stakeholders in the Kenyan community and beyond. They should also prepare learners to be leaders who possess Christian integrity and who actively engage in fulfilling *mission Dei*. This can be achieved by integrating faith in learning and in core-curricular activities. The purpose of this paper is to challenge Christian educators concerning the need and process of integrating faith in learning so that Christian schools can achieve the goals of Christian education.

**Keywords:** Christian school, Christian educator, Faith, Learning, Integration, *mission Dei*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The main goal of a Christian school is to achieve its God given goal. The purpose of a Christian school is greater than that of non-Christian school. According to Musyoka, "Christian schools are supposed to deliberately shape in students the specific kinds of values and life motives that govern the use of educational knowledge and skills in the promotion of the mission of the church on earth as God intends it to be."<sup>1</sup>

The Christian educator can enable the learners achieve their God given purpose by properly integrating faith in learning. Dr. Garrick emphasizes the need for integration by stating the difference between a Christian teacher and a teacher who is a Christian:

There is a difference between a Christian teacher and a teacher who is a Christian. Too often a teacher who is a Christian moves into the Christian school classroom and carries the same secular bent toward the subjects and even the students which were present in the non-Christian school. In contrast, the truly Christian teacher assures that all the teachings, activities, and relationships are in alignment with his Christian view of life and with the teaching of scripture.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Benjamin Mwangi Musyoka, *The Integration of Faith and Learning: Aligning Values and Intentionality with the Mind of God*. Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology Vol. 34, No. 2, (2015), 159.

<sup>2</sup>Dr. Roy W. Lowrie,

## II. INTEGRATING LEARNING, FAITH, AND PRACTICE IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

One of the major concerns of Christian schools should be the integration of learning, faith, and practice in every aspect of the curriculum.<sup>3</sup> This task is more than just blending religion with other disciplines and calls for serious and dedicated teachers.<sup>4</sup> Peter Haile in his article, "Why I Believe in Schools that Are as Christian as Possible," focuses on the kind of teachers that should teach in Christian schools:

They should have strong faith-teachers who believe in God as a real person—powerful, active, and able to change human hearts. They should demonstrate Christian love as they deal with students. And they should always be concerned with excellence in personal relationships, societal structure and all subjects they teach in schools.<sup>5</sup>

This quote points out some of the key characteristics of teachers who are capable of integrating faith into learning.

Many schools which were once committed to Christian truth gradually changed and by the nineteenth century had turned to dualisms of every kind. They have separated head knowledge from heart knowledge, faith from learning, revealed truth from observed truth, and careers from vocation.<sup>6</sup> Where are Christian schools in Kenya headed to?

### *What Integration is*

Gangel defines integration of truth as, "the teaching of all subjects as part of the total truth of God, thereby enabling the student to see the unity of the natural and special revelation."<sup>7</sup> According to Arthur F. Holmes, integration is a process in which Christian faith touches the entire range of life and learning to which students are exposed.<sup>8</sup> Holmes further says, "Integration is concerned not so much with

<sup>3</sup>George H. Akers and Robert D. Moon, "Integrating Learning, Faith, and Practice in Christian Education", [http://ict.aiaas.edu/vol\\_08/08cc\\_001-016](http://ict.aiaas.edu/vol_08/08cc_001-016) (accessed July 25, 2014).

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Bruce Lockerbie, *A Passion for Learning: The History of Christian Thought on Education* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 391.

<sup>6</sup>David S. Dockery, "Integrating Faith and Learning in Higher Education", <http://www.eric.com/article/Integrating-faith-and-learning-in-higher-education> (accessed July 25, 2014.)

<sup>7</sup>Lockerbie, 396.

<sup>8</sup>Arthur F. Holmes, *The Idea of a Christian College* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), 47.

attack and defense as with the positive contributions of human learning to an understanding of the faith and to the development of a Christian world-view, and with the positive contribution of Christian faith to all the arts and sciences of man.”<sup>9</sup> Fischer defines key words that constitute integration:<sup>10</sup>

1. Faith-is what one believes in his or her inmost being.
2. Learning-is intellectual activity, the use of one’s mind. Although, learning in a broader sense includes the learning skills which may or may not require full exercise of the mind.
3. Living-is the application of faith and learning in the living of one’s life.
4. Integration-is bringing together that which is apart.

Therefore, the integration of faith, learning, and living is an intellectual activity that is a “journey rather than a destination, a process rather than a product.” How can teachers be able to achieve this task that seems simple yet difficult? Several models have been suggested.

#### *Models of Integration*

Dr. Paul A. Kienel quotes Kenneth O. Gengel’s model that focuses on the teacher, the Bible, and curriculum. The teacher should recognize the authority of the Bible and the Holy Spirit and make sure that the curriculum is centered on the Bible.<sup>11</sup>

Holmes’ model also emphasizes the need to develop a Christian worldview in the course of teaching.<sup>12</sup> Another approach of integration was developed by Nelson. He points out that integration of faith should be applied to areas of learning and disciplines that are compatible.<sup>13</sup> According to Korniejezuk and Kijai, teachers should make the integration process a routine and should meet frequently to discuss ways of making it better.<sup>14</sup>

The last model of integration to consider was developed by Rasmussen. In this model, integration is not limited to learning in a particular class but should be extended to overall college or school atmosphere. Biblical values should be incorporated into instructional objectives and

assessment processes.<sup>15</sup> Another aspect of this model is the life of the educator. Jay acknowledges the fact that, “there is no Christian education without Christian teachers”<sup>16</sup>

#### *Integration through Instructional Methods*

Generally, methods include those devices and processes that facilitate the teaching-learning process, culminating in knowledge, habits, attitudes, and ideals.<sup>17</sup> For Christian schools, method is the means by which the goal of Christian education, Christian character development is achieved.<sup>18</sup> Various methods have been used during the educative process.<sup>19</sup>

Robert suggests that teachers in Christian schools should embrace the teaching methods that Jesus used.<sup>20</sup> In historical New England the integration of Christianity and the Bible in public schools was reflected in the kind of textbooks and teaching methods that were used. Fakkema alludes to the teaching methods used:

In teaching the first letter of the alphabet a small picture of the fall of our first parents was presented. Opposite the picture were the words: “In Adams fall we sinned all”. All of the other letters were introduced by moral or biblical references. The last letter, “Z”, pictured a man in a tree with the words, “Zacchaeus, he did climb a tree his Lord to see.”<sup>21</sup>

This is a good example of how to integrate faith into learning.

In considering methods to be used, McCulley points out that “there is a time, place, and subject for each method and the important issue is the necessity to provide students with opportunities for interaction and means to experience the lesson.”<sup>22</sup> In addition, she proposes several instructional methods of which some are the same as what others have suggested while some are different. She suggests lecture, question and answer, class discussion, group work, demonstrations, drama or role play, stories, panel discussion, debate, reflection writing, student presentation, and other ideas.<sup>23</sup>

Since this is the era of technology, teachers in the twenty-first century should learn to exploit computer technology in the teaching-learning process.<sup>24</sup> The computer

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 48.

<sup>10</sup>Fischer R. B., *Faith, Learning, and Living: Separated, juxtaposed, overlapped, or permeated? Faculty dialogue* (1989), 22-23.

<sup>11</sup>Lockerbie, 396.

<sup>12</sup>Jay B. Rasmussen and Robert H. Rasmussen, “The Challenge of Integrating Faith-Learning-Living in Teacher Education.” *A Journal of the International Christian Community for Teacher Education* 1, no. 1(May 2013):1-10, [http://icctejournal.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/vol1-1challenge\\_of\\_integrating.pdf](http://icctejournal.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/vol1-1challenge_of_integrating.pdf) (accessed July 25, 2014).

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Korniejezuk R. I. and Kijai, “Integrating Faith and Learning: Development of a stage Model of Teacher Implementation.” *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 3, issue 1(December 2009):79-102,<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080> (accessed July 25, 2014).

<sup>15</sup>Jay B. Rasmussen and Robert H. Rasmussen (accessed July 25, 2014).

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Byrne, 185.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 191.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 186.

<sup>20</sup>Robert Joseph Choun Jr., “Choosing and Using Creative Methods,” in the *Christian Educators Handbook on Teaching: A Comprehensive Resource on the Distinctiveness of True Christian Teaching*, ed. Kenneth O. Gangel and Howard G. Hendricks (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1988), 166.

<sup>21</sup>Fakkema, 372.

<sup>22</sup>McCulley, 112.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Stuart S. Cook, “Using Personal Computer in Teaching,” in the *Christian Educators Handbook on Teaching: A Comprehensive Resource on the Distinctiveness of True Christian Teaching*, ed. Kenneth O. Gangel and Howard G. Hendricks (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1988), 179.

should be used as a tool in carrying out normal teaching duties, and as a teaching machine which delivers instructions, drills students on basic skills, or serves as a resource for inquiring minds.<sup>25</sup>

#### *Integration through Co-curricular Activities*

According to Ogunji, students are mentored as they take part in non-academic activities outside classroom.<sup>26</sup> He further observes that faith will make its profound and holistic impact on the learner if it is integrated into all such activities.<sup>27</sup> Holmes noted that “all of life with its culture and its learning must be penetrated with a Christian perspective.”<sup>28</sup>

Banke and others point out certain outside-academic-arena activities that enhance spiritual formation in students: campus ministries, team building, communication and servant leaders.<sup>29</sup> According to Byrne, extra-curricular activities contribute to the student’s personal, mental, spiritual, and social development.<sup>30</sup>

### III. SUMMARY

The teacher is a key person in the process of integrating faith in learning. Teachers impact the students by their behavior and what they teach. They are responsible for the process of integration. They should have a good understanding of the Bible, should be filled with the Holy Spirit, and should ask wisdom from God.

The integration process begins with the preparation of the curriculum and the syllabus. Integration of faith in learning should not be limited to learning in class. It should be implemented also through teaching and learning methods, and co-curricular activities.

### AUTHOR

Rev. Dr. Peter Mamuli Nyongesa is a Chairman of Dept of Social Science at Kaimosi friends University College. He has lectured in a number of Universities and Colleges including, Potchefstroom University [South Africa], Africa Nazarene University, Kenyatta University and Catholic University for the last 13 years. In this article, Rev. Dr. Mamuli Nyongesa and Ven. Dr. Manya Stephen examine the inter-faith dialogue between Christians and Muslims as a response to religious radicalization in Kenya

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 182.

<sup>26</sup>Ogunji, 56.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Holmes A.F., *The Idea of Christian College* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 22.

<sup>29</sup>Banke et al 2012, 255.

<sup>30</sup>Byrne, 222.