

# Enhancing Children's Learning through Faith Based Environments in Sunday Schools. The Case of ELCT Diocese of Meru

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## ABSTRACT

This article aims to explore how the learning environment enhances faith formation among Sunday school children. The study was conducted in three parishes within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT), Diocese of Meru. A qualitative research approach was employed, utilizing both observation and interviews. The participants included Sunday school teachers, pastors, evangelists, and children. The findings revealed that unfriendly and inadequately resourced faith learning environments hinder effective children's faith learning. The study was guided by two main objectives: first, to examine the challenges affecting children's learning environments, and second, to analyse how the learning environment contributes to enhancing faith learning among children. Key issues identified included the inadequacy of classrooms, insufficiently trained teachers, and the lack of essential teaching and learning resources such as visual aids, appropriate furniture, and reference books. The study concludes that the faith learning environment plays a crucial role in enhancing children's faith development. Based on these findings, the study recommends that the Church should invest more in improving children's learning environments. The study suggests; strengthening teacher training, improving the construction and equipping of classrooms, and ensuring the provision of adequate teaching and learning materials including visual aids, appropriate furniture, and books would significantly enhance the faith learning environment.

*Key words: Child, Church, Faith, and Studying Environment.*

## INTRODUCTION

Fundamentally, one of the primary roles of the church is to shape children's character and faith. Christian education serves as the main platform for implementing the Sunday School program, which consists of biblical teachings aimed at instilling Christian values and guiding children in understanding and applying them in daily life (Supit, 2025). It is said that throughout its history, the main task of the Church has often been characterized by three concepts: witness, service and fellowship. Teaching and education have been, and still are, a means through which to promote these concepts (Bahendwa, 1990). Evidence shows that the success of the Sunday School program is not solely dependent on the materials delivered but on diverse learning approaches such as a supportive learning environment, competent teaching staff, technological integration, and active parental participation — are factors that significantly enhance children's interest, engagement, and overall effectiveness of Sunday School education (Supit, 2025)

There is no way the church can communicate its mission unless teaching is included, teaching is one of the major tasks of the church instructed by the Bible in the Old and in the New and Testament.

International pedagogical standards, including those established by the United Nations (1989) Article 29 states that the education of the child shall be directed to the development of the child's

personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential. Therefore, faith learning environment without furniture, books, teaching aids and adequate teachers fails to develop the physical, mental and spiritual abilities.

Lutheran world federation (2021) emphasize child-centered and resource-rich environments, local ecclesiastical contexts often face significant infrastructural deficits. Lutheran world federation argues the mission of the Church is not just spiritual but includes social and educational quality. Emphasis on holistic mission, the ELCT, as a member of the LWF is committed to high quality education. Therefore, the unfriendly environment is call to action for the Church to align with its global Lutheran identity.

By employing a qualitative research design such as observations, interviews, and questionnaires involving, Sunday school teachers, children, pastors and evangelists, the study identifies a systemic lack of dedicated classrooms, teachers, visual aids, and age-appropriate furniture.

The results suggest that inauspicious learning settings act as an obstruction to the sensual and kinesthetic learning essential for childhood development. The study clinches that the silent curriculum of physical learning Sunday school space significantly impacts spiritual outcomes. It recommends a strategic shift in church policy to prioritize pedagogical infrastructure as a core component of its holistic mission.

Children faith learning environment plays an important role in shaping children's spiritual development. Scholars insists that well prepared environment encourage learner's participation and motivation to learn. Children learning are influenced by how faith is communicated and practiced in the environment. The church is part of a Christian educational institution that plays a crucial role and holds significant responsibility in creating a conducive environment for children's Christian education (Supit, 2025).

The Evangelical Lutheran church in Tanzania has embraced faith nurturing among the children through various programs including Sunday school. This influences people in their lives in the society (Groome, 1980). Faith teaching among the children therefore aims to impart character formation.

However, in Tanzania factors like inadequate classrooms, furniture, teachers, books and visual aids hinders effective children teaching. Studies have specifically shown lack of necessary teaching facilities such as furniture for staff and students, books, science equipment, games and sport equipment exist in Tanzania. It has been found that Sunday school work faces three major challenges: a shortage of teachers, inadequate teaching materials, and insufficient classroom space in many congregations. In numerous cases, classes are conducted under the shade of trees: however, this arrangement becomes impractical during rainy season (Bahendwa, 1990).

The inadequacy of physical and material resources is a major factor responsible for learning outcome of students (Kasulwa, 2023). This article explores the role of faith learning environment and how it influence effective faith learning among the children in the area of study with the aim of contributing toward the improvement of faith learning in Sunday school. This study aims to address this gap.

Scholarly accord insists that, the faith learning environment is a primary spur for cognitive and spiritual conception among children. Within the Lutheran tradition, the church's mission is fundamentally educational. As scholar avers, the historical task of the Church is defined by the triad of witness (martyria), service (diakonia), and fellowship (koinonia); teaching and education serve as the essential mechanisms to promote these core concepts (Bahendwa, 1990)

As a result, the communication of the Church's mission is intimately connected to its pedagogical efficacy. This instructional mandate is not a new innovation but is rooted in the biblical imperatives of both the Old and New Testaments. As established in the Deuteronomic tradition (Deut. 6:7) and the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19), the calling to teach is a divine instruction that requires a careful and well-prepared setting. Thus, the physical setting in which this teaching occurs is not merely a logistical facet; but a theological expression of the Church's commitment to its mission.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Child:** The Holy Bible explains children as heritage, gift and Blessing from God, Psalm 127:3 says Lo, sons are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward.

The UN (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Children article one states, a child means every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier (Unicef for Every Child, 2026). According to this study children are between the age of two years and nine years.

**Church:** According to this study the church means an institution such as Evangelical\_Lutheran Church in Tanzania and respective Dioceses.

**Studying Environment:** According to UNESCO learning environment refers to the physical or virtual space where educational activities take place, encompassing various elements that support the teaching and learning process. This includes classroom setting, online platforms, resources and social interactions among participants (UNESCO). This definition is employed in this study.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The Church's mission is basically educational, a reality that Bahendwa (1990) identifies as the foundational framework for the institution's very survival. He provides the following structural mandate for the Church's existence:

Throughout its history, the main task of the Church has often been characterized by three concepts: witness, service and fellowship. Teaching and education have been, and still are, a means through which to promote these concepts. There is no way the church can communicate its mission unless teaching is included (p. 48)

Yet, this mission is currently under major infrastructural strain. Bahendwa (1990) further notes that Sunday school work faces a triple crisis where teachers are in short supply, materials are limited, and there is a critical lack of rooms to house classes. In many cases, classes are forced to meet under the shade of trees, a practice that becomes impossible during the rainy season. As a professional counselor and educator, this lack of stability communicates a silent message to the child

that, their place in the Church is secondary. This environment makes it difficult for faith learning to be effective, as the physical state of a classroom is a direct reflection of the value placed on the learner.

This physical environment acts as a "silent partner" to the teacher, often stifling even the best leadership intentions. Schuller (1993) identifies the ideal relationship between leadership and the environment, stating that children require a specific kind of space to flourish. Children need leaders who can provide a learning environment in the church that encourages and supports curiosity and questions about the Bible, church doctrine, and the practice of faith. Such an environment is one where children feel safe to explore and where their contributions are valued as part of the faith community. Unless the learning environment is well prepared, faith learning process will reach its aim in a very slow pace.

If a room is established as a safe place to talk and feel, as Evirist (2002) suggests, pupils are finally free to be really present and then all can become engaged in sustaining that environment. This presence is the soil in which spiritual growth occurs. Without a disciplined and safe environment, the child's natural curiosity which is the very engine of faith formation, is suppressed. This creates a pedagogical mismatch where the child's voice is lost.

In many contexts, the shortage of space forces teachers to combine children of all ages into a single group, often resulting in the inappropriate use of the lecture method. Machenje (2001) observes that teachers frequently resort to lecturing regardless of the children's developmental stages. From a developmental perspective, this is a failure of care.

Tutege Masikio (1985) reminds us that children learn according to their age, making it necessary to have enough classrooms to facilitate effective pedagogy. The lecture method creates a "one-way" flow of information that ignores the child's participatory rights. When children are treated as passive listeners, learning becomes a static lecture rather than a living encounter. This explains why Tulung (2024) finds that students in such environments often display little interest, becoming lazy with assignments or frequently asking for restroom breaks to escape a room that does not

meet their needs. When children lose interest it means little is achieved in the faith learning classrooms.

Children are naturally multisensory learners who "know" through their bodies. Berryman (1989) insists that biblical stories must be translated into figures and materials that allow kinesthetic, visual, and auditory thinking to happen (p. 26). This is supported by the study of Juengst (1994), which excellently outlines that, while we recall only 10% of what we hear, we remember 90% of what we experience. To achieve this high level of retention, the physical teaching space must meet the standards of spaciousness and cheerfulness as described by Fernández (2024). This comprises furniture at the child's height and visual aid. The absence of these tools is the strategic cry of teachers noted by Bahendwa (1990) that, the five human senses are starved, and faith learning becomes unproductive. This aligns with what Westerhoff observed couple of small inadequate rooms attached to their church building, no audiovisual equipment, few supplies, an inadequate number of prospective teachers and age graded classes (Westerhoff, 2012).

As Bangun (2023) suggests that teachers play a crucial role as guides and role models. Their words and actions stir children to grow in their faith, leaving a permanent effect on spiritual advance. However, even the most inspired teacher needs a functional setting. This research suggests that, recognizing child's learning environment is ultimately a matter of justice and love. The United Nations (1989) asserts that education must be "child-friendly" (Article 29), a mandate that finds its local theological home in the E.L.C.T Diocese Meru constitution (Katiba ya KKKT DME). Therefore, providing a dignified classroom is a theological act of love. Once environment is established, as Evirist (2002) eloquently concludes, students are able to listen, learn, and create something together; when such an environment exists, teachers and learners alike realize it.

John Westerhoff and James Fowler provide theoretical frameworks that align with the aim of this article, as both emphasize that faith is formed and nurtured from early childhood. John Westerhoff conceptualizes faith as an inherent human capacity, describing it as an awareness or perception of God's grace that is present from the

beginning of life. Rather than viewing faith as something acquired later, he argues that it exists in a complete form at its origin, yet undergoes gradual maturation. This growth is analogous to the natural development of a tree, which, though whole as a sapling, progressively expands and strengthens over time. Accordingly, Westerhoff frames faith development not as a linear accumulation of new elements, but as a transformation in modes or styles of experiencing and expressing faith, shaped continuously by life experiences.

In contrast, James Fowler presents faith development as a structured, stage-based process. He argues that individuals move through identifiable stages, each reflecting a distinct way of interpreting and organizing life experiences into a coherent and meaningful worldview. For Fowler, faith is not static but is repeatedly reconstructed, as individuals actively reinterpret their experiences in light of new insights and challenges. His metaphor emphasizes an ongoing process of building and rebuilding, suggesting that faith evolves through critical reflection and cognitive reorganization (Kreider, 1995).

Together, they provide a comprehensive understanding of faith development as both an experiential and structural process, integrating gradual maturation with periodic reorganization of belief systems. Effective Children faith learning requires a well-prepared environment.

## METHODOLOGY

The study uses qualitative case study approach where observation and interviews involving Sunday school teachers, pastors, evangelists, and Sunday school children. This approach was chosen because it allows for in-depth understanding of the phenomenon relying on the data collected through interviews and observation.

The study was done in three parishes; respondents were Sunday school teachers, children, parents and pastors who were actively involved in children work. Observation was carried out to explore church's learning environment for children. Interviews were conducted with teachers, pastors, evangelists and children to get their views on the

effectiveness of Sunday school learning environment.

Moreover, the collected data were analysed thematically for presentation, discussion and concluding remarks. Findings from the study gave an opportunity to give suggestion on the improvement of Sunday school learning environment for effective faith learning. The study was guided by two objectives: To explore challenges facing children learning environment and analyse how learning environment enhance faith learning for children. The names of the respondents were kept anonymous.

## FINDINGS

### *Challenges Facing Children Faith Learning*

#### *Environment*

#### **Inadequate of faith learning Rooms**

The Researcher attended 3 Sunday school classes. During the observation in the field among three parishes only one had single special room for children faith learning. In one parishes child used to share the church building with adults, and the other one had to borrow the government classes for children faith learning.

In the Parish “A” where children share the building they had to hurry their classes to give space for the coming adult service. This hinders concentration because teachers had to make sure children leave as early as possible to allow adult service to use the same building.

In Parish “B” there was no specific learning room for children. Children come with parents, they get prayer from the pastor in the middle of adult service and leave for their Sunday school lessons. In this parish there was no church owned room for children faith learn instead they borrow the government rooms for Sunday learning. The church had no mandatory ownership of the building.

Parish “C” had one room for children. In this parish children gather in one room despite of their age, they learn together the same topic. The age of children in this room was between 3 years to 10 years. Teachers had difficult in managing the class;

there was no concentration at all. Learning was not effective.

During interview one respondent said there was to build special room for children. It was added that “there was a long way to go because it is not only a classroom which was needed but also necessary facilities (Interview with Parent 1, March 23, 2025).

Moreover, Children said although the learning environment was not good it needed to be improved because all children gathered in one room despite of their age. Respondent insisted they needed more rooms with enough windows in the recent classroom. They needed better classrooms because they said they had very poor classrooms at church compared to the schools they attended Interview with child 1, March 23, 2025).

The researcher proceeded interview Sunday school teachers which revealed lack of classrooms resulted difficulty in teaching, classroom management, and use of poor teaching methods. It was as difficult to ensure children's safety in the classroom (Interview with teacher 1, February 23, 2025). All questionnaires discovered that teachers were not convinced with faith learning classrooms. Literature found that, the role of Sunday School teachers is crucial in delivering Christian education. Therefore, continuous teacher training (Supit, 2025) is essential for improving teaching effectiveness.

The findings from observation, and interviews reflect that faith learning environment in the area of faith learning rooms is a challenge. Rooms were inadequate which result to include all children in the class regardless of their age. Children teachers and parents were curious to see presence of faith room happening to improve faith learning.

The findings from observations, and interviews indicate that the faith learning environment, particularly in relation to designated learning spaces, remains a significant challenge. The data reveal that available rooms are inadequate, resulting in the grouping of children of different age levels into the same class. This practice undermines age-appropriate pedagogy and limits the effectiveness of faith-based instruction. From an argumentative perspective, the lack of sufficient and well-structured learning spaces compromises both the quality of teaching and the learners’

spiritual development, as children require environments that are conducive to their cognitive and faith maturity levels.

The findings of this study are consistent with existing literature, since Bahendwa identified inadequate learning infrastructure as a persistent challenge. He notes that classes are often forced to convene under the shade of trees, a practice that becomes impossible during the rainy season (p. 228). This evidence reinforces the argument that insufficient physical learning spaces significantly hinder the delivery of effective instruction. In the present context, children are frequently compelled to gather outdoors due to the lack of adequate classroom facilities, a situation that not only disrupts learning continuity but also undermines the quality of faith-based education. Such observation highlights the urgent need for improved infrastructure to support structured, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate learning environments.

Reflecting this view, it was proved that teachers, parents, and even the children themselves expressed a strong desire for the establishment of dedicated faith learning rooms. The anticipation of improved facilities suggests that stakeholders are not only aware of the existing limitations but are also hopeful for meaningful change that will foster more effective and engaging faith formation among children.

### Lack of enough Sunday School Teachers

Table 1: Children Teachers Ratio

CLASS	A	B	C	TOTAL	AVERAGE
Children attendance	17	180	211	408	51 children per one teacher
Number of Teachers	2	3	3	8	

The table above indicates that, on average, one teacher was responsible for teaching 51 children of varying age groups. Such a teacher–pupil ratio presents a significant challenge to effective instruction, particularly in contexts that require age-appropriate and individualized learning approaches. In such an environment, it becomes

exceedingly difficult for teachers to adequately attend to the diverse cognitive, emotional, and spiritual needs of all learners. This situation undermines the quality of both pedagogy and learner engagement.

This finding aligns with the argument by Senyagwa (2021), who emphasizes that the identification of students’ needs depends largely on frequent and meaningful interactions between teachers and learners. One critical form of such interaction is the teacher’s ability to move freely within the classroom, observing, guiding, and responding to individual learners. However, in overcrowded and multi-age learning settings, such movement and interaction are significantly constrained, thereby limiting the teacher’s capacity to provide effective and responsive instruction.

### Absence Audio Visual Faith Teaching Aids

A respondent emphasized that, although the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania accommodates a large number of children in Sunday school, pedagogical approaches must consider the developmental needs of young learners. Specifically, children up to the age of eight learn most effectively through sensory engagement seeing, doing, and touching. The respondent further noted that children should leave church with tangible outcomes of their learning, which they can share with their parents at home, thereby extending the learning process beyond the classroom. This practice not only reinforces understanding but also facilitates faith formation within the family context, highlighting the critical role of effective faith pedagogy in nurturing spiritual growth (CE 1, April 9, 2025). Since children have little attention, teaching aids improves learning among the children in Sunday school, absence of visual aids makes learning difficult.

However, it was also observed the parishes under investigation has not sufficiently provided visual and auditory teaching materials to support children’s faith learning. Classroom observations revealed that none of the three classes under study utilized visual teaching aids, indicating a significant gap between pedagogical theory and practice. This finding raises critical concerns, as it contradicts established principles of learning which emphasize multisensory engagement. As argued by Bahendwa (1990), effective teaching should

involve the five human senses seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching in order to enhance comprehension and retention.

Reflectively, the absence of such resources and methods suggests a disconnect between the recognized needs of young learners and the actual instructional practices employed in Sunday school settings. Argumentatively, this gap undermines the effectiveness of faith-based education, as it limits children's ability to actively engage with and internalize religious teachings. Therefore, there is a compelling need for the church to invest in appropriate teaching and learning materials and to adopt child-centered pedagogical approaches that align with both developmental theory and practical realities. Moreover, educators long ago discovered that the best way to teach is to involve students in experiential learning model. While we remember only 10% of what we hear, we remember 90% of what we experience (Juengst, 1994), with this reality teaching aids would make children experience the lesson hence high understanding.

### **Unfriendly Furniture for Children**

Findings from interviews with children regarding the learning environment revealed that, although they perceived the general setting as satisfactory, there was a notable lack of appropriate chairs and desks to support writing activities (Interview with Child 1, 2, 3, and 4, March 2, 2025). This concern was further substantiated through classroom observations, which indicated that the available furniture consisted mainly of pews and plastic chairs without accompanying tables. In addition, the number of chairs was not enough, resulting in some children sharing seats, others standing throughout the session, and only one group (Group A) having relatively adequate seating for its 17 learners.

The inadequacy and unsuitability of the furniture significantly compromised the learning process. The furniture was not child-friendly, and as a result, learners were observed writing on their knees, against walls, or while standing. Such conditions created visible difficulties, as children struggled to simultaneously sit, write, and listen effectively.

From an argumentative perspective, these findings underscore the critical role of appropriate and

ergonomic learning resources in facilitating effective pedagogy. The absence of suitable desks and chairs not only disrupts learners' concentration and participation but also limits their ability to engage meaningfully with instructional activities.

Reflectively, the observed learning environments across all classes can be characterized as constrained and pedagogically unfavorable due to the lack of adequate and child-appropriate furniture. This situation highlights a disconnect between the intended goals of effective teaching and the realities of the physical environment in which learning takes place. Consequently, there is a pressing need to improve classroom infrastructure to create supportive, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate learning conditions for children

### **Inadequate Supply of Faith Learning Books**

The findings reveal a significant inadequacy in the availability and utilization of essential learning materials among the children. Notably, there were no textbooks accessible to learners, with only a single copy available to the teacher, who relied on reading aloud while the children listened passively. A few children possessed copies of the Holy Bible; however, these were seldom used consistently throughout the lesson. Similarly, although some learners had hymn books, these resources were largely underutilized, as no hymns were sung in most classes. In one instance, a hymn was attempted in Class One, but participation was limited due to the fact that only two children had access to hymn books. While a number of children had exercise books, these were not effectively integrated into the learning process, as writing activities were treated as optional rather than essential components of instruction.

From an argumentative perspective, this limited access to and ineffective use of learning materials significantly undermines the quality of teaching and learning. The absence of adequate instructional resources restricts active learner engagement and promotes a predominantly passive mode of learning, which is inconsistent with established pedagogical principles that emphasize participation, interaction, and practice. Reflectively, these conditions suggest a disconnect between the intended objectives of faith-based education and the practical realities within the classroom. Consequently, the lack of structured use

of learning materials not only diminishes learners' comprehension and retention but also hinders the overall effectiveness of faith formation among children.

## DISCUSSIONS

### *Contribution of Teaching And Learning*

### *Environment in Enhancing Effective Faith Learning*

In this part the discussion was done following the checklist which covered faith learning classrooms, teacher children ratio, availability and use of visual teaching Aids, children friendly furniture, availability of books, was the list to be observed.

### *Good Environment Helps the Teacher to Use*

### *Appropriate Method of Teaching*

Scholarly perspectives underscore the centrality of the learning environment in shaping both pedagogical choices and learner engagement. Eivist (2002), argues that the intentional structuring of the learning environment enables educators to select methods that respond to the diverse needs of learners and the specific objectives of a session. Once such an environment is established, learners are more likely to be present, engaged, and actively involved in sustaining a conducive atmosphere for learning. Importantly, the learning environment must be safe physically, emotionally, and socially to allow learners not only to participate freely but also to grow holistically. This perspective suggests that the quality of the environment is inseparable from the effectiveness of teaching methods. Consequently, inappropriate pedagogical methods are often a reflection of, or are constrained by, inadequately structured learning environments. Conversely, establishing a supportive faith learning environment lays the foundation for the application of appropriate, learner-centered teaching methods.

However, the findings of this study reveal a significant disconnect between these theoretical ideals and the realities observed in practice. Teachers faced considerable challenges in instructing children of different age groups within

the same learning space, despite the well-established principle that children learn according to their developmental stages. The lack of age-appropriate grouping limited the use of differentiated teaching methods and hindered the effectiveness of instruction. This situation was largely attributed to the shortage of classrooms, which forced multiple groups to share a single room regardless of age differences.

Argumentatively, such conditions compromise not only pedagogical effectiveness but also classroom management and learner concentration. The overcrowding and heterogeneity of learners created discomfort for both teachers and students, making it difficult to maintain order, apply suitable teaching strategies, and sustain learners' attention. These findings are consistent with earlier research by Lyamuya (1995), which observed that shared learning spaces—such as church buildings used simultaneously by different groups often lead to confusion and reduced concentration. Moreover, the use of outdoor or open-air spaces further exacerbates these challenges, as environmental distractions such as passing vehicles, people, and animals disrupt the learning process. During the rainy season, the situation deteriorates further, with some classes being suspended and regular attendance declining significantly (Lyamuya, 1995).

Reflectively, these findings highlight a critical gap between the envisioned role of the learning environment in supporting effective pedagogy and the practical constraints faced in many congregations. The persistence of such challenges suggests that insufficient attention has been given to the infrastructural and organizational aspects of faith-based education. Without deliberate efforts to create structured, safe, and age-appropriate learning environments, the implementation of effective teaching methods remains severely limited. Therefore, improving the physical and organizational conditions of the learning environment is not merely a logistical concern but a pedagogical imperative essential for fostering meaningful and effective faith learning among children.

### *Adequate Number of Teachers Enhance Effective*

### *Learning Among the Children*

The findings of this study indicate that the average number of children per teacher was 51, as presented in Table 1. This figure significantly exceeds the recommended standard outlined in the constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, specifically within the Diocese of Meru. The constitution explicitly emphasizes that children should be organized into classes according to their age to facilitate effective faith teaching and learning. Furthermore, it stipulates that a Sunday school class should not exceed thirty children and that each class should be entrusted to a prepared teacher (Katiba ya KKKT Dayosisi ya Meru, 2012). This shows that what was stipulated in the constitution was not practiced something which requires improvement.

From an argumentative standpoint, the disparity between the prescribed standard and the observed practice raises critical concerns about the effectiveness of faith-based instruction. A teacher-pupil ratio of 51:1 undermines the implementation of age-appropriate pedagogy and limits opportunities for individualized attention, interaction, and meaningful engagement. Such overcrowded conditions make it difficult for teachers to address the diverse developmental and spiritual needs of learners, thereby compromising both the teaching process and learning outcomes.

Observational data further confirm that the large number of children assigned to a small number of teachers negatively affected the quality of faith learning. Reflectively, this situation points to a gap between policy and practice within the diocese, suggesting challenges in resource allocation, teacher preparation, and classroom organization. The inability to adhere to established guidelines not only constrains pedagogical effectiveness but also calls into question the institutional capacity to support holistic and developmentally appropriate faith formation among children. Therefore, addressing class size and teacher availability should be considered a priority in efforts to enhance the quality of faith learning environments

#### *Friendly Furniture Promotes Comfortable Learning for Children*

Furniture were not friendly to children since tables and chairs were pews for those who used church buildings in the government classes they used desks. Observation found that chairs were not

friendly for children. Young children had to hang their legs while sitting and when got tired they had to stand up something which irritated teachers. Older children had to carry the young children; also, even the older had to carry one another. Children had no tables so it was difficult to write. Learning in such kind of environment was not effective enough.

Effective pedagogy demands the environment where children can sit comfortably, read, write and have safe movement for effective learning. Unsuitable childcare furniture could make the children suffer and can be a cause of chronic pains. This negatively impacts their general education and academic success, so it's important to provide them with good quality things like desks or chairs. Hence, they can reach their full potential as learners. School furniture is a necessary part of any child's education. The right kind can differentiate between success and failure, so students need to find what works best with their personal needs (<https://classroomdirect.co.uk/> 26/3//2026, 2026).

#### *Enough Supply of Books Enhance Effective*

#### *Children faith learning*

Findings from the observed classes revealed the absence of reference books within the learning environment, indicating that teachers relied on limited sources of information when delivering instruction. This limitation has significant implications for both teaching quality and learners' outcomes. Reference materials play a critical role in expanding teachers' subject knowledge, deepening content understanding, and enriching instructional delivery. In the context of children's faith formation, access to diverse and age-appropriate religious texts is essential for presenting biblical content in ways that are both meaningful and engaging.

The lack of reference books and other relevant learning resources may therefore constrain the effectiveness of faith-based education, resulting in limited knowledge transmission and slower spiritual development among children. When teachers are not adequately supported with instructional resources, their ability to interpret, contextualize, and communicate faith concepts becomes restricted. Consequently, learners may receive fragmented or superficial understanding,

which undermines the overall goal of nurturing strong and grounded Christian faith.

Existing literature strongly supports the importance of access to reading materials in promoting effective learning. Studies indicate that children who are frequently exposed to self-selected reading texts encounter a wider range of vocabulary, develop broader background knowledge, and achieve greater reading fluency over time (<https://education.purdue.edu/26/3/2026>, 2026). These benefits are equally applicable within faith learning contexts, where exposure to biblical stories, devotionals, and other religious literature enhances comprehension, reflection, and personal connection to faith teachings.

Therefore, the absence of reference books in Sunday school classrooms not only limits cognitive and literacy development but also hinders holistic faith formation. To promote effective pedagogy and sustainable faith growth, it is essential that churches and educational stakeholders ensure the availability of adequate and contextually relevant reference materials for both teachers and learners.

#### *Visual Aids and Effective Children Faith Learning*

Findings from the three observed classes indicated that none of the teachers utilized visual teaching aids during instruction. This absence suggests a significant pedagogical gap in the teaching and learning process within Sunday school contexts. It is widely argued that, due to the diversity of congregations and teaching environments ranging from urban to rural settings and from large to small class sizes teachers are required to carefully select or develop contextually appropriate teaching materials that enhance learning effectiveness. The failure to employ such materials, therefore, raises concerns about the quality of instructional practices being implemented.

One of the contributing factors to this challenge is the difficulty in creating faith-based teaching materials, particularly because many Sunday school teachers are lay Christians with limited pedagogical training. This lack of professional preparation constrains their ability to design and effectively use teaching aids. Consequently, the limited use of faith learning aids may lead to ineffective Christian education, especially given that children primarily learn through praxis, that is,

learning by doing. Unlike adults, children's learning is fundamentally multisensory; they learn more effectively through touching, seeing, hearing, and active engagement.

Scholarly literature underscores the importance of audio-visual teaching aids in enhancing children's understanding and engagement. According to Bahendwa (1990.), such teaching aids simplify the teacher's work, capture learners' attention, and motivate children toward faith development. In the absence of these aids, classrooms are likely to miss these pedagogical advantages, resulting in slower comprehension and reduced effectiveness in faith formation. Therefore, effective pedagogy in Sunday school teaching must intentionally incorporate appropriate teaching aids to support holistic learning.

Furthermore, young children tend to grasp knowledge more effectively through concrete and visible experiences rather than abstract concepts. As argued by Berryman (1989), children learn through both their bodies and minds, utilizing multiple sensory channels such as movement, sight, sound, touch, and feeling. For this reason, biblical narratives should be translated into tangible forms and materials that children can see, manipulate, and interact with. Such approaches enable children to construct meaningful mental images of scripture and facilitate kinesthetic, visual, and auditory learning processes.

In light of this, the absence of a supportive and resourceful learning environment significantly undermines children's faith development. Children who are not exposed to effective learning environments are less likely to develop a strong and stable Christian foundation. Therefore, the integration of appropriate teaching aids is not optional but essential for promoting meaningful and sustained faith growth among children.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study underscore the critical role of the faith learning environment in promoting effective children's faith formation. A well-structured and resourceful learning environment significantly enhances children's understanding, engagement, and internalization of Christian teachings. Given that children constitute both the

present and future of the Church, it is imperative to invest intentionally and sustainably in their faith development. Failure to improve the conditions under which faith learning occurs risks producing shallow understanding and weak spiritual foundations among children.

In light of these findings, the study recommends that the Church need to strengthen its commitment to children's ministry by investing in essential educational resources and infrastructure. This includes the construction and improvement of dedicated classrooms, provision of training for Sunday school teachers, and the availability of appropriate teaching and learning materials such as visual aids, child-friendly furniture, and relevant books. Such investments are necessary to support effective pedagogy and meaningful learning experiences.

Children faith learning environment plays important role in effective children faith learning. It is important to invest strongly in children faith learning since they are the church today and tomorrow. If faith learning environment will not be improved children learning will be weak hence weak Christians. The study recommends that the church need to invest more in constructing building classrooms, education for Sunday school teachers, visual aids, furniture, and books for effective children learning. Without improving learning environment Christian faith learning will not achieve its goal. Ways of improving this may include organizing special fund rising, seeking funds from charity organization for offering training teachers and buying the needed resources for faith learning.

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