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## Teachers' Curriculum Knowledge in Teaching Christian Religious Studies among Senior High Schools of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana

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**Abstract:** The study sought to investigate on teachers' curriculum knowledge in teaching Christian Religious Studies among Senior High Schools of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The population of the study was CRS teachers in Senior high schools in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Through census sampling approach, all teachers of CRS were involved in filling the questionnaire. Analysis of data was done through descriptive statistics. The study established that teachers of CRS had high knowledge about the rationale of teaching CRS. It was also found that teachers of CRS had high knowledge of the aims of teaching CRS. It is therefore recommended that Universities that are mandated to train teachers of CRS in Ghana should include courses like curriculum studies in CRS emphasis, the rationale (philosophy and logic) and aims for the subject. This would ensure that teachers who teach CRS have adequate knowledge and the rationale and aims for teaching the subject. The Ghana Education Service (GES) in collaboration with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) should organise regular in-service trainings for the teachers of CRS.

**Keywords:** Curriculum Knowledge; Christian Religious Studies; rationale; aims; teachers.

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### Introduction

The role and place of Teachers in the educational quest is fundamental. Teachers engage their learners in the teaching and learning process and translate educational goals and aims into specific classroom objectives; that is why they are seen as the final implementers of the curriculum (Mensah, 2018). To be able to function effectively in this regard, the teacher should have knowledge of the curriculum and that would come as a result of the training he/she underwent. This means that the kind

of education and training the teacher underwent plays a major role in his/her quality and characteristics which in turn determine work output. Bagherzadeh and Tajeddin (2021) put the icing on the cake when they said: a professionally qualified teacher should be someone who has gained the communication skills, professional mind-sets, abilities and values needed for the implementation of a curriculum. This is important because the teacher regulates the day-to-day activities of teaching and learning in schools. There

is the need for teachers to have fair ideas about the curriculum of the subjects they teach. To make the subject efficient in attaining its rationale and objectives, teachers had to go through curriculum training in order to have in-depth knowledge about the curriculum for teaching. That is why Heather and Charalambos (2012) placed a lot of emphasis on quality teacher education as a vital component of the attainment of educational aims.

Livingston (2016) is of the view that, due to the place of teachers in education, they need to constantly upgrade to meet the current global demands of the teaching job and help in the development of learning opportunities. Teachers are supposed to always be abreast with current issues in teaching and learning. This brings up the issue of teacher quality which refers to the characteristics that teachers possess and this has attracted a lot of research. Fitchett and Heafner (2018) are of the view that although the concept has generated a lot of responses, it bothers basically on professionalizing teaching and qualities teachers bring on board. The teacher should know how to make the classroom environment conducive for learners for learners to freely learn without any intimidation as well as having in-depth knowledge of using physical learning materials to represent what has to be portrayed in the classroom. Hill (2007), Choppin (2009) and Heather and Charalambos (2012) have all identified curriculum knowledge as an important quality of a teacher.

According to Shulman (1986), there are requirements for teaching which are to be met by every teacher. One of these requirements is curriculum or curricular knowledge. He labels curriculum knowledge as the “tools of the trade” for teachers. These “tools of trade,” according to him, are the things that enable teachers to execute and transact the curriculum. In its widest sense, it borders on the unabridged curriculum arranged for pupils, the programmes of study and the categories of curriculum materials used to teach each subject. It again refers to a teacher’s understanding of the school’s learning programs that have been developed for the different curricular levels. The learning program encompasses specific topics and subjects at any given level, the various instructional materials available, and the array of activities that would support the learning experiences (Livingston, 2016; Ozkan, 2016). According to Carlson and Daehler (2019), curriculum knowledge of teachers refers to their familiarity with arranging

lessons in a way to improve students’ comprehension, their mindfulness of categories of assessment and skills for effective teaching. Again, Şen, Öztekin and Demirdöğen (2018) intimate that curricular knowledge comprises teachers’ understanding of the objectives in the curriculum, their familiarity with the topics they teach and their knowledge of students’ understandings to recognize the problems their students may encounter. They consider curricular knowledge as teachers’ cognizance of specific curricular programs about the topic they teach. In the context of this paper, curriculum knowledge is conceptualised as teacher’s knowledge of; the rationale for teaching, the aims of the subject, the various levels at which the subject operates and the content/topics of the subject.

Bagherzadeh and Tajeddin (2021) have opined that curriculum knowledge is one of the vital dimensions of the teacher knowledge base and that it lends itself to variations across educational and sociocultural contexts. Curriculum knowledge is essential to the attainment of the aims of every educational program including Religious Education. Metzler and Woessmann (2010) have indicated that teachers who possess high levels of curriculum knowledge impact their students’ achievement positively. It is therefore imperative that a teacher of religious education (in this context, Christian Religious Studies) possesses curriculum knowledge on the subject he/she teaches. It thus, plays an important role in shaping the teaching and learning of Christian Religious Studies in Ghana.

Christian Religious Studies as a subject at the Senior high school is rationalized to help students understand the role the Bible plays in the lives of people as a source of guidance, direction and counsel on various problems facing the world today. Consequently, Christian Religious Studies based on the Holy Bible has a framework for handling a good deal of teaching about personal and social values that are essential for individual and societal growth and development. Therefore, the understanding, appropriation and actualization of biblical ideals, virtues and concepts in the lives of the students are the prime motives of this subject (Curriculum Research and Development Division, 2010).

These positions, for some time now, have led to a lot of interest and research into the issues of teachers’ curriculum knowledge and its impact of teaching and learning across disciplines (Zhang & Stephen, 2016; Situma, 2016; Ozkan, 2016; Njoku &

Njoku, 2015; Behar & George, 1994; Khoza, 2016). Studies have shown that the teachers' knowledge of the rationale and aims for teaching a subject is paramount in the attainment of intended learning outcomes (Sahin & Suylu, 2017; Ozkan, 2016). This implies that a teacher who lacks knowledge of the rationale and aims for teaching a subject, which is a critical component of curriculum knowledge, would not promote effective learning in the classroom.

The issues of teaching and learning and the role of both the teacher and the learner have taken centre stage of research in education over the years. Most of the studies have emphasised the critical role teachers play when it comes to effective teaching. The need for teachers to be updated and clothed with the required knowledge and skills, have been underscored (Heather & Charalambos, 2012), if we want to attain educational ends. Postulating from Shulman's (1986) requirements for teaching, Fitchett and Heafner (2018) are of the view that Curriculum Knowledge is one very critical requirement for teaching. It encompasses skills that ensure that the teacher is on top of the subject he/she teaches (Bagherzadeh & Tajeddin, 2021).

The teaching of Christian Religious Studies, since it was introduced in Ghana, has gone through marked changes and reviews. These have notably been triggered by the changing perspectives on what the core mandate of the subject is (Owusu & Asare-Danso, 2018). The current nature and scope of the subject is as a result of these reviews. The subject is aimed at making the student be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the Biblical texts as set in the selected passages;
2. Analyse the religious and social background of the specified themes/passages.
3. Apply the religious and moral lessons in the set passages/themes in their lives; and
4. Adopt healthy attitudes, concepts and skills acquired from the Bible for their personal living and impact on society.

With these aims in mind, it becomes critical that the teacher of CRS possesses the required knowledge and skills to help students attain the experiences.

It is important to note that teachers of CRS in Ghana are trained from Universities that offer Education programmes where emphasis is laid on the acquisition of skills required for teaching.

Observations from supervision of teaching by student-teachers of the University of Cape Coast on the field in the Greater Accra region reveal that some appointed teachers of CRS were not trained to teach the subject. They had their training and specialization in other subject areas. It is implied that they lack indebt knowledge about the subject. Other teachers who were trained to teach the subject also display ignorance of why they teach the subject. They don't have interest in the subject because of the way their teachers taught. The lack of interest has led to decline in their performance in the subject which is closely linked to the attainment of the aims on the subject. Onovughe and Mordi (2017) has indicated that the reasons for the abysmal performance of students in the subject and the moral decadence in the Ghanaian society may include students lacking interest, teachers' inability to contextualize the biblical text to reflect the day to day lives of students and teachers' lack of pedagogical content knowledge.

Interactions with the Statistical Department of the West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) revealed that most students who participated in the 2012 to 2021 WAEC examinations performed poorly in CRS in Ghana as a whole (WAEC Chief Examiner's Reports (2022)). These reports explained that students were not well prepared for the examination. They displayed inadequate understanding concepts in the Bible and how it relates to social and moral life situations. The reports further indicated that students were not able to show appreciation and understanding of biblical texts and lacked the skills of analysing the religious and social background of some of the texts. Are these problems attributable to teachers' lack of curriculum knowledge? The continuous decline in the performance of students of CRS during West African Secondary School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) which is not peculiar to Ghana, has become an issue of discussion. The discussions have concentrated on the challenges of the teaching and learning of the subject, teasing out the major roles of both the teacher and learner.

Although the challenges related to the teaching and learning of CRS as revealed by studies are varied, scholars in the field have resorted to tackling the issues from different perspectives. Focusing on the teacher, the discussions have been premised on the requirements for teaching as stipulated by Shulman (1986). Questions have been asked if CRS teachers have the skills and experiences required for teaching

the subject. To this end, several studies (Njoku & Njoku, 2015; Annobil, 2020; Owusu & Asare-Danso, 2018, Situma, 2016; Khoza, 2016) have been conducted to answer these questions. These studies mainly concentrated on issues of teaching methods and approaches (Pedagogical knowledge), subject matter mastery (Content Knowledge) and the blend of the two (Pedagogical Content Knowledge). Most of these studies report that CRS teachers possess these skills and it should reflect in students' performance. However, the issue of low performance still linkers. Teachers' curriculum knowledge is a major contributing factor that determines the success of the teaching and learning as stipulated by Shulman (1986). With evidence in the literature, no study has been conducted in Ghana on CRS teachers' curriculum knowledge. With this gap in literature, one may ask, 'Can the issue of poor performance in CRS be attributed to CRS teachers' lack of curriculum knowledge? Put together, this study sought to find out the Curriculum Knowledge of CRS teachers in Senior High schools in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the level of CRS teachers' knowledge of the rationale for teaching CRS?
2. To what extent do CRS teachers know about the aims of teaching CRS?

## Methodology

This study resides in the positivism philosophical orientation of inquiry. Positivism duels on the assertion that a phenomenon can be observed,

measured and understood (Frost, 2011). It focuses on observation and reason as means of understanding behaviour; explanation proceeds by way of scientific description (Creswell, 2014). The study was guided by the Quantitative approach to research (Leavy, 2017). In this study, quantitative data was collected from CRS teachers to ascertain their curriculum knowledge which is a requirement for teaching. Due to this, the Cross-Sectional Survey design was employed to conduct this study. This design enabled the researchers to collect data from a large sample at one point in time during the study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018).

## Population and Sampling

The population of the study was CRS teachers in Senior high schools in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. There were 215 CRS teachers in 50 (38 public and 12 private) Senior High Schools in the Region that offer CRS as a subject (Greater Accra Regional office; GES, 2020). Employing the census method, all the 215 CRS teachers were involved in the study. The census method is where of all units, individuals, entities, objects etc of a defined population of interest are involved in a study to avoid bias in selection (Neuman, 2014; Leavy, 2017). Tracy (2013) has indicated that the census method is most appropriate to employ when one deals with a defined population that is small.

## Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire. The instrument had 34 closed ended items and was made up of five sections: Section A which had four items, was focused on the demographic characteristics of the teachers.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Teachers**

Variable	Subscale	No.	%
<b>Gender</b>	Male	143	66.5
	Female	72	33.5
<b>Area of Specialization</b>	Religion	109	50.7
	History/English	106	49.3
<b>Teaching Experience</b>	1-5 years	122	56.7
	6-10 years	49	22.8
	11 and above	44	20.5
<b>Type of School</b>	Public	140	65.1
	Private	75	34.9

Section B had six items and looked at the teachers' knowledge about the rationale for teaching CRS; Section C with six items sought information about the teachers' knowledge on the aims of teaching

CRS; Section D which had seven items focused on the knowledge of the various levels CRS operates; and finally Section E with 11 items was on teachers' knowledge of the content of CRS.

### Validity and Reliability

To ensure content and face validity, the instrument was subjected to scrutiny with the objectives of the study as a yardstick. Also, the responses from the pilot study which was conducted in 10 senior high schools in the both the Akuapim South District and the Nsawam Adoagyir Municipality of the Eastern Region with 32 teachers of CRS brought to light some ambiguous items. These items were subsequently disambiguated. The pilot test enabled the determination of the reliability of the instrument. The composite Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was determined to be 0.82 which is deemed reliable (Frost, 2011).

### Ethical Considerations

Various ethical issues (such as informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity) were taken into consideration. Appointment was made with the Greater regional office of the Ghana Education Service, to seek permission to have access to the schools. Subsequently, after permission and information on the teachers were obtained, appointments were made with the headmasters of the senior high schools. After this, data was collected with permissions from the headmasters of the schools, meeting the teachers and scheduling convenient times for data collection.

### Statistical Treatment of Data

Data was coded, processed and analysed using the Statistical Package for Service Solutions software. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations) were used to analyse data to answer the research questions. The mean scores were interpreted as follows: 4.50-5.0= Very High knowledge, 3.50-4.49 = High Knowledge, = 2.50-3.49 = Undecided, 1.50-2.49 = Low knowledge and 1.00-1.49 = Very Low knowledge.

### Findings and Discussion

This section focused on the results and discussions. The results and discussion are presented based on research questions that guided the study.

**Research Question 1:** What is the level of CRS teachers' knowledge of the rationale for teaching CRS?

The study sought to establish if CRS teachers of Christian Region had knowledge of the rationale for teaching the subject as seen in table 2. The mean scores were interpreted as follows: 4.50-5.0= Very High knowledge, 3.50-4.49 = High Knowledge, = 2.50-3.49 = Undecided, 1.50-2.49 = Low knowledge and 1.00-1.49 = Very Low knowledge.

**Table 2: Teachers' Knowledge Level of Rationale for Teaching CRS**

Statements	Agree		Disagree		Undecided		M	SD
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
CRS subject is to help students understand the role the Bible plays in the lives of people as a source of guidance.	215	100	0	0	0	0	4.3	0.2
CRS helps students understand the role the Bible plays in the lives of people as a source direction and counsel on various problems facing the world today.	215	100	0	0	0	0	4.8	0.1
The understanding, appropriation and actualization of biblical virtues in the lives of students is the motive of teaching CRS	152	70.7	63	29.3	0	0	3.9	1.1
Christian Religious Studies based on the Bible has a frame work for handling teachings about personal and social values essential for students' societal growth and development.	128	59.5	87	40.5	0	0	3.4	1.9
Religious books, particularly the Bible which is used for teaching CRS is widely used all over the world	0	0	128	59.5	87	40.5	1.8	0.9
The biblical ideals that are suited to the lives of students should be the only ideals taught during CRS lessons	87	40.5	128	59.5	0	0	2.8	0.9
<b>Average</b>							<b>3.5</b>	<b>0.9</b>

Results in Table 2 show responses of CRS teachers with regards to their agreement or disagreement to statements on the rationale for teaching CRS. All (n=215, 100%) teachers agreed that the subject is to help students understand the role the Bible plays in the lives of people as a source of guidance and also

as a source of direction and counsel on various problems facing the world today (M=4.8, SD=0.1). They also agreed that CRS helps students understand the role the Bible plays in the lives of people as a source direction and counsel on various problems facing the world today. Furthermore, the

majority (n=152, 70.7%) of the teachers agreed that the motive for teaching CRS is for students to understand, appropriate and actualize biblical virtues in their lives. Out of 215 teachers, 128 (59.5%) agreed that CRS has a framework for handling teaching about personal and social values that are essential for students' societal growth and development.

Although it was revealed that majority (n=128, 59.5%) of teachers disagreed that the Bible which is used for teaching CRS is widely used all over the world and that the biblical ideals that are suited to the lives of students should be the only ideals taught during CRS lessons, the overall mean score of 3.5 suggests that teachers had high knowledge about the rationale for teaching CRS. This can be attributed to the fact that most of the teachers who taught CRS were trained to teach it. In a similar study, Acquah and Ako (2018) observed that

teachers had high level of knowledge on the rationale for teaching a subject of natural science. In other related studies (Khoza, 2016; Ozkan, 2016; Carlson & Daehler, 2019; Şen, Öztekin, & Demirdöğen, 2018) which were all outside Ghana, findings indicated that most of teachers either had low or moderate knowledge of the rationale for teaching their respective subjects.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent do CRS teachers know about the aims of teaching CRS?

This research question sought to find out the extent to which CRS teachers in the region had knowledge about the aims for teaching the subject as reflected in table 3. The mean scores were interpreted as follows: 4.50-5.0= Very High knowledge, 3.50-4.49 = High Knowledge, = 2.50-3.49 = Undecided, 1.50-2.49 = Low knowledge and 1.00-1.49 = Very Low knowledge.

**Table 3: Teachers' Knowledge of the Aims for Teaching CRS**

Statements	Agree		Disagree		Undecided		M	SD
	%	No.	%	No.	%	%		
The teaching of CRS is to make sure students show knowledge, understanding and appreciation of biblical texts	215	100	0	0	0	0	4.5	0.3
Application of religious and moral lessons as found in biblical passages in solving current immoral issues in Ghana is one of the aims of teaching CRS	152	70.7	63	29.3	0	0	3.7	1.1
The teaching of CRS aims at students adopting healthy attitudes, concepts and skills towards their impact on society	150	69.8	0	0	65	30.2	3.7	0.4
The teaching of CRS is to help convert students to Christianity	128	59.5	0	0	87	40.5	3.6	0.4
The teaching of CRS is targeted at helping students analyse the religious and social background of the passages in the bible	128	59.5	87	40.5	0	0	3.5	1.2
The teaching of CRS is to help students appreciate the culture in the bible better than the culture of the students	87	40.5	63	29.3	65	30.2	2.8	1.2
<b>Average</b>							<b>3.6</b>	<b>0.8</b>

Results in Table 3 show all (n=215, 100%) teachers strongly agreed that the teaching of CRS is to make sure students show knowledge, understanding and appreciation of biblical texts (M= 4.5, SD=0.3). Likewise, majority (70.7%) strongly agreed that application of religious and moral lessons as found in biblical passages in solving current immoral issues in Ghana is one of the aims of teaching CRS. Furthermore, the majority (69.8%) strongly agreed that the teaching of CRS aims at students adopting healthy attitudes, concepts and skills towards their impact on society. Again, majority (n=128, 59.5%) strongly agreed that the teaching of CRS converts

students to Christianity and helps students analyse the religious and social background of passages in the bible. Finally, majority of teachers either strongly agreed (40.5%) or agreed (29.3%) that the teaching of CRS is to help students appreciate the culture in the bible better than the culture of the students. While the overall mean score was 3.6, it is likewise indicated that teachers had high knowledge about the aim of teaching CRS. This can be attributed to the fact that most of the teachers who taught CRS were trained to teach it and therefore took courses related to the CRS curriculum. Bagherzadeh and Tajeddin (2021) and Khoza (2016)

commend teachers' knowledge of the aims of teaching a subject as an essential aspect for effective curriculum implementation. Therefore, it is worth noting that teachers under investigation understood the aim of teaching CRS.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

It is concluded that the instructional lessons by teachers of CRS in the Greater Accra Region would definitely reflect the inherent logic for the teaching and learning of CRS. This means that if students' performance is poor, it cannot be attributed to teachers not having knowledge of the rationale.

Again, it can be concluded that CRS teachers in the Greater Accra Region know why (aims) they teach CRS and so can prepare and plan to teach to the attainment of educational ends. Therefore, poor performance by students, if any, cannot be attributed to them.

It is therefore recommended that Universities that are mandated to train teachers of CRS in Ghana should include courses like curriculum studies in CRS emphasis, the rationale (philosophy and logic) and aims for the subject. This would ensure that teachers who teach CRS have adequate knowledge and the rationale and aims for teaching the subject. Finally, the Ghana Education Service (GES) in collaboration with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) should organise regular in-service trainings for the teachers of CRS.

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