

Out-of- Field Teaching: The Bane of Christian Religious Education in Senior High Schools

Martin Owusu¹, Eric Mensah²

¹Department of Arts Education
University of Cape Coast, Ghana
Email: martin.owusu [AT] ucc.edu.gh

²Department of Arts Education
University of Cape Coast, Ghana
Email: eric.mensah5 [AT] ucc.edu.gh

ABSTRACT---- *This study assessed the problem of out-of-field teaching in the Berekum Municipality of Ghana. The convergent parallel design premised on the mixed method approach was employed to collect data from 20 teachers who hold different degrees instead of Bachelor of Education in Religious Education and are teaching Christian Religious Studies in Senior High Schools in the Berekum Municipality. Questionnaire and observation protocols were used to gather data. The teachers were observed twice in their classrooms during delivery. Data was analysed through the computation of frequencies and percentages and narrative reporting of the field notes. Three areas were assessed namely their capacity to use appropriate instructional strategies, resources, as well as classroom management capabilities. It was found that teachers used teacher-centered methods of teaching. Their teaching was dominated by the use of the lecture method. Most of the teachers narrated bible stories while students listen without any interactions. Teachers failed to use appropriate instructional resources in the classroom. Most of them used textbooks and bibles. Students were made to read bible verses turn by turn while teachers explain the concepts to them. Their classroom management was good. Teachers attempted to motivate their students to answer the few questions that were asked during the evaluation of the lessons. It is recommended that the Ghana Education Service should organise in-service training for the teachers to sharpen their skills in teaching. Teachers are encouraged to do teacher education programmes and teacher recruitment should be based on professional qualifications.*

Keywords--- out-of-field, strategies, resources, management, and teaching

1. INTRODUCTION

There is currently a growing concern locally and internationally about teacher quality. The many tasks of the teacher such as; selecting suitable learning activities, giving helpful explanations, asking useful questions, and evaluating students' learning form an important feature of an effective teacher. Teachers are expected to have an in-depth understanding of the subjects they teach because according to research (Goldhaber, 2003), this is a key attribute of highly effective teachers. Most often, the search for a quality teacher has been restricted to the realms of different factors (such as assessment interval, communication language, and the teacher's characteristics (age, academic and professional qualification, designation, experience, and in-service training) other than the nexus between a teacher's area of specialization and his assignment (what subject he is assigned to teach). This is to say, a quality teacher teaches not in an area he did not train but otherwise. However, a least recognized but strong factor militating against education in Ghana is the issue of out-of-field-teaching; a situation where a teacher does not have an academic major or certification in the subject he or she teaches (U.S. Department of Education, 2004 and Ingersoll, 1998). Conant (1963) and Shanker (1985) however, refer to it as "misuse of teachers" and "education's little secret" respectively. Interestingly, this problem is not only found in developing countries but developed countries. In the late 1990s for instance, the United States of America dealt with the phenomenon of out-of-field-teaching by employing various measures such as alternative certification programs; whereby college graduates could postpone formal education training, obtain an emergency teaching certificate, and begin teaching immediately. Peace Corps-like programs such as; Teach for America, was designed to recruit the "best and brightest" teachers into understaffed schools (Ingersoll, 1999). Statistics published by the Department of Education indicate that two of three teachers are out-of-field in the USA. Similarly, a study conducted in Australia by Weldon (2016) indicates that 37% of early-career (one-two years) teachers teach out-of-field while 25% of those with over five years of teaching experience also teach out-of-field. Allen (2003) maintains that the extent of a

teacher's subject knowledge does contribute to teacher effectiveness. To him, the solution lies in policymakers ensuring that teachers acquire knowledge of how to teach a subject in addition to their content knowledge. This proposition seems problematic as research has revealed that out-of-field teachers are professionally and academically qualified. That is, they possess both content and pedagogical knowledge. They become out-of-field when they teach subjects they did not major. A solution that I align myself with is that of Ingersoll (2013) when he suggested the upgrade of teacher qualifications and an increase in the number of qualified teachers in the various schools as the panacea to out-of-field teaching. Aina and Olanipekun (2015), talk of out-of-field teaching in Nigeria as being common practice. Hobbs, Silva, and Loveys (as cited in Du Plessis et al, 2015) noted that 30% of teachers in South Africa taught out-of-filed. The situation in Ghana is not different from what has been reported in the aforementioned countries. In Ghana, the issue of out-of-field teachers in Religious Education in Senior High Schools is on the rise and could be attributed to two main factors; inadequate institutions to train professional Religious Educators for the second-cycle institutions and the nature of Religious Education. Concerning the former, University of Cape Coast and Catholic University College of Ghana, Fiapre are the only institutions that have been officially mandated to train Religious and Moral Educators for second-cycle institutions in the country (Awuah-Nyamekye, 2010). The rest of the Universities in Ghana offer religious studies without any professional education courses attached to it. This creates shortages in terms of RME, CRS, IRS, and ATRS professional teachers compelling headteachers to assign teachers without an academic major in Religious Education to teach the religion-related subject. The problem, relative to the latter, concerns how the content of Religious Education (CRS, IRS, ATR) at the second-cycle level is based on religious scriptures such that, a Pastor/Reverend minister, an Imam, or Traditional Priest with knowledge of the Bible, Quran or Traditional Oral Scriptures respectively without a degree in Religious Education, is allowed to teach RME, CRS, IRS or ATR. It can be said then that, out-of-field teaching happens as a "quick fix" in schools with teacher shortages in those subjects. Du Plessis (2013) supports this by referring to the concept of out-of-field teaching as occurring when qualified teachers become unqualified when they are assigned to teach subjects or year groups for which they lack suitable qualifications. The Ghana Education Service has put forward the minimum requirement for teaching any subject in a Senior High school (either public or private) as being a Bachelor's Degree. Thus, the RME, CRS, IRS, and ATR teacher is expected to hold a Bachelor of Education Degree, commonly referred to as B.Ed. with a major in Religious Education. Alternatively, a teacher with a Bachelor of Arts Degree and a major in Religious Studies holding a Diploma in Education is also qualified to teach a Religion-related subject. This means, that an out-of-field CRS, RME, IRS, and ATR teacher in Ghana is one who did not major in or has no certification in Religious Education. This position is supported by the (U.S. Department of Education, 2004) when it said, out-of-field teaching is a situation where a teacher does not have an academic major or certification in the subject he or she teaches. This is to say, a teacher with a Bachelor of Education degree but minored in Religious Education is considered to be out-of-field should s/he be assigned to teach any Religion-related subject in the Senior High School. This view is further amplified by Weldon (2016) when he says teaching out-of-field is teaching in a subject area for which a teacher has not specialized. In Ghana, as has been observed in Nigeria by Aina and Olanipekun (2015), it is a common practice to see a qualified teacher teach a subject he/she was never trained for, at that point such a teacher becomes unqualified and an out-of-field. Out-of-field teachers can also be looked at from the angle of a teacher teaching a level s/he was not trained to teach. That is, he either teaches a class lower or above what he was been trained for. This situation is observed when teachers, trained to teach in the first-cycle institutions work their way out into second-cycle institutions without any upgrade to meet the minimum requirement to teach in a Senior High School. These two conceptions of out-of-field teaching perhaps call for a relook at the concept of out-of-field teaching to include teaching a subject or at a level of education that one did not train for and teaching a subject one majored in but not in Education.

2. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The implementation stage of the curriculum is associated with challenges. It becomes profound when people who are not specially trained to implement the curriculum are allowed to engage in the implementation process. Religious Education teachers go through theories that underpin the subject. They are taught how to teach the three main religions in Ghana scientifically. They are also taken through specific approaches to the teaching and learning of Religious Education. Their training is very different from pastoral and ministerial training. Whiles pastoral and ministerial training deals with evangelism and indoctrination, religious education gives the learner opportunity to subject religious teachings to discussion and critical analysis. Religious Education as a field of study provides people from different religious backgrounds the opportunity to bracket their faith and study the religion as it is and not as it ought to be. Theology, ministry, religious instruction, divinity, and spirituality focus on one religious teaching while religious education can be studied in an integrated manner. Religious studies is different from religious education. What makes the difference is the use of indoctrination in religious studies whiles indoctrination is frowned upon in religious education. The engagement of reverend ministers and people who have done raw religion without any knowledge of religious education pedagogy is what is referred to as out-of-field teaching.

3. CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF STUDY

Few educational issues have received attention over the years on the African continent and Ghana in particular (Mohamedbhai, 2014). In Ghana, the concern for classrooms in the various Senior High Schools to be staffed with qualified teachers has been a major concern for the major stakeholders in education such as the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) and the Ghana Education Service (GES) among others to rid the classrooms off unqualified or out-of-field teachers. Among the most recent measures is the staff auditing conducted by the Ghana Education Service with the sole aim of getting Senior High School teachers without a Degree in Education out of the classroom. The latest one is the Teacher Licensure Exam introduced by the National Teaching Council in September 2018, with the sole aim of improving teacher quality in Ghana and gaining the tacit approval of His Excellency President Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo (Mensah, Acquah, Frimpong & Babah, 2020).

Despite all efforts made by these major stakeholders in Education, the issue of unqualified teachers in Senior High Schools remains a major challenge in Ghana's education sector, cutting across all subject areas including Christian Religious Education. The nature of CRS makes it susceptible to attracting out-of-field teachers due to its dependence on the Holy Bible as its major source of content. Thus, anyone with knowledge of the Bible is wrongly deemed knowledgeable and therefore qualified to teach CRS. Ingersoll (2013) suggests that staffing classrooms with qualified teachers, upgrading the qualifications of teachers, and increasing the number of teachers in the various schools is the panacea to out-of-field teaching. Although much of his suggestions are being put into use in Ghana currently, the problem of out-of-field teaching continues to persist. This reality dawned on the researchers in November 2017 during the distribution of questionnaires to CRS teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality of Ghana. The researchers discovered during the data analysis that, most of the CRS teachers in the Municipality were out-of-field. Also, it was realized after an extensive review of literature that very little had been done about out-of-field teachers in Ghana and non in the Berekum Municipality of Ghana relative to Religious Education. These reasons informed the conduct of a study to look at out-of-field teachers being the bane of Religious Education. According to Weldon (2016), out-of-field CRS teachers lack both pedagogical and content knowledge about the subject they teach. As a result, the New South Wales Quality Teaching Model of Pedagogy (NSW QTM) which according to Yeigh (2008), links students learning to the quality of pedagogical strategies a teacher brings to the teaching and learning process shall be adapted in determining out-of-field RME, CRS, and IRS teachers' pedagogical knowledge.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was guided by the following research questions;

1. How well can out-of-field teachers use learner-centered instructional strategies in teaching CRS?
2. How well are out-of-field teachers in the Berekum Municipality of Ghana able to use instructional resources in teaching CRS?
3. To what extent are out-of-field teachers able to manage classrooms?

5. METHODOLOGY

The convergent parallel design premised on the mixed method approach was employed to collect data from 20 teachers who hold different degrees instead of Bachelor of Education in Religious Education and are teaching Christian Religious Studies in Senior High Schools in the Berekum Municipality. The population of the study included all Christian Religious Studies teachers in Senior High Schools in the Berekum Municipality. For ethical reasons, the names of the schools involved in the study were not included. In all, 20 teachers participated in the study. A census was conducted in the administration of the questionnaire while seven key informants were purposively selected and observed. Questionnaire and observation protocols were the main instruments used for this research. The questionnaire was divided into sections with each section paying attention to the objectives formulated to guide the study. After the collection and coding of quantitative data, an analysis was done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 27.0). Data for the study were analysed through the computation of frequencies and percentages. Narrative reporting was conducted for the qualitative data.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

How well are out-of-field teachers in the Berekum municipality able to use learner-centered instructional strategies in teaching CRS

Table 1 will present the results on how well out-of-field teachers in the Berekum Municipality can use learner-centered instructional strategies in teaching CRS.

Table 1: How Well Out-Of-Field Teachers in the Berekum Municipality Can Use of Learner-Centered Instructional Strategies in Teaching CRS

Statements	Very Well No. (%)	Well No. (%)	Not At All No. (%)
Use of lecture method in teaching CRS	18(90.0)	2(10.0)	0(0.0)
Use of discussion method in teaching CRS	0(0.0)	3(15.0)	17(85.0)
Use of question-and-answer method in teaching CRS	0(0.0)	10(50.0)	10(50.0)
I take my students on a field trip as part of CRS lessons	0(0.0)	1(5.0)	19(95.0)
Use of resource persons in teaching CRS	0(0.0)	1(5.0)	19(95.0)
Use of role-play in teaching CRS	0(0.0)	1(5.0)	19(95.0)
Use of dramatization in teaching CRS	0(0.0)	1(5.0)	19(95.0)
Use of lecturette in teaching CRS	1(5.0)	7(35.0)	12(60.0)
Use of brainstorming in teaching CRS	0(0.0)	3(15.0)	17(85.0)
Use of storytelling method in teaching CRS	11(55.0)	2(10.0)	7(35.0)

Source: Field Data (2021).

Table 1 shows the results on how well out-of-field teachers in the Berekum Municipality can use learner-centered instructional strategies in teaching CRS. It can be seen from Table 2 that most of the teachers use lecture, question-and-answer, and storytelling methods in teaching CRS. In that angle, the majority 18(90.0%) responded that they use the lecture method very well and 2(10.0%) responded that they use the lecture method well. In addition, it can be stated categorically that even though CRS teachers use the question-and-answer method half of 10(50.0%) of them use it well and 10(50.0%) of them do not use it at all. Finally, on the use of the storytelling method in teaching CRS, it was found that 11(55.0%) use the method very well, 2(10.0%) use it well and 7(35.0%) did not use it at all. Most of the teachers used lecture and storytelling teaching strategies which are teacher-centered and failed to use question and answer methods, discussion, role-play, dramatization, brainstorming, and field trips which are learner-centered teaching strategies. In teaching religious studies, it is imperative for teachers to assume the role of facilitator. The students are to be guided to explore and engage in activities that will help them to acquire knowledge. It is unfortunate that according to the teachers, teacher-centered methods dominate their teaching.

Data gathered from the observation section confirmed the fact that teachers used teacher-centered strategies in teaching CRS. The main instructional strategy observed was textbook reading. Students read the RSV Bible as the teacher explained. The teachers generally demonstrated mastery of the subject matter. Attitudes and moral competencies were not developed. The few students who attempted to answer evaluation questions wanted to speak Ghanaian Language because they were finding it difficult to speak English. It was found out that some of the teachers hold a diploma in education but not even one course was done in the area of religious education. Some of them offered BA(ARTS) specializing in religious studies and sociology. Instead of writing notes on the board, most of the teachers dictated for students to write. In one instance, the teacher started the lesson by making one of the students read through notes she dedicated to correct mistakes. Acceptance of chorus answers and Mannerism- Teachers repeating the word “What” was rampant in their teaching. Some technical concepts were given to the children to note and find a dictionary meaning for them. Teachers lacked understanding of religious’ language. Those who did not understand some religious concepts gave them to the students as an assignment instead of explaining them to them. Christian Religious Studies lessons were generally teacher-centered and the use of lecture method dominated. Teachers seemed to have no knowledge concerning pedagogy in religious education.

How well are out-of-field teachers in the Berekum Municipality able to use instructional resources in teaching CRS?

The second research question sought to find out how well out-of-field teachers in the Berekum Municipality can use instructional resources in teaching CRS, The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Out-Of-Field Teachers Use of Instructional Resources in Teaching CRS

Statement	Very Well No. (%)	Well No. (%)	Not At All No. (%)
Teacher uses textbook/Handout to teach CRS	16(80.0)	4(20.0)	0(0.0)
Teacher Uses charts to teach CRS	1(5.0)	0(0.0)	19(95.0)
Teacher uses pictures to teach CRS	1(5.0)	0(0.0)	19(95.0)
Teacher uses film strips to teach CRS	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	20(100.0)
Teacher uses chalkboards to teach CRS	4(20.0)	3(15.0)	13(65.0)
Teacher uses video tapes to teach CRS	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	20(100.0)
Teacher uses slide/ projector to teach CRS	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	20(100.0)
Teacher uses radio cassettes to teach CRS	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	20(100.0)
Teacher makes use of community festivals to teach CRS	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	20(100.0)
Teacher takes students to museums when teaching CRS	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	20(100.0)
Teacher takes students to church when teaching CRS	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	20(100.0)
Teacher takes students to religious sites when teaching CRS	7(35.0)	0(0.0)	13(65.0)

Source: Field Data (2021)

Results from Table 2 show how well out-of-field teachers in the Berekum Municipality can use instructional resources in teaching CRS. From the results, it can be deduced that most of the teachers used textbooks/Handouts to teach CRS. This is evident from the results as 16(80.0%) responded very well, 4(20.0%) responded well and none of them responded not at all. It was observed that the main TLR was the Bible (RSV) and CRS textbooks. Audiovisual and community-based resources were not in use at all.

Information gathered from the observation protocols attests to the fact that teachers failed to use appropriate instructional resources in teaching CRS. During the instructional hours observed, the main teaching-learning resources that all the students were made to provide were the Revised Standard Version of the Bible prescribed for all Christian Religious Studies students in Ghana. Apart from the Bible pamphlets were mostly used. Students were made to read portions of the bible and pamphlet periodically. The chalkboard and markerboard were not used well. The teachers rarely wrote on them. The reason behind teachers' failure to use instructional resources is not known. Instructional resources might not be available and teachers did not see their use as important. None of the teachers observed used any resources apart from the bible and pamphlet. Tuimur and Chemwei (2015), assert that learning occurs best when a multiplicity of senses are involved, other than overreliance on verbal communication alone. Reading and listening to bible reading and explanations make use of only two senses. They continue to posit that instructional materials are quite important for effective teaching. Thus from the forgoing effective teaching of CRS is not guaranteed. Lockheed (1991) says that instructional materials are critical ingredients in learning and that the curriculum could not be easily implemented without them.

To what extent are out-of-field teachers able to manage classrooms?

Out-of-field teachers CRS were observed during instructional hours to ascertain how they were able to manage their classrooms. Field notes were gathered. To gather data that meets a true reflection of their classroom management practices, each teacher was observed twice. Several factors enhance the readiness of the learners to learn and some of these include a positive home environment, a positive classroom environment, and the teacher attitude among others. A positive interaction between these factors will enhance effective teaching and learning. Teachers are expected to use a wide range of skills and techniques to keep students attentive and make them active participants in the lesson delivery process. From the field notes gathered, teachers' ability to control the class was quite good just that the level of participation of the learners was very low. The classroom atmosphere was serene may be due to the presence of the researchers. Teachers failed to encourage initiative and creativity among the students. Individual leadership skills were not developed due to their inability to group students during instruction. Tangible rewards were not given in any of the lessons observed. Only verbal motivation was used and even those who used them made it monotonous by sticking to only clapping of hands. Looking at the aforementioned areas that were assessed, it can be concluded that the out-of-field teacher's classroom management practices were very poor. This inability to manage classrooms could be attributed to the failure to go through teacher professional enhancing courses that are designed to sharpen their skills in teaching CRS. With this, Shanker (1985) argues that professionalization is needed to help teachers improve their status and attain better compensation and a greater voice in decision making. Managing classroom involves making a lot of right decision and only professional teachers can make those decisions.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

It can be concluded that out-of-teaching poses a big challenge in religious education. The effect of out-of-field teaching on teachers' ability to use learner-centered instructional strategies, resources, and classroom management practice is magnanimous. Excessive use of lecture methods prevents the student from participating fully in lessons. Most of the teachers narrated bible stories while students listen without any interactions. Failure to use appropriate instructional resources leads to boredom in the classroom and teachers dominate instruction. There is minimal interaction between teachers and students when students are not adequately motivated to participate in a lesson. Out-of-field teachers could develop only two generic skills namely fluency and listening. Classroom management and control may be good but that does not follow that there would be assimilation. Multi-methodic teaching promotes understanding than the use of a single strategy in teaching.

- Excessive use of lecture methods prevents students from participating fully in lessons Out-of-field teachers can develop only two generic skills namely fluency and listening.
- Failure to use appropriate instructional resources leads to boredom in the classroom and teachers dominate instruction.
- Classroom management and control may be good but that does not follow that there would be assimilation. There is minimal interaction between teachers and students when students are not adequately motivated to participate in a lesson.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Ghana Education Service should organise workshop/in-service training for the teachers to sharpen their skills in teaching. Teachers should embark on continuing professional education. Teachers should do teacher education programmes and recruitment should be based on professional qualifications. Teachers should use multiple motivational strategies to sustain students interest.

8. REFERENCES

- Aina, J. K., & Olanipekun, S. S. (2015). A review of teacher self-efficacy, pedagogical content knowledge and out-of-field teaching: Focusing on Nigerian teachers. *International Journal of Elementary Education*, 4(3), 80-85.
- Allen, M. (2003). *Eight questions on teacher preparation: What does the research say?* Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.
- Awuah-Nyamekye, S. (2010). Religious education in a democratic state: The case of Ghana. *Cell*, 233, 244-308.
- Conant, J. (1963). *The education of American teachers*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Du Plessis, A., Carroll, A., & Gillies, R. M. (2015). Understanding the lived experiences of novice out-of-field teachers in relation to school leadership practices. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 43(1), 4-21.
- Du Plessis, D. E. (2013) *Understanding the out-of-field teaching experience*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Queensland.
- Goldhaber, D. D., & Brewer, D. J. (2003). Does teacher certification matter? High school teacher certification status and student achievement. *Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 22, 129-145.
- Ingersoll, R. (1998). *The problem of out-of-field teaching*. Retrieved from <http://repository.upenn.edu/gsepubs/137>
- Ingersoll, R. M. (1998). The problem of out-of-field teaching. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 79(10), 773-776.
- Ingersoll, R. M. (1999). The problem of under qualified teachers in American secondary schools. *Educational Researcher*, 28(2), 26-37.
- Ingersoll, R. M. (2002). *Out-of-field teaching, educational inequality, and the organization of schools: An exploratory analysis*. Retrieved from <http://depts.james.washington.edu.pdf>
- Kochhar, S.K., (1991). *The teaching of social studies*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Ltd.
- Lockheed, M.E., (1991). *Improving primary education in developing countries*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Mensah, R. O., Acquah, A., Frimpong, A., & Babah, P. A. (2020). Towards improving the quality of basic education in Ghana. Teacher licensure and matters arising: Challenges and the way forward. *Journal of Education and Social Policy*, 7(3), 117-127.
- Mohamedbhai, G. (2014). Massification in higher education institutions in Africa: Causes, consequences and responses. *International Journal of African Higher Education*, 1(1), 1-13.
- Shanker, A. (1985). *About education: Education's dirty little secret*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com>
- Shanker, A. (1985). The making of a profession. *American Educator: The Professional Journal of the American Federation of Teachers*, 9(3), 10.
- Tuimur, N. H. & Chemwei, B. (2015). Availability and use of instructional materials in the teaching of conflict and conflict resolution in primary schools in Nandi North district, Kenya *International Journal of Education and Practice*, 3(6): 224-234 available online at <http://pakinsight.com/?ic=journal&journal=61>

- U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. (2004). *Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Weldon, P. R (2016). *Out-of-field teaching in Australian secondary schools*. Australia: Australian Council for Educational Research.
- Yeigh, T. (2008). Quality teaching and professional learning: uncritical reflections of a critical friend. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education (Online)*, 33(2), 1-15.