



# Perspectives and Perception on the Sacred Seeds of Virtue and Value: A Journey into the Effectiveness of Religious and Moral Education in Ghanaian Basic Schools

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effectiveness of religious and moral education (RME) programs in Ghanaian basic schools, prompted by concerns that an emphasis on STEM education may contribute to rising immoral behaviour among students. Recognizing schools as crucial venues for academic and moral development, the research aimed to evaluate how effectively these institutions instill virtues and values in students. Employing a descriptive survey design, data was gathered from 104 participants in the Sefwi Wiawso Municipality. The findings indicate a gap between the intended RME curriculum and its practical implementation, with students needing more comprehensive integration across subjects. While some students appreciate varied teaching methods, others criticize the predominant reliance on the Bible, potentially alienating those from diverse religious backgrounds. Parents expressed concern over the declining emphasis on Ghanaian cultural values and norms within the curriculum, as well as a reduction in parental involvement and essential resources. Teachers highlighted challenges such as disciplinary constraints and resource shortages, yet reaffirmed their commitment to imparting moral values through engaging methods. The study recommends enhanced collaboration among stakeholders to effectively fulfill their roles in RME, promoting a more inclusive and culturally relevant approach. Despite existing challenges, the research concludes with a positive outlook on the potential of schools to impart values, moral education, and virtues. This study contributes to scholarship by emphasizing the importance of holistic development and cultural preservation in Ghanaian education and offering insights relevant to the fields of education, sociology, and religion.

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### Publication History

Received: 28<sup>th</sup> April, 2024

Accepted: 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2025

Published online:

21<sup>st</sup> February, 2025

**Keywords:** *Religious and Moral Education, Values, Virtue, Cultural Norms, Students, Curriculum, and Ghanaian Basic School.*

## INTRODUCTION

The school, traditionally conceived, has been viewed not merely as an institution for imparting academic knowledge but also as a crucible for nurturing the moral and ethical fabric of individuals. Rooted in this philosophy is the idea of the school as a sacred ground for sowing the seeds of virtue and value. This notion underscores the pivotal role that educational institutions play in shaping not just the intellect but also the character of students, thereby contributing to the betterment of society at large. At the heart of this concept lies the recognition that education extends beyond the transmission of facts and figures; it

encompasses the cultivation of virtues such as honesty, compassion, integrity, and empathy. These virtues serve as the bedrock upon which individuals build meaningful relationships, make ethical decisions, and contribute positively to their communities. In this sense, the school becomes a fertile ground where the seeds of these virtues are planted, nurtured, and encouraged to flourish.

After independence in 1957, education was recognized as the chief instrument for effecting the rapid social and economic changes which the country sought. This recognition manifested itself in many official policy statements concerning the objectives of education. For example, the 1961 Accelerated Development Plan for Education stated: The new Ghana for which we are striving is imbued with the African personality and is equipped with a strong economy, with an educated and healthy population, physically well-developed and highly skilled manpower and a high level of moral and spiritual consciousness. To achieve these ends, the whole educational system must be oriented towards a radical transformation of our society in which Virtues or religious and moral values are significant.<sup>1</sup> This suggests that every child from the earliest level should be enabled to have a very good understanding of the religious and moral values of the society in which he lives and the basic tasks facing this society to cultivate a virtuous life.

The foundation of moral and religious education within the Ghanaian educational system has historically been considered indispensable for fostering character formation, ethical reasoning, and spiritual growth among students. Officially, Religious and Moral Education was introduced to the Ghanaian curriculum in 1998 by the Ghana Education Service (GES).<sup>2</sup> The discipline of Religious and Moral Education has encountered numerous obstacles, particularly during periods of educational reform despite its essential incorporation within the fundamental school curriculum. A commission to examine the Ghanaian educational system was formed in 2002 under the leadership of Professor Jophus Anamuah-Mensah. In 2004, per the suggestions put forth, the Ministry of Education eliminated religious and moral education as a subject from the basic school curriculum.<sup>3</sup> However, as a result of extensive criticism from the Ghanaian public, President Kuffour issued a directive during his speech at the May Day Celebration in 2008, instructing the officials of the Ghana Education Service to reintroduce religious and moral education as a standalone subject starting from the 2008–2009 academic year. According to this presidential decree, religious and moral education was reintroduced into the core school curriculum and has been taught ever since.

Religious and moral education was introduced in Ghanaian basic schools to help students understand the difference between good and bad behaviour so that they can make informed decisions. Other reasons for including religious and moral education in Ghana's curriculum were to introduce students to their creator and assist them in identifying the rationale for their creation by the creator, as well as to produce good, responsible, useful, and patriotic future leaders. To put it another way, the goals of religious and moral education are to promote national unity, national development, individual development and self-fulfillment, social impartiality and responsibility, respect for and development of cultural heritage, and international consciousness.<sup>4</sup>

However, in contemporary Ghanaian society, there has been a perceptible shift towards prioritizing Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) subjects, often at the expense of religious and moral education. This shift has sparked debates regarding its potential repercussions on the moral fabric of Ghanaian society, particularly among the younger generation. The discourse surrounding the preservation and transmission of moral and religious values among the youth has gained significant traction. There exists a prevailing concern that the traditional emphasis on STEM education within basic schools has inadvertently led to a decline in the cultivation of moral and religious virtues among students. This concern is rooted in the observation that the holistic development of individuals, encompassing not only intellectual prowess but also moral fortitude and spiritual enlightenment, is

<sup>1</sup> Eric Owusu Obeng, "Early History of Education in Ghana. An Overview," *Education System Through the Prism of the Sustainable Development Goals (Cases of Ghana, South Africa, Tunisia, Ethiopia)*, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Ghana Education Service [GES], *Religious and Moral Education Syllabus for Junior Secondary Schools in Ghana* (Accra: Curriculum Research and Development Division, 1998) 2-3.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Education Youth and Sports [MOEYS]; *White Paper on the Report of the Education Reform Review Committee* (Accra: Ministry of Education Youth and Sports, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Ghana Education Service, *Religious and Moral Education Syllabus for Junior Secondary Schools in Ghana* (Accra: Curriculum Research and Development Division, 1998) 1-2.

essential for the sustenance of a harmonious and morally upright society. People perceive that school is an important avenue for developing the personal moral and social character of children, which is an essential prerequisite for the continuation of civilization, has failed.<sup>5</sup>

Opuni-Frimpong has asserted that moral values such as honesty, mutual respect, civility, and social responsibility that would help individuals to live good lives and at the same time become productive, contributing members of society are lacking in schools.<sup>6</sup> Based on the fact that cases of robberies, murder, drug abuse, abortions, sex trading, corruption, fraud, and violence against women, children, and the elderly are commonly committed by children or teenagers.<sup>7</sup> This phenomenon can be attributed to the neglect of the moral dimension within educational institutions, resulting in a reduction in virtuous behaviour, academic achievement scores, heightened indiscipline, and behavioural issues. The populace believes that educational institutions lack the concept of human development and nation-building in education. The emphasis instead is on money-making and materialism, resulting in the gradual erosion of values among learners and society.

This indicates that with the current focus on STEM education, there is a growing concern about the decline of moral and religious values among students in Ghanaian elementary schools. The confluence of societal changes, technological advancements, and educational priorities has contributed to a perceived neglect of religious and moral education within the school curriculum. Consequently, there arises a pressing need to scrutinize the effectiveness of basic schools in imparting religious and moral education to students. The perceived decline in moral and religious values among students in Ghanaian basic schools has raised questions about the efficacy of the educational system in nurturing holistic development. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the effectiveness of religious and moral education programs within Ghanaian basic schools to ascertain their role in shaping the religious and moral consciousness as well as the ethical behaviour of students.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Religious and Moral: Educational Context

RME serves as a cornerstone in many educational systems worldwide, aiming to instil ethical values, moral reasoning, and spiritual development among students. The roots of RME trace back to ancient civilizations where moral instruction was intertwined with religious teachings.<sup>8</sup> Throughout history, different religious traditions have emphasized the importance of moral education as a means to cultivate virtues and guide ethical conduct. In modern educational settings, RME has evolved to accommodate diverse religious beliefs and ethical frameworks while striving to promote tolerance and understanding.

Philosophers such as Aristotle, Confucius, and John Dewey have contributed significantly to the discourse on moral education. Aristotle's virtue ethics, Confucian emphasis on filial piety and social harmony, and Dewey's pragmatic approach underscore the importance of integrating moral development into educational curricula. These philosophical perspectives provide theoretical foundations for RME and highlight its role in fostering character formation and ethical reasoning.<sup>9</sup> The implementation of RME varies across educational systems, ranging from standalone courses to integrated curricula within broader subjects. Research suggests that standalone RME programs can effectively enhance students' moral reasoning, empathy, and prosocial behaviour.<sup>10</sup> As a result, the standalone RME program was implemented in Ghanaian basic schools. Moreover, integrating moral themes into various subject areas can reinforce ethical principles and promote interdisciplinary learning.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Julius Otieno Gogo, "The Contribution of Education to Moral Decay in Kenya Challenges and Prospects," *International Journal of Educational Humanities and Social Science* 3, no. 1 (2020): 20–32.

<sup>6</sup> "STEM education without moral values breed intelligent criminals" - Opuni-Frimpong," Christian Yalley, myjoyonline, (2022), accessed on 8<sup>th</sup> May, 2022, <https://www.myjoyonline.com/stem-education-without-morals-spiritual-values-breed-intelligent-criminals-opuni-frimpong/>

<sup>7</sup> Peter Addai-Mensah, "The Role of Akan Values on Moral Upbringing of Children in Contemporary Society," *Journal of Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics and Theology (MOTBIT)*, Vol.2 (2020):99.

<sup>8</sup> Norman Richards, "The history of post-war religious education, with particular reference between religious and moral education: A Study in Pluralism." (PhD diss., University of Sheffield, 1986), 51.

<sup>9</sup> Edward Westermarck, *The origin and development of the moral ideas.* (DigiCat, 2022), 14.

<sup>10</sup> Larry Nucci and Darcia Narvaez, "Constructivist Approaches to Moral Education in Early Childhood." In *Handbook of Moral and Character Education*, (Routledge, 2008), 368-385.

<sup>11</sup> Mark Halstead and Monica J. Taylor, "Values in education and education in values," (Routledge, 2005), 11.

One of the challenges in RME lies in addressing cultural and religious diversity within increasingly pluralistic societies. Critics argue that RME may inadvertently privilege certain religious perspectives or neglect secular ethics, thereby excluding minority beliefs.<sup>12</sup> However, proponents advocate for a balanced approach that respects diverse worldviews while fostering critical reflection and dialogue. Empirical studies on the effectiveness of RME yield mixed findings regarding its impact on student outcomes. Some research indicates positive correlations between RME participation and moral development, including increased empathy, altruism, and ethical decision-making.<sup>13</sup> However, other studies suggest limited or inconsistent effects, highlighting the complexity of measuring moral outcomes in educational settings.<sup>14</sup> Charles Haynes argues that the effectiveness of RME is closely tied to teacher training and pedagogical strategies since educators play a pivotal role in facilitating moral discussions, modelling ethical behaviour, and creating inclusive learning environments.<sup>15</sup> Michael Grimmitt adds that professional development programs that equip teachers with skills in moral reasoning, interfaith dialogue, and cultural competency are essential for enhancing the quality of RME implementation.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the effectiveness of religious and moral education is contingent upon various factors, including curriculum design, cultural sensitivity, teacher expertise, and assessment methods. While RME holds promise in cultivating virtues or ethical values and promoting spiritual growth, ongoing research and dialogue are necessary to address its challenges and optimize its impact on student outcomes in diverse educational contexts.

### **Domains of Effective Religious and Moral Educational Programs**

Religious and moral education plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' beliefs, values, and behaviour, particularly in Ghanaian societies where religion holds significant cultural and social influence. Effective religious and moral educational programs in Ghanaian basic schools aimed not only to impart knowledge about religious doctrines but also to foster moral development, ethical reasoning, and spiritual growth. This suggests that its effectiveness can be measured across certain domains.

Thomas Lickona posits that the design of the curriculum is fundamental to the effectiveness of religious and moral educational programs. Thomas argues that a well-structured curriculum should encompass a diverse range of religious traditions, moral principles, and ethical dilemmas, catering to the multicultural and pluralistic nature of contemporary societies. Moreover, curricular content should be age-appropriate, developmentally sequenced, and aligned with educational objectives.<sup>17</sup> This suggests that the curriculum content of RME in Ghanaian basic schools should be age and level-appropriate and geared towards multi-sociocultural values of Ghanaian society to attain its effectiveness. On the contrary, Jackson and Miedema also suggest that the effectiveness of the RME program can be achieved by integrating experiential learning activities, reflective practices, and interdisciplinary approaches within the curriculum to enhance students' engagement and understanding.<sup>18</sup> This signifies that curriculum design is a major domain dealing with the effectiveness of RME programs in basic schools.

Another domain mentioned by Julian Stern is pedagogical strategies. According to Julian, the effectiveness of religious and moral education hinges on pedagogical strategies employed by educators. Research by Julian suggests that dialogical approaches, such as inquiry-based learning and Socratic questioning, promote critical thinking, empathy, and respectful engagement with diverse viewpoints. Furthermore, narrative-based methods, such as storytelling and case studies, can facilitate moral reasoning and character development by contextualizing abstract principles within real-life situations.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, effective pedagogy in religious and moral education involves creating a supportive learning

<sup>12</sup> Robert Jackson, *Rethinking religious education and plurality: Issues in diversity and pedagogy*, (Routledge, 2013), 49.

<sup>13</sup> Terence Lovat, *International research handbook on values education and student wellbeing*. Edited by Ron Toomey, and Neville Clement, (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), 11.

<sup>14</sup> Gert Biesta, *Good education in an age of measurement: Ethics, politics, democracy*, (Routledge, 2015), 76.

<sup>15</sup> Charles C. Haynes, *Religious Liberty and the Public Schools*, (Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 2001), 23.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Grimmitt, *Pedagogies of religious education: Case studies in the research and development of good pedagogic practice in RE*. (McCrimmons, 20000), 9.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Lickona, "Eleven principles of effective character education." *Journal of Moral Education* 25, no. 1 (1996): 93-100.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Jackson and Siebren Miedema, *International Perspectives on Values Education and The Teacher's Role: Innovative Approaches for Global Times*, (Routledge, 2016), 19.

<sup>19</sup> Julian Stern, *Teaching religious education: Researchers in the classroom*, (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018): 27-35.

environment where students feel safe to explore their beliefs, express their opinions, and engage in open dialogue.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of the RME program can be assessed by evaluating the moral development levels exhibited by students within the educational institution or by scrutinizing the behavioural tendencies of the school's graduates. Given that the core objective of religious and moral education revolves around fostering moral growth in students, these metrics serve as pivotal indicators of the program's impact. Drawing from Kohlberg's theory of moral development, educators aim to foster the progression from pre-conventional to post-conventional moral reasoning, where individuals internalize ethical principles and act autonomously based on moral values.<sup>20</sup> Religious traditions often provide moral frameworks and ethical guidelines that contribute to this development. However, researchers such as Darcia Narvaez, and Daniel Lapsley argue for a more holistic approach that integrates cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions of morality, emphasizing virtues, empathy, and moral imagination.<sup>21</sup> This proposition posits that the efficacy of RME can be gauged by an analysis of learners' behavioural patterns, value systems, and the multifaceted aspects of morality encompassing cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions. Consequently, it underscores the pivotal role of values education within comprehensive religious and moral educational initiatives. These programs aspire to cultivate cardinal virtues such as compassion, honesty, integrity, and appreciation for diversity, thus underlining the significance of values in the educational discourse and its implications for fostering moral development. Drawing from positive psychology and character education, researchers advocate for a strengths-based approach that focuses on nurturing students' character strengths and virtues.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, values education should promote ethical awareness and moral agency, empowering students to make principled decisions and take responsible actions in their personal and social lives.

Another domain of effective religious and moral education is the cultivation of ethical leadership skills. Educators play a vital role in modelling ethical behaviour, promoting moral courage, and empowering students to become agents of positive change in their communities.<sup>23</sup> Religious and moral educational programs should provide opportunities for students to develop leadership qualities such as empathy, integrity, and social responsibility through service-learning projects, peer mentoring, and ethical leadership training initiatives.

Nevertheless, central to religious and moral education is the cognitive domain, focusing on knowledge acquisition, understanding of religious texts, and ethical principles. Clark and Wright emphasize the importance of teaching critical thinking skills within religious education to enable students to analyze religious texts and moral dilemmas critically.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, a study by Smith and Snell highlights the significance of providing students with a comprehensive understanding of different religious traditions to foster tolerance and respect for diversity.<sup>25</sup> Davis and Marzilli also argue that the effectiveness of RME can be determined through learners' affective domain. The affective domain pertains to the emotional and attitudinal aspects of religious and moral education. Research by Davis and Marzilli underscores the role of empathy and compassion in moral development, suggesting that educational programs should incorporate activities that cultivate these virtues.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, Fernandez and Gallifa emphasize the importance of creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment that nurtures students' emotional well-being and fosters a sense of belonging.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Gonzalo Jover and Vicent Gozávez posit that effective religious and moral education extends beyond theoretical knowledge

<sup>20</sup> Lawrence Kohlberg, *The Psychology of Moral Development: The Nature and Validity of Moral Stages*, (Harper & Row, 1987), 18.

<sup>21</sup> Darcia Narvaez, and Daniel Lapsley, "Becoming a moral person—Moral development and moral character education as a result of social interactions." In *Empirically informed ethics: Morality between facts and norms*, (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2013), 227-238.

<sup>22</sup> Nansook Park and Christopher Peterson, "Moral competence and character strengths among adolescents: The development and validation of the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths for Youth." *Journal of Adolescence* 29, no. 6 (2006): 891-909.

<sup>23</sup> Mary C. Gentile, *Giving voice to values: How to speak your mind when you know what's right*, (Yale University Press, 2010), 68.

<sup>24</sup> A. Clark and S. Wright, Critical thinking in religious education: Opportunities and challenges. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 42(1), (2020): 56-70.

<sup>25</sup> Monica L. Smith and J. Snell, Teaching religious diversity in moral education: Challenges and strategies. *Journal of Moral Education*, 47(4), (2018): 483-498.

<sup>26</sup> R. A. Davis and A. Marzilli, Empathy and compassion in moral education: A developmental perspective. *Journal of Moral Education*, 48(2), (2019): 218-233.

<sup>27</sup> E. Fernandez and Josep Gallifa, Creating inclusive environments in religious education: Strategies and best practices. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 25(4), (2021): 371-386.

to tangible actions and behaviours. A study by Gonzalo Jover and Vicent Gozávez suggests that incorporating service-learning components into educational programs can facilitate students' application of moral principles in real-world contexts.<sup>28</sup> To achieve this, Dianne Rayson advocates for the inclusion of ethical decision-making frameworks to empower students to navigate moral complexities and make principled choices.<sup>29</sup>

Hill and Peterson view the effectiveness of the RME program from the spiritual domain. The spiritual domain encompasses individuals' sense of meaning, purpose, and connection to something greater than themselves. Hill and Peterson argue that effective religious education should cultivate students' spiritual literacy by providing opportunities for reflection, meditation, and contemplation.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, studies by Miller and Taylor suggest that integrating mindfulness practices into educational programs can enhance students' spiritual well-being and ethical awareness.<sup>31</sup>

Robinson and Cooper also analyse the effectiveness of the RME program from the social domain. The social dimension of religious and moral education focuses on interpersonal relationships, community engagement, and social justice advocacy. This emphasizes the role of dialogue and collaboration in fostering interfaith understanding and cooperation.<sup>32</sup> Brown and Lee highlight the importance of promoting social responsibility and ethical leadership skills among students to effect positive societal change.<sup>33</sup> This implies that there exists a possibility within the Ghanaian populace to perceive the Religious and Moral Education program within primary education institutions as lacking efficacy, contingent upon the congruence of its curriculum and the comportment of graduating students with the prevailing norms, cultural mores, and foundational principles inherent to Ghanaian societal ethos.

### **Domains of Ghanaian Values: The Lens of Socio-cultural and Religious Education**

Ghana is known for its rich cultural heritage and diverse religious practices and has long been a subject of scholarly inquiry regarding its societal values. The intricate interplay between these domains is the foundations that shape Ghanaian society and contribute to the nation's unique identity. Ghana's socio-cultural values are deeply rooted in its traditional systems, reflecting a strong sense of communalism. Extended families, clans, and tribes play pivotal roles in shaping individual identity and societal norms. The concept of 'Ubuntu' or 'Sankofa,' emphasizing the interconnectedness of individuals with their community and history, underscores the importance of collective well-being.<sup>34</sup>

Ghanaian society places a high value on respecting ancestors and elders. Ancestor veneration is an integral aspect of traditional religious practices, influencing daily life, decision-making, and community cohesion. This reverence extends beyond the immediate family, fostering a sense of continuity and interconnectedness with past generations. Hospitality is a hallmark of Ghanaian culture, epitomized by the concept of Ubuntu.<sup>35</sup> This signifies why Ghanaians often prioritize communal support, offering a warm welcome to strangers and valuing social harmony. Gabriel Idang argues that this ethos extends to daily interactions, with greetings and communal meals serving as expressions of shared values and interconnectedness.<sup>36</sup>

Ghana's religious landscape is diverse, with a blend of traditional African religions coexisting with Christianity and Islam. According to Gabriel Idang, traditional beliefs emphasize a connection between the spiritual and earthly realms, influencing moral codes, rituals, and community practices. Elements such as libation ceremonies and festivals are integral to preserving and transmitting cultural

<sup>28</sup> Gonzalo Jover and Vicent Gozávez, "Service learning and the just community: Complementary pragmatist forms of civic character education." *Theory and Research in Education* (2024): 71-88.

<sup>29</sup> Dianne Rayson, ed. *Education, Religion, and Ethics—A Scholarly Collection*, (Springer Nature, 2023), 59.

<sup>30</sup> Peter C. Hill and Christopher Peterson, Cultivating spiritual literacy in religious education. *Religious Education*, 115(2), (2020): 121-135.

<sup>31</sup> L. Miller and J. Taylor, Mindfulness in religious education: Practices and outcomes. *Journal of Contemplative Inquiry*, 6(1), J. (2019): 89-104.

<sup>32</sup> M. Robinson and H. Cooper, Interfaith dialogue in religious education: Principles and practices. *Journal of Interreligious Studies*, 26, (2019): 65-81.

<sup>33</sup> Brown, L., and Lee, M. Promoting social responsibility and ethical leadership in religious education. *Journal of Moral Education*, 47(3), (2018):339-354.

<sup>34</sup> Kwame Gyekye, "Tradition and modernity: Philosophical reflections on the African experience," 28.

<sup>35</sup> Annabella Osei-Tutu, Vivian Afi Dzokoto, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, Abraham Kenin, and Amanda Stahl. "Perceptions of Ghanaian values: A focus group study." *Ghana Social Science Journal* 20, no. 1 (2023): 20-38.

<sup>36</sup> Gabriel Idang, "African culture and values." *Phronimon* 16, no. 2 (2015): 98.

values.<sup>37</sup> Christianity, introduced through missionary activities, has significantly impacted Ghanaian values. Christian values, such as compassion, charity, and the importance of moral conduct, have permeated various aspects of Ghanaian society.<sup>38</sup> The church often serves as a moral compass and community centre, contributing to the moral fabric of the nation. Islam, practised by a significant portion of the population, also plays a crucial role in shaping Ghanaian values. Islamic teachings emphasize social justice, equality, and ethical conduct, influencing individual behaviour and community dynamics.<sup>39</sup> The coexistence of Islam with other religious traditions further contributes to the pluralistic nature of Ghanaian society.

Therefore, the domains of Ghanaian values are intricately woven through socio-cultural and religious dimensions. The strong influence of traditional systems, the coexistence of multiple religions, and the role of education all contribute to the unique tapestry that shapes Ghanaian identity. In schools, helping students to recognize and understand these values is essential for fostering social cohesion, preserving cultural heritage, and navigating the evolving dynamics of Ghanaian society. As the nation continues to progress, the interplay between socio-cultural and religious education remains a critical aspect of maintaining a harmonious and values-driven society.

### **The Implication of the Domains of Ghanaian Values in Religious and Moral Education**

Inculcating socio-cultural and religious values in Ghanaian students is fundamental to nurturing well-rounded individuals who are deeply connected to their heritage and possess a strong moral compass. Samuel Amponsah postulates that the integration of these values into the education system contributes to the development of responsible citizens who appreciate diversity, foster unity, and uphold the principles that define the fabric of Ghanaian society.<sup>40</sup> As a result, educators and stakeholders should work together to embed these values in the hearts and minds of students, for the preservation and promotion of Ghana's unique cultural and religious identity. Nevertheless, beyond formal education, informal channels, including family, community, and religious institutions, play crucial roles in transmitting Ghanaian values.<sup>41</sup> Storytelling, traditional rites of passage, and religious teachings contribute to the holistic education of individuals, fostering a deep understanding of cultural and religious values.

Formal education in Ghana incorporates both socio-cultural and religious elements, aiming to instill a sense of identity and values in the younger generation. Subjects such as social studies and religious and moral education provide a platform for exploring cultural heritage, ethical principles, and religious diversity. Mumuni Thompson posits that fostering socio-cultural and religious values ensures that students not only excel academically but also become responsible, respectful, and culturally aware individuals.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, by integrating these values into the curriculum and creating an environment that encourages their practice, Ghanaian schools contribute to the holistic development of students and the preservation of the nation's rich heritage.

According to Mary Lystad, Ghanaian culture places a high premium on respecting elders; this value is deeply rooted in the societal structure, and students should be taught the importance of showing deference to their elders.<sup>43</sup> This includes respecting authority figures in educational and societal settings and fostering a positive and disciplined learning environment. This can be achieved on the basis that schools organise programs where elders from the community share their experiences and wisdom, creating a bridge between generations. Samuel Amponsah postulates that, societies in Ghana value communal harmony and cooperation.<sup>44</sup> As a result, it is the school's role to encourage students to develop a sense of community spirit, understanding that their actions can impact the collective well-being of the

<sup>37</sup> Gabriel Idang, "African culture and values," 102.

<sup>38</sup> K. Effa-Ababio, "The nature and dynamics of culture and its social, moral and religious dimensions." *Journal of Science and Technology* (Ghana) 25, no. 2 (2005): 99.

<sup>39</sup> Annette Haaber Ihle, "Islamic morality, youth culture, and expectations of social mobility among young Muslims in Northern Ghana." *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 28, no. 2 (2008): 267-288.

<sup>40</sup> Samuel Amponsah, "Akan folklore as a philosophical framework for education in Ghana." *International Review of Education*, (2023):1-18.

<sup>41</sup> Douglas Asante and Thomas Archibald, "Beyond Ubuntu: Nnobia and Sankofa as Decolonizing and Indigenous Evaluation Epistemic Foundations from Ghana: 160.

<sup>42</sup> Mumuni Thompson, "Early childhood pedagogy in a socio-cultural medley in Ghana: Case studies in kindergarten." *International Journal of Early Childhood* 51, no. 2 (2019): 177-192.

<sup>43</sup> Mary H. Lystad, "Traditional values of Ghanaian children." *American Anthropologist* 62, no. 3 (1960): 454-464.

<sup>44</sup> Samuel Amponsah, "Akan folklore as a philosophical framework for education in Ghana," 11.

community. They should be encouraged to work collaboratively, fostering a sense of community. There is a need to emphasise that, group projects and extracurricular activities that promote teamwork can instill the spirit of collectivism among students. Group projects and community service initiatives can be incorporated into the Ghanaian educational system by school administrators and authorities to reinforce this value.

Ghana boasts a diverse cultural heritage, including various ethnic groups, languages, traditions, traditional dances, music, and festivals.<sup>45</sup> Schools can integrate cultural activities into the curriculum to ensure that students are well-versed in their heritage. Inviting local artists and cultural experts to schools can provide students with hands-on experiences and a deeper appreciation for their cultural identity. Students should be taught to appreciate and celebrate this diversity, fostering a sense of unity amid differences. Simon During established that, incorporating cultural studies and events into the curriculum can promote cultural awareness and pride.<sup>46</sup> Ghanaians are known for their warm hospitality. Students should be encouraged to be generous and welcoming, understanding the importance of helping others and sharing resources. This value contributes to the creation of a compassionate and caring society.

According to Douglas Asante, Ghana is home to various religious beliefs, including Christianity, Islam, and traditional African religions.<sup>47</sup> This makes it crucial to teach students the value of respecting and tolerating diverse religious perspectives. Students should be educated about various religious beliefs and practices in the country, fostering an environment of tolerance, spiritual growth and understanding. Benjamin Eshun claims that education should not only focus on academic development but also on nurturing students' spiritual well-being.<sup>48</sup> Consequently, schools can provide spaces for prayer, meditation, or reflection, accommodating the diverse spiritual needs of students. Religious leaders from various faiths can be invited to speak on spiritual growth and its connection to personal development. Additionally, cultivating a sense of spiritual awareness can contribute to the moral development of students. Interfaith dialogues and seminars can be organized to promote understanding and harmony among students from different religious backgrounds.

Religious teachings often emphasize ethical behaviour. Schools should integrate moral education that aligns with religious values to guide students in making ethical decisions. Students should be guided to apply these teachings in their daily lives, promoting honesty, integrity, and compassion. Integrating ethical discussions into the curriculum can help students navigate complex moral dilemmas that align with social justice and serving the community.<sup>49</sup> Students should be encouraged to actively participate in community service initiatives, aligning their actions with the values of compassion and justice promoted by their faith. Encouraging students to participate in community service and outreach programs reinforces the importance of empathy and compassion, values often emphasized in religious teachings.

## METHODOLOGY

Since the study investigates practical concerns about how parents, teachers, students, and school administrators perceive the effectiveness of basic schools in inculcating values and virtues in students through religious and moral education, a descriptive survey design was employed in the study. Descriptive survey studies, according to Kothari, concentrate on describing the traits of a particular person or group of people within a company, institution, or society.<sup>50</sup> A descriptive survey design, according to Helen Dulock, gathers data that explains or responds to inquiries about a contemporary setting, like a school.<sup>51</sup> Hence, the significant goal of descriptive survey research is to describe the state of issues as they presently are. Therefore, it was used to investigate issues surrounding the effectiveness of Ghanaian basic schools to sow the seed of virtues and values in students through religious and moral

<sup>45</sup> K. Effa-Ababio, "The nature and dynamics of culture and its social, moral and religious dimensions," 93.

<sup>46</sup> Simon During, *Cultural studies: A critical introduction*, (Routledge, 2004), 33.

<sup>47</sup> Douglas Asante and Thomas Archibald, "Beyond Ubuntu: Nnobia and Sankofa as Decolonizing and Indigenous Evaluation Epistemic Foundations from Ghana: 164.

<sup>48</sup> Benjamin A. Eshun, "Ghana: Education in a multicultural context." In *International perspectives on intercultural education*, (Routledge, 2013), 258.

<sup>49</sup> E. Dzata, "The Study of African Traditional Religion in Schools in Ghana: A Historical Perspective." *Indiana Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 3, no. 10 (2022): 64.

<sup>50</sup> C. R. Kothari, *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*. (2nd Ed.), (New Delhi: Sage, 2004), 28.

<sup>51</sup> Helen Dulock, Research design: Descriptive research. *Journal of Pediatric Oncology Nursing* 10, no. 4 (1993): 154-157.

education. This design empowered the researchers to gather facts and opinions from various respondents, gather information, and systematically describe the phenomenon, circumstances, and population.

Sefwi Wiawso Municipality served as the focal point for this study. The Municipality's diversity and accessibility made it an ideal setting for examining the interplay between educational institutions and the development of religious and moral values among its youth population. The survey was limited to parents, teachers, and students in the municipality's major and well-known towns, which include Wiawso, Boako, Asafo, and Asawinso. To create an equal chance for schools in the selected towns (Wiawso, Boako, Asafo, and Asawinso) in the municipality to take part in the study, simple random sampling was used to select two schools from each of the selected towns. In each school, two different focus groups with ten participants were established for students and parents through simple random and purposive sampling respectively. The students were composed entirely of Form 3 Junior High School (JHS) students. The reason for this decision is predicated on the notion that students in middle adolescence (14 to 17 years old) feel more liberated to voice their ideas and have been at the school long enough to have taken part in a range of activities organised in the school. Similarly, four headmasters and 20 teaching staff members were purposively selected. In total, one hundred and four (104) people took part in the study, consisting of forty (40) students, forty (40) parents, twenty (20) teaching staff, and four (4) Headteachers. Data from the teaching staff and the headteachers was gathered through a semi-structured interview.

## PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Parents, educators, and students collectively represent indispensable stakeholders in the educational structure, constituting integral elements of the school entity. The effectiveness of the school's delivery of values and virtue through religious and moral education relies significantly on the thoughtful involvement of each of these stakeholders. Consequently, these individuals emerge as adept assessors, possessing the discernment required to evaluate the school's efficacy in imparting religious and moral education to Ghanaian students. This evaluative process serves to discern and delineate gaps in the provision of religious and moral education within the educational landscape of Ghana.

The prevailing view among students is that apart from the RME course and the Wednesday school worship sessions, the school lacks a comprehensive framework for religious and moral education. According to these students, religious and moral values are primarily emphasized during school worship and RME classes. They contend that during worship, teachers read passages from the Holy Bible and derive religious and moral teachings from them. Additionally, students assert that after each RME topic, teachers assist them in extrapolating the religious and moral implications, enabling practical application in real-life situations. A student's remark perfectly captures the viewpoint that these students expressed during the focus group discussion:

*“Personally, in my opinion, the school falls short in effectively imparting religious and moral education. Surprisingly, discussions on values, religion, and moral teachings seem to be confined to Wednesday school worship sessions or when we engage in RME lessons in the classroom.”*

The student's statement suggests a perception among the majority of students that RME is limited to a specific course title and the weekly school worship session on Wednesdays. According to Pala, this perspective may arise from a lack of integration of religious and moral education across the broader curriculum or a limited emphasis on these values in other subjects.<sup>52</sup> It could also indicate that students perceive RME as a standalone, isolated component rather than an integrated aspect of their overall education. Bidwell posits that this perception may be influenced by the teaching approach, curriculum design, or overall school culture, which might not sufficiently emphasize the incorporation of moral and religious principles throughout various subjects and activities.<sup>53</sup> The specific mention of school worship on Wednesdays might indicate that while there is a designated time for religious activities, students may not perceive these activities as comprehensive enough to constitute a holistic approach to religious and moral education within the school setting.

<sup>52</sup> Aynur Pala, "The need for character education." *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Studies* 3, no. 2 (2011): 24.

<sup>53</sup> Charles Bidwell, Moral education and school social organization." *The social organization of schools: New conceptualizations of the learning process*, (New York: Plenum Press, 2013), 207.

Furthermore, the statement raises questions about the effectiveness of current educational strategies in instilling moral and religious values in students. It suggests that there might be a discrepancy between the intended curriculum, which includes broader objectives for religious and moral education, and what students experience as the curriculum. Balraj Singh argues that in such situations, engaging students in meaningful discussions about ethics and morality in different contexts could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of these values within the school setting.<sup>54</sup> The student's observation could also reflect a potential gap in communication or awareness regarding the efforts made by the school to instill virtue, moral and ethical values beyond the explicitly designated RME course and Wednesday worship.

Notwithstanding the previously mentioned findings, a minority of students assert that their schools effectively instill religious and moral principles. These students argue that their schools utilize diverse instructional approaches, including the enforcement of rules and regulations as well as pedagogical strategies such as role-playing, drama, and both positive and negative reinforcement of behaviour. Teachers and staff consistently employ these methods, creating an environment conducive to the exploration of ethical dilemmas through discussions. Furthermore, these students argue that, beyond the Wednesday school worship, their educational institutions conduct morning devotions throughout the week dedicated to prayers, recitation of the Ghanaian national pledge, and anthem, all of which serve to instill moral values. It is important to note, however, that these schools exclusively rely on the Bible for value impartation, rejecting teachings from alternative religious perspectives. They additionally underscore that exposure to the teachings of the three main religions is confined to RME lessons. This assertion was put forth by a student:

*“No, it is not like that in my school..... In my school, the approach to teaching moral values is diverse. While the staff employs various methods, there is a predominant focus on utilising the Bible during worship sessions and establishing rules we don't understand. Despite this, I believe schools are highly effective in imparting religious and moral values.”*

The findings highlight the variety of methods used by the staff to teach moral values in the school. Notably, there is a predominant emphasis on utilizing the Bible during worship sessions as a means to instill moral principles. This suggests a combination of religious teachings and broader moral education within the educational framework. These students express confidence in the effectiveness of schools in imparting religious and moral values, suggesting that the diverse approaches employed contribute to a well-rounded education in ethics. The use of the Bible in worship sessions indicates a commitment to religious teachings while the recognition of the broader spectrum of methods suggests an inclusive strategy that addresses a wide range of moral values. The findings are in line with Julia Dewey's assertion that in schools, drama, role play, folktales, discussions, seminars, games, and school worship are some of the approaches that can be used to teach and inculcate values.<sup>55</sup> The student's statement overall implies a belief in the comprehensive role of schools in nurturing religious and general moral principles among students.

The students assert that at times, the school authorities impose rules upon them without providing a clear understanding of the reasons behind those rules. This assertion reflects a sense of frustration or confusion regarding the rules set by school authorities. It suggests a perceived lack of clarity or communication about the reasons behind these rules, leaving students uncertain about their purpose or necessity. Redding posits that this situation may lead to a disconnection between the authorities and the students, potentially hindering a cooperative and understanding environment within the school community.<sup>56</sup> Since, clear communication and transparency in rule-setting can foster a more inclusive and cooperative atmosphere, ensuring that students comprehend the rationale behind the regulations.

Furthermore, the findings reflect a potential limitation in the approach to teaching moral values in the school, as it seems to heavily rely on a specific religious text, the Bible, during worship sessions. While diversity in teaching methods is acknowledged, the predominant focus on a single religious source may not be inclusive of students from diverse cultural or religious backgrounds. This confirms the

<sup>54</sup> Balraj Singh, "Character education in the 21st century." *Journal of Social Studies (JSS)* 15, no. 1 (2019):10.

<sup>55</sup> Julia M. Dewey, 'How to Teach Manners in the School-room,' (Czechia: DigiCat, 2022), 8.

<sup>56</sup> Redding, The community of the school, 21.

findings of Hartas, who found that some students felt that collective worship promoted a particular religious worldview and did not reflect the diversity of beliefs within the school community.<sup>57</sup> Fancourt found that effective moral education should be broad and accommodating, encouraging an understanding and appreciation of various ethical perspectives rather than being centred on one particular belief system. This suggests that some students may feel uncomfortable or excluded during collective worship, which could negatively impact their moral development.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, this approach could inadvertently marginalize students who do not share the same religious background, hindering the development of a truly inclusive and comprehensive moral education that prepares students for the diverse global society they will encounter outside the school environment.

The parents acknowledge the school's commendable efforts in moral education. However, they express concern that the current curriculum overly emphasizes foreign cultures, neglecting the essential values, norms, and moral principles of Ghana. In the past, the school used to organize social programs involving community authorities, but this practice seems to have faded from Ghanaian schools. According to the parents, the prevailing school culture prioritizes the extensive coverage of subjects on the timetable, with insufficient focus on nurturing students' understanding of cultural norms and moral development. Consequently, they attribute the observed lack of cultural refinement among students who leave the school to this educational approach. The parents point out that the previously routine Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, which used to occur at least twice a term, have dwindled to an annual event if that. They attribute this decline to the school's exclusive emphasis on academic instruction within the classroom, sidelining the broader educational and cultural aspects. This shift in emphasis, as per the parents, has resulted in the manifestation of undesirable behaviours among students, such as improper dressing, lack of manners and respect, incidents of theft, teenage pregnancies, and a deficiency in critical thinking skills. They advocate for a more balanced approach that incorporates cultural values and moral development into the curriculum, fostering a well-rounded education for the students. A member of the PTA's executive committee said:

*"I know school authorities are doing their best and even extra to help our children. I know this because I work with them as a PTA chairman, but I think the current curriculum gives less attention to our children's moral endeavours. Nowadays, our values and customs do not permeate the activities of the school. Our curriculum is packed with foreign cultures and academic work to the extent of not even getting time for PTA meetings. Do you know that, formally, there was a subject dedicated to our Ghanaian values? It was known as cultural studies, and we had life skills as well. The only one we have today is RME, which always goes and comes back into the curriculum. And we are seeing the results in the behaviour of our youth, who appear to lack cultural awareness and discipline."*

According to the findings, there is a sense of appreciation for the efforts made by school authorities, particularly highlighted through the speaker's role as a PTA chairman, indicating involvement and collaboration. However, the parent expresses concern about the current curriculum, noting a perceived lack of emphasis on the moral development of their children. The parent observes a shift from traditional values and customs in the school's activities, attributing it to a curriculum that prioritises foreign cultures and academic subjects to the extent of hindering PTA meetings. Moses Kumi Asamoah contends that the absence of PTA meetings can lead to a breakdown in communication between parents and educators, hindering collaboration and the exchange of valuable insights about a student's progress.<sup>59</sup> This may result in a less supportive educational environment and a potential disconnect between home and school. Noddings declares that since both the school and the home are responsible for children's moral development, teachers, parents, students, and the whole community must work together to create a caring relationship for students to learn these moral values.<sup>60</sup> The mention of the absence of a subject

<sup>57</sup> D. Hartas, Collective worship and spiritual development in primary schools in England. *Journal of Research in Religious Education*, 65(2), (2017): 112.

<sup>58</sup> N. Fancourt, Students' attitudes towards Collective Worship in English secondary schools. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 39(1), (2017): 11.

<sup>59</sup> Moses Kumi Asamoah, "Ethics power for effective leadership in the academia." *International Journal of Ethics Education*, (2023): 14.

<sup>60</sup> Nel.Noddings, "Caring: A relational approach to ethics and moral education," (Univ of California Press, 2013), 14.

dedicated to Ghanaian values, such as cultural studies and life skills, implies a perceived loss of cultural awareness and discipline among the youth, with the current subject, RME being insufficient in addressing these concerns. The statement suggests a desire for a more holistic educational approach that incorporates and preserves cultural values along with academic pursuits. Addai-Mensah suggests that Ghanaian communities are imbued with a variety of values, and it is essential to educate children in alignment with these values to instill moral uprightness in them.<sup>61</sup>

The teachers perceive that the effectiveness of the school in providing religious and moral education lies in their commitment to creating a positive and inclusive learning environment. Therefore, their dedication goes beyond the classroom, as they actively engage with students in discussions, encourage critical thinking about moral dilemmas, and serve as role models for ethical behaviour. They further argue that the school staff are all professionals; therefore, they employ interactive and engaging teaching methods, such as open discussions, case studies, and real-life examples, to make moral education content more relatable and impactful for students to develop moral values. The teachers claim that they also actively collaborate with serious parents who prioritise their children's schooling by giving feedback and sharing other vital information to ensure a consistent approach to moral education at home and in school to foster a supportive environment for students' ethical growth. A teacher's statement encapsulates their claim:

*"I believe the school is excelling in this area, thanks to a team of dedicated and skilled professionals who employ diverse methods to impart ethical values. Additionally, the school collaborates with committed parents who actively visit the school and contribute to their children's education."*

The findings reflect a belief that the school excels in imparting ethical values due to a combination of factors, including the dedication and skill of the teaching staff and the active involvement of committed parents. The use of diverse methods suggests that the school employs a multifaceted approach to ethical education, recognizing that different students may respond to various teaching techniques. This collaborative approach contributes to a well-rounded and effective educational experience that goes beyond traditional classroom instruction and nurtures the development of ethical values in students. Asare-Danso established in his study that moral education pushes students' minds to engage in moral reasoning when teachers use the proper techniques and skills.<sup>62</sup>

Furthermore, while acknowledging the importance of parental involvement in a child's education, the teachers seem to imply a somewhat idealistic and exclusionary perspective on the collaboration between schools and parents in fostering moral education. The emphasis on "committed parents" may inadvertently overlook the diverse range of family structures and socioeconomic backgrounds that students come from. This perspective could inadvertently perpetuate inequalities, as not all parents may have the resources or time to actively contribute in the same way. According to Joyce Epstein, a more inclusive approach to moral education should recognize and accommodate various family dynamics, ensuring that the school plays an active role in instilling moral values while considering the broader societal factors that impact a child's upbringing.<sup>63</sup>

Some teachers assert that despite their earnest efforts to impart religious and moral education, they encounter challenges. Their primary apprehension revolves around the regulations set forth by the GES, particularly those governing the application of disciplinary measures, wherein there appears to be a prioritization of child rights over the cultivation of discipline and moral values. A notable concern raised by these teachers pertains to the surge in indiscipline within schools attributed to the prohibition of corporal punishment. They underscored the constraint imposed by the GES, which prohibits implementing punishments on students during instructional hours despite acknowledging that all hours are designated for instruction. The teachers argue that students exploit these regulations to engage in misconduct, potentially hindering their moral development. Additionally, they highlighted the adverse

<sup>61</sup> Addai-Mensah, *The Role of Akan Values on Moral Upbringing of Children in Contemporary Society*, 98.

<sup>62</sup> Seth Asare-Danso "Moral education and the curriculum: The Ghanaian experience." *International Journal of Scientific Research and Management (IJSRM)*, Vol.6 (2018): 40.

<sup>63</sup> Joyce L. Epstein, "Theory to Practice: School and family partnerships lead to School Improvement and student success." In *School, family and community interaction*, (Routledge, 2019), 41.

attitudes exhibited by some parents towards the school, noting instances where parents resort to verbal abuse against school authorities in response to disciplinary actions taken against their children. Paradoxically, these same parents show a lack of engagement by abstaining from PTA meetings and forums designed for the exchange of ideas and consideration of the overall well-being and holistic development of students. According to the teachers, apart from school rules and regulations, collaborative worship and the RME subject constitute the primary established sources of moral education in schools. They lamented the inadequacy of teaching and learning resources essential for effective moral education, citing the absence of resources such as televisions, computers, textbooks, and projectors. An illustrative comment from a head teacher sums up their argument:

*“As a headteacher, I am cognizant of our earnest endeavours to instill moral values in our students; however, we are confronted with numerous challenges. These challenges emanate from parents who are non-participants in PTA meetings, directives from the GES concerning the execution of disciplinary measures, and a dearth of essential teaching resources. It is noteworthy that even minor errors on the part of educators may result in their withdrawal from the teaching profession as mandated by the GES.”*

The teachers express awareness of the school's commitment to instilling moral values, citing challenges stemming from non-participatory parents, GES directives on disciplinary measures, and a lack of teaching resources. While acknowledging the difficulties, it is crucial to recognize that blaming parents and external directives may oversimplify the complex task of religious and moral education in instilling virtue and values. The teacher's emphasis on potential consequences for educators' careers due to minor errors suggests a rigid system that may hinder constructive dialogue, professional growth, and healthy relationships. According to Dewey, the conception of the school as a mode of social life is the foundation for moral education; therefore, the best and most profound moral education comes from proper relationships with others in a unity of work and thought.<sup>64</sup>

The findings suggest that stakeholders exhibit a favourable outlook regarding the efficacy of schools in imparting moral education. Nevertheless, stakeholders express apprehensions regarding the deficient incorporation of Ghanaian norms and cultural values within the existing curriculum, the absence of robust parent-teacher associations, and insufficient teaching resources for the cultivation of moral principles. Despite the significant role Wednesday school worship sessions play in shaping students' moral development, educators predominantly resort to Bible verses, thus impeding the promotion of cultural diversity within the educational context. It was established that teachers employ interactive and engaging teaching methods, such as open discussions, role modelling, enforcement of school rules and regulations, role play, case studies, and real-life examples, to make moral education content more relatable and impactful for students to develop moral values. The predominant perspective held by students suggests that apart from the RME course and the Wednesday school worship sessions, the school lacks a comprehensive framework for religious and moral education.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings presented, it is evident that there are both strengths and areas for improvement in the delivery of religious and moral education within Ghanaian basic schools. To address the identified gaps and enhance the effectiveness of moral education, the following recommendations are proposed:

- 1. Curriculum Review and Revision:** Authorities need to conduct a comprehensive review of the curriculum to ensure the integration of religious and moral education across various subjects and activities, moving beyond the confines of the RME course and Wednesday school worship sessions. There is a need to emphasize the inclusion of Ghanaian norms, cultural values, and traditions within the curriculum to foster cultural awareness and appreciation among students.
- 2. Professional Development for Educators:** The government and other educational authorities need to provide ongoing professional development opportunities for educators to enhance their

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<sup>64</sup> Shulamit Gribov, "John Dewey's pragmatism and moral education." *Philosophy of Education Archive*, (Simon Fraser University, 2001), 101

skills in delivering moral education effectively. They need to equip teachers with diverse teaching methodologies and resources to facilitate engaging and interactive moral education sessions.

3. **Parental Engagement:** Educational authorities should actively encourage and facilitate increased parental involvement in school activities, including regular Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, to foster collaboration between home and school in nurturing students' moral development. Schools' authorities need to establish effective communication channels to keep parents informed about their children's moral education initiatives and encourage their active participation and support.
4. **Resource Allocation:** Educational authorities need to allocate resources to schools to address the identified shortage of teaching and learning materials essential for effective moral education, such as textbooks, projectors, computers, and audiovisual resources. They should ensure equitable distribution of resources to all schools, particularly those in underserved communities, to promote inclusivity and equal access to quality moral education.
5. **Promotion of Cultural Diversity:** Authorities need to encourage schools to adopt inclusive approaches that celebrate and embrace cultural diversity within the educational context. They need to provide training and support on how to incorporate diverse religious and cultural perspectives into moral education, promoting tolerance and understanding among students from different backgrounds to educators.
6. **Review of Disciplinary Policies:** Educational authorities need to collaborate with relevant stakeholders, including the GES, to review disciplinary policies and guidelines to strike a balance between upholding child rights and fostering discipline and moral values among students. This will help to provide clear guidance to educators on the appropriate disciplinary measures that promote positive behaviour and moral development while respecting students' rights and dignity.

## CONCLUSION

The school serves as a sacred space where the seeds of virtue and value are sown, nurtured, and cultivated. Through a holistic approach that integrates formal education, co-curricular activities, the influence of educators, and the physical environment, educational institutions play a vital role in shaping individuals who not only possess academic proficiency but also embody the principles of integrity, compassion, and ethical responsibility. As these individuals graduate and enter the wider world, they carry with them the seeds of virtue planted in their formative years, enriching society and contributing to the greater good.

Nevertheless, stakeholders, including parents, educators, and students, play crucial roles in ensuring the effectiveness of schools in providing religious and moral education. Parents contribute by advocating for a curriculum that reflects Ghanaian norms and cultural values, fostering cultural awareness among students. Educators, committed to creating an inclusive learning environment, employ diverse teaching methods to impart ethical values, engaging students in discussions and serving as role models for ethical behaviour. However, challenges such as limited parental engagement and inadequate teaching resources arise. To address these issues, recommendations include curriculum reviews to integrate moral education across subjects, ongoing professional development for educators, increased parental involvement through regular PTA meetings, equitable resource allocation, promotion of cultural diversity, and a review of disciplinary policies. Ultimately, the collaborative efforts of stakeholders within the educational ecosystem contribute to the cultivation of individuals who embody integrity, compassion, and ethical responsibility, enriching society as they graduate and enter the wider world.

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