Subject Implementation in the Senior High Schools: The Perspectives of Christian Religious Studies Students

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Abstract
This study explored the opinions of Senior High School students in the Cape Coast metropolis on what they opined on the implementation of the Christian Religious Studies (CRS) subject offered in their schools. The students' opinions were sought to ascertain and add to literature, some effects that absence of knowledge on subject implementation including learners' perspective on the CRS subject have on the CRS' subject implementation in schools. A historical and empirical review provided the grounds for the study. Semi structured interview was used for the collection of qualitative data from eleven students. The findings which were analysed with the thematic analysis strategy from the interview guide revealed that students think the Fidelity approach to CRS implementation is good yet the Adaptation approach was found out that if it is used along the Fidelity approach would help achieve more success in the subject. On implementation requirements, students revealed that day to day contact with teachers help successful implementation however, inadequate resources in the subject's implementation have been a worry. On a whole, although learners learn CRS with other combined subjects, they think more should be done in the subject area to encourage many learners to opt for CRS' studies in order to promote national development through morality and critical thinking.

Keywords: Subject Implementation, Christian Religious Studies (CRS), Implementers.

Introduction

Christian Religious Studies (CRS) has been part of the many subjects introduced and taught by the colonial masters from the first day of the start of formal education here in Ghana (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975, cited in Asare-Danso, 2011). This activity gained grounds after it was taken over by the Basel and other missionaries who expanded the education in all the aspects of education we have now. They took the education from the castles to the people in the various societies and the indigenous embraced this practices which before were limited to only children born and bred in the circumspatial of the castles (mulattos). The education included vocation, health, humanities and social sciences. Later, many indigenous people were willing to have a formal education yet the Basel missionaries' educational practices were found not all over Ghana. Nevertheless, there were other missionaries helping with the education including the teaching of Christian Religious Studies in its principles and doctrines in Ghana. Education, therefore, became a holistic activity which was also run by the government under the set Gordon Guggisberg Educational Ordinance. CRS, as of the time, was taught primarily to indoctrinate the indigenous people who had contacts with the colonial masters (Cobbina, 2003). CRS was taught at various levels of education. It was taught in the basic schools, involving the primary schools,

the middle schools and even at the advance levels of education which included the universities. The subject later became an optional academic discipline taught in most Senior High Schools found in the country.

As a subject, it has passed through a number of umbrella names, titles and reviews. Between 1951 and 1966 for example, Dr Kwame Nkrumah implemented the Accelerated Development Plan which saw CRS taught under the umbrella name Religious Studies and it was titled Religious Instruction. It was later changed to Scriptures in 1960. From that period to now, the subject has seen a consistent implementation with the current name, Christian Religious Studies (CRS), although there had been some number of reviews in the education sector which had affected the subject's implementation. Notable among the reviews were the Dzobo Committee and the Anamuah Mensah Committee reviews done in the 1971 and 2002 respectively. These reviews always affected contents and sometimes, the methodology teachers of CRS use when teaching. Implementers were demanded from to make sure they adhere to changes from reviews because of the philosophy of education the country has established and continue to spearhead. With such philosophy, the fidelity approach to implementation has always been the common practical approach that most Ghanaian schools adopt for subjects' implementation because the subjects are designed and developed at the national level and for the nation's consumption.

Interestingly, there have always been problems day in and day out with CRS subject implementation even after reviews. Stakeholders, mostly teachers, do complain on problems which are either resolved or not attended to. Although the problems keep coming up day in and day out, everything done to resolve such problems are for the interest of the subject. The very basic solutions which are being implemented in the schools by curriculum leaders are sometimes done to resolve cases and others neglected because the problems are either very complicated or expensive to be resolved. However, most of these challenges or problems faced from the implementation processes are generally what the teachers and designers happen to face over and over, just that these times, they are voluminous. What is clear is that little do curriculum leaders do to bring on board learners who happen to have the curriculum implemented on. Perhaps, the learners are deemed not knowledgeable enough to contribute or learners happen to end their three year implementation process (as it is the case of senior high schooling in Ghana) without the need for a review. It is therefore important to find out from the point of view of the students on what they also think of the CRS subject implementation in schools in order to assist further redress in the subject whenever it becomes necessary.

Subject Implementation in Schools

Curriculum Approaches

The three approaches to curriculum or subject implementation according to Fullan (1991) and Snyder, J., Bolin, F., & Zumwalt, K. (1992) are the fidelity, the enactment and the adaptation approaches. With the three approaches to be discussed, the only way through which most implementers put desired subject's objectives to work and accomplished here in Ghana is the fidelity approach. This fidelity approach is used because the contents and objectives set for a specific subject are set and designed centrally. The curriculum is created outside the classroom by experts and users (teachers and learners) are to use the product with vivid accordance to the specifications laid down by the designers and the experts of the curriculum. The final implementers are to do exactly as they have been mandated in the curriculum. The philosophy, objectives and the subject matter are kept and exercised as they are and users are to remain loyal to the requirements as such.

The second approach which is very unusual in its use on Ghanaian curricula is the enactment approach. It is very much used for or in the interest of users. The enactment approach ensures that users create their own curriculum and put such created whole to work in the classroom. The situation calls for a curriculum that suit individuals and the nation as a whole however, it does not come from a centralized body but the individuals in the classrooms or the school's setting including what both institutions accept to be fit to implement.

The third is the adaptation approach which ensures implementers change situations to fit needs that are necessary to be met in the classroom as and when they become important. It thus ensures there is never a pre-specified content, objective and methodology to set implementation in motion. It is recorgnised as a dynamic approach which suit change of time.

Subject Implementation Stages

Rogers (1983) and Cobbold (1999) identifies and affirms respectively, three stages through which a subject or curriculum is implemented. These stages, he identified to be the re-intervention, clarification and routinization. The re-intervention is described as the stage which seeks to modify situations in order to have success with implementation. It ensures that whatever the situation, best modules are adapted to cater for the challenges faced and resolved to suit the planned curriculum to achieve what it was developed to achieve. In a simple inadequately resourced classroom for example, teachers could explain either the use of a tool or how a tool looks like. The motive in the context of the re-intervention stage is to make up for the absence of the tool or its use. Therefore, the stage is tailored to achieve the best whenever there is a difficulty.

The clarification stage also puts to work changes observed in the re-intervention stage. It ensures that what to do be done with a subject or curriculum is done well and also, near perfection. Based on the example given in the first stage, users of the curriculum or a subject then put to work the oral description of the tool previously taught. This time, based on images imagined in the persons' minds' eye. It is probably because the image has been seen before and thus, to clarify content.

The routinization stage is the last stage where the activity to suit the implementation has now become part of the implementers. It is said that mostly implementers have become abreast with the subject and that the implement might not need the contents and the objectives of the subject to implement. They can now do whatever activity as if it was their own designed curriculum. They however make reference to the curriculum in use (the philosophy) to ensure they are on the right path.

Requirements for Subject Implementation

The first requirement Pratt (1980) talks about is personal contact. The contact has to do with the designers and the final implementers and in the classroom, the teacher and the students (Stenhouse, 1979 & Wolfson, 1997 in University of Zimbabwe, 1995). Pratt (1980) talks about the fact that designers should start to develop personal contacts with the users even before beginning work on the curriculum because it seeks to clear all doubts about the curriculum. When in the classroom, teachers are to regularly be in the classrooms to ensure they are either teaching or facilitating content delivery. The contact also involves the parents and students and such contacts could lead to awareness of societal and students' needs. The absence of these makes the teacher and the schools vulnerable, not knowing what to do and leads to difficulty in implementing the curriculum (Cremin, 1961).

Communication is the second requirement. It necessitated that when there is clarity and understanding in whatever might be communicated, implementation becomes successful. Teachers are entreated to speak the language of the learners just as developers are required to put

to work language that is basic for teachers' consumption and not jargons and registers for developers. It is also demanded of teachers to be concise and specific with objectives' delivery because of individual differences in relation to comprehension in language use whenever implementation is at play and thus communicating. The situation is said to ensure clarity of communication and understanding for consumers and its absence would definitely create problems for the implementers.

Besides interest groups, the school's environment, the culture or the society, instructional resources, supervisors and many others, Pratt (1980) identifies resources for curriculum or subject implementation to be basically time, teachers (personnel) and materials, Pratt finds that they are very crucial when it comes to implementing the curriculum or the subject. It was evident that every educational programme requires time on the schools timetable to be able to be successful. Such time provides for the period of disseminating the content of the curriculum. Time is a major resource in whenever the curriculum is involved.

Also, teachers are important requirements since they are the final implementers of the programme in the classrooms. Their skills, knowledge and attitude are very important to help the designed product. They are specialized individuals to put the designed product to use. The teachers of the subject should have expertise in the subject; they should also have pedagogy and must be abreast with the design of the curriculum. Teachers should be given in-service trainings as and when they are necessary because these help the teachers to adapt to new trends and thus ensuring success in implementing a subject to ensure achieved rationale and objectives set for the curriculum is attained.

Lastly on resources, textbooks and equipment are to be provided to users of the curriculum. The presence of these materials, no matter what the subject is, is crucial to the success of the programme. These resources when absent, also become barriers.

The final requirement talked about is motivation or incentive. It is also found that if people are not well motivated, they do not give off their best. It is still interesting to note that although teachers have had increase in salaries with other incentives coming on board since the single spine salary structure introduction some teachers may still prefer to run away for more motivation should they be presented with better paid jobs away from the profession they have now. The absence of motivation or incentives is very detrimental to implementation.

Inhibiters of Successful Subject Implementation

According to Synder, et al, (1992), there are five factors that inhibit subject implementation. They include teachers' lack of clarity about innovation; teachers' lack of skills and knowledge needed to conform to the new model; unavailability of required instructional materials; incompatibility or organisational arrangements with the innovation; and staff's lack of motivation. These I suppose are not different from the views of Pratt (1980). However, these factors do persist in the Ghanaian milieu of day to day subjects' implementation. Politicians keep bringing up policies with very little experts' judgements and off they get into service and such reforms are implemented. In the schools, the same knowledge and skills that were taught decades ago in the lecture theatres are the same taught now without a slight change of contents and notes. The underlying fact is that these factors can either militate against or work for the success of implementing a curriculum. Programme developers are therefore called upon to always take these into consideration when designing the curriculum no matter the level or the context the programme is meant for.

Synder, et al, (1992)'s naming of the inhibiters of successful subject implementation seem to tell that in a country where priority is given to a centralized curriculum and its development, curriculum leaders including developers and implementers could keep having discussions and recognising these issues every day on implementation even in CRS (in Ghana). Yet it seems implementers and the stakeholders have accepted these inhibiters to be chronic issues or cankers rather than tackling them and resolving them as such thereby, making sure they are issues of

extinct. It is very tragic to find out that hardly do or are learners who partake and, thus, are the final consumers of this whole curriculum and its issues really contacted when a situation or situations for solving these and many issues are on board.

Research Focus

Pratt (1980) established that the two forms of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic, emphatically, has the former to be more effective than extrinsic. The explanation being that when teachers realize learners are interested in the subject and thus, are performing well, teachers feel more motivated and this to the teachers is more effective than being paid with more money including other material incentives. If the teachers are motivated by the crucial development the subject has for the consumers (learners) it therefore, becomes wasteful spending time convincing teachers about the subject because intrinsically they are motivated to implement the subject. However, the presence of both types of motivation are important so far as a subject's implementation is involved and if the teachers find themselves in this pool of ecstasy, probably, it could be one of the situations learners may perceive of a subject's implementation: very interesting without issues. If such could be the state of teachers and learners in a subject area and specifically CRS, all might be positively in bed with the implementation of the CRS subject. However, the opposite of such a situation therefore leaves one with no choice than to investigate learners' opinions about the implementation of subjects in various Senior High Schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis specifically looking at CRS learners because of an earlier interaction with such learners in the various schools.

The approaches, stages and the requirements for subject implementation informed data acquisition and also served as the themes for analysis. The findings will inform implementers on the general perspective of CRS learners towards the subject. It will inform other stakeholders to involve in good and achieving practices to help the successful holistic implementation of not only CRS but other subjects in various schools.

The Method

The study adopted an interpretive constructivist approach to investigate students' opinions of the implementation of the Christian Religious Studies subject. The reason for the choice of this approach was that the approach helps to critically understand opinions and reactions of respondents towards a phenomenon under study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Grbirch, 2007). The approach also helped to develop a more publicly analysis which helps to speaks to a wide range of sectors be it social, cultural, theoretical, and any other contexts deem fit to be used (Larkin, et al, 2006). The population for the study comprised the final year CRS students (2017/2018 academic year) of eleven Senior High Schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis. These students happened to engage in implementation activities of the subject for the past two years and they stand in pole position to assist with what they have accrued in thoughts about the subject and its implementation. The convenient sampling technique was employed to select each student from the eleven schools to serve as the sample size for the study. It was adequate to use the eleven students to make the qualitative study because each student represented a school and that made the findings even better (Boyd, 2001).

A semi structured interview guide guided the data collection exercise. It was designed by the researcher with experts judgements used to ascertain its face and content validity. Member checking and credibility ensured its validity. Respondents were interviewed individually because of the various locations of schools. They were first given thorough information about the implementation of the CRS subject and were made to respond to an interview guide. The issues interviewed were based on issues that emanated from the literature. In all, the discussion guide was made up of two sections, all from the approaches, stages and requirements for subject

implementation. Each section addressed an issues reviewed in the areas of the literature discussed. Sub issues were discussed under their corresponding section. Probing questions were also employed to further obtain thorough understanding of respondents' opinions and experiences. All discussions were taped and transcribed into text. Thematic analysis was then used to present findings and backed by issues discussed from the literature.

Results and Discussion

Opinions of learners about the implementation stages and approaches teachers use

Learners' opinions were sought on the implementation stages and the approaches teachers use. Learners revealed that the Fidelity approach to CRS implementation was good yet the Adaptation approach if also used would help achieve more success in the subject although the subject was developed centrally. It was evident that the students were not aware of any of the stages and approaches used to implement the subject. However, when they were briefly told and explained to, it was found out that their views were exactly the differences which scholars and educationist debates on when telling which approach should be the best to be adopted in subject implementation. After students understood the approaches including the stages implementation go through and differences in their use, a student said, "*I think the stages explains why we have different ways through which teachers, based on their years of experiences, do teach specific topics differently from other teachers. Sometimes, it is very difficult to understand from the start but I never knew some (*teachers) *modify their approaches to get the message of the content sent across to all students…and then after a while, we could flow with them (*teachers) *anytime we tend to meet them in the class when they are to teach their subjects areas*". Nevertheless, teachers are to practice the continual reference to the stated rationale and objectives set for a subject. This makes them (teachers) to deliver just as have been designed for the students to help achieve and keep up to the philosophy and goals set centrally and deemed fit to help contents imparted to the students.

Again on the approaches, what appeared to be pleasant to the learners was the Mutual Adaptation approach. It was said that if there would be a mutual adaptation approach used alongside the fidelity approach during the subject's implementation, both could help successful implementation to be achieved. However, such a proposal cannot be accepted in Ghana since every educational activity takes a centralized point of view. Also, it was found out that if both the mutual and the fidelity approach could be adopted at the same time, could help ensure both the rationale and objectives set for the subject are realised perfectly and dynamic. A learner affirmed, "*The Bible is a huge book and we don't have a fair idea about where to locate all issues we are confronted with vividly… it's only when we come across such contents which figuratively answers the situation we are confronted with, that is when we are able to recall situations to resolve the situations… if implementers can address situations like that with concepts which generally looks like using the mutual adaptation during studies, I think it is better than having a content set by some experts for us to adhere to strictly…like that of the fidelity approach.*"

Another respondent claimed that learners know most of the stories in CRS so the subject should be made such that teachers and learners can sit in the classroom to create their own contents just by being offered the philosophy of the country. These and other responses presented the different shades to how CRS should be implemented in the eyes of students however, since our national educational philosophy and developmental activities are imbibed in what is produced nationally, we may have to continue with the fidelity approach to implement the CRS subject and ensure we fall within the frame of being loyal to what has been designed and implemented for years. On this, one concluded, "*…we should stick to what experts have designed because they know best, especially with issues of life and if they have decided such issues are to be dealt with examples from scriptures, and thus strictly adhering to them, like what our teachers I think do, who are we (students) to refute such brilliant constructions?*"

Opinions of learners on the requirements for implementation

On personal contact the students opined that although they do not know the requirements for implementation but after they were briefed, it was attested that designers and developers cannot call all students to bring on board their verdict on the CRS subject in order to make reviews or reforms to help attain successful and perfect implementation. However, they expressed that the very few learners who could be contacted could be ensured by having a sample that represent the nation in order to review the subject with responses of learners to help implementation. It was said that if we have a sampled population of learners representing every locality in the country, such numbers of learners' views would become relevant for the design and for the implementation as well. One stated, *"I think contact with good learners in the country can also be an effective way to always produce and put to work better content and also, tackle needs of the subject in the course that relate to its implementation… I don't know those who are called to give their consent but whatever and whoever they are, I believe they also give fruitful ideas…I just wish students are really contacted…"* Such confirms some alleged issues which one states that indeed Curriculum Research Development Division (CRDD), now National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA), do not contact learners whenever there is a review.

It was also found to be relevant to contact parents because students established that their parents had choices in their bid to undergo the implementation in the subject. A few of the student respondents indicated that their parents never liked the idea of them studying CRS. When probed, it was found out that the parents' reasons and attitudes toward the subject include that the children might become priests and might not have better jobs because CRS, as a subject, only teach all that there are to know about the Bible and to be Christians instead of ensuring good or better jobs. So, it has been on some individuals' thought that it is not of value to be in the CRS classrooms for implementation. It is therefore relevant that parents also get involved or in contact with the subject at the implementation level and even before including the design stage of the curriculum. It is at least to brief parents on job opportunities, benefits of the subject; including the importance to the learners and their parents, the society and the nation as a whole. It was not surprising to hear parents' concerns on educating to find good jobs. Possibly, that is what education has become: the route for a person to get a good job to do and not to improve the society.

In like manner to the aforementioned discussed, the contact can even grow much popular with parents on the subject and thus deemed CRS relevant not only in the schools but in the houses as well. This is because such individuals (parents) would always get to be involved in CRS' implementation to even create the awareness in helping resolve the holistic societal issues related to aims and the objectives for which CRS was implemented including the biblical assistance.

Pratt, (1980) stipulated that such contact ensures needs of mentioned stakeholders are resolved. He concludes on this that in the absence of such practices, teachers and schools are vulnerable and not knowing what to do. They may end up implementing a subject that only affects the cognitive and motor skills but not the affective domain. This difficulty in implementing the curriculum partially may also eradicate the subject from the national curriculum because of its dwindling relevancy and loss of interest among future learners.

Regarding communication, learners opined that communication is the only way they could get the understanding of what the subject really wants to achieve with the learners of the subject. It was observed that sometimes, learners get lost or are unable to follow through implementation at any given point of learning because they might not comprehend a speech or an important content taught. It was proposed that when the language becomes familiar and

simple, it entice them to do well during implementation. One noted, *"If the language we get communicated to is always in our local language or we get the opportunity to be taught in the local language, some vital issues to really understand the objectives for a topic are well communicated, I think the majority of students in our class can match up to what is expected of us during teaching and learning."* It was not farfetched but a reality on grounds that indeed that is the milieu of some Ghanaian schools. Some of the Senior High Schools in Ghana apart from the graded A schools do have majority of students who cannot read or write well in the English language yet the English language is the medium of implementation.

Again, it was found out that teachers especially, novice and student-teachers sometimes use *'big English'* language so even what the content want to tell the students *"…passes from one ear and through the other and it's gone. We hardly have time to even look up for the meaning of the words. Also, some teachers are not friendly so we cannot ask them for the meaning of words used"*. This I deemed a negative attitude from teachers who happen to be knowledge imparters and therefore such practices should be done away with because what the students learn from the teachers are both directly and indirectly put into practise by learners. No wonder it was found out from a respondent who wished not to be a teacher because of a CRS teacher's attitude towards him although teachers might act in a manner that would bring learners' attention and interest onto a subject's implementation. A learner remarked, *"Teachers don't speak well of CRS. When it happens like this it makes us feel we are not part of the school and that we seem strange to them because there is no respect for the subject"*

On resources, learners identified that CRS is one of the subjects with very few resources in terms of personnel and materials for implementation. On personnel, learners confirmed that sometimes they tend not to have a teacher in their class to teach them. Some schools do not even have Religious educators whilst others have only a teacher assisting implementation and if he or she happens to be on other assignments, the class had to forfeit that day in meeting the teacher. This situation affirms Owusu & Asare-Danso (2014) findings on CRS when they indicated the CRS subject has inadequate personnel to implement. Learners again attested that they cannot confirm whether there are textbooks to support the content from the Bible they use. A respondent noted, *"Although some of us do not use pamphlets, the pamphlets have become the notes many of us rely on. It simplifies the issues we are to learn from the Bible"*. However, it was established that some of the pamphlets do not tell exactly the content the Bible tells. There were some contradictions to what the biblical content had to be taught learners. Some of the pamphlets which were used were mostly recommended by the teacher implementers. These were in the interest that the contents would be beefed up with values noted to be said directly in the Bible.

It was also revealed that learners loved to be taught using movies and role plays during CRS' implementation because the two teaching methodologies helped contents taught stay on mind. However, the time table in most schools do not favour such activity so most schools were not using such strategies to teach. It was proposed that the single periods of thirty five and forty minutes based on the schools' plans on the time tables could rather be merged to allow the methodologies be used to assist successful implementation. Maybe, now that a period is made an hour, it could necessitate the change and teachers may use more of the movies and role plays in teaching. On the use of ICT (media and software) in implementation, learners believed these days information are easily got on the Internet however, they do not always have the freedom to visit the Internet all the time especially, at school because sometimes, the ICT laboratories are either locked up or restricted to students if they have not the period to visit the laboratory on their timetables. Others proposed they should be allowed to use phones that may give easy access to the Internet. However, it was observed that some learners used phones in the schools and could have helped as well yet the phones do not serve these situations which could help implementation. Learners expressed that the schools should provide them with virtually

everything for studies. This was because they were made to provide their own Bibles for studies. Pratt (1980) affirms that if such resources are absent, they could spark unsuccessful implementation and eventually, become a long standing barrier.

It was found out that students are motivated both intrinsically and extrinsically as Pratt (1980) noted. There was no dominant activity that made a type of motivation higher than the other. However, what kept both types at par were that each student established a point or two of the importance each of the types of motivation took effect so far as CRS was concern, A student respondent observed, *"The prior knowledge we have on the stories which we keep hearing even at the Sunday schools and in churches motivates us to learn more and get involved in what are taught us"*. Another said, *"When you hear or get to know the performances our predecessors achieved after their final year examination, you are always happy and believe in yourself that you can make it and that alone, motivates us very much"*. What were evident are that if teacher implementers would always give the room to students to do the majority of the things in the subject, would definitely raise much interest therefore, there should be much students centred activities given priority to in the schools to achieve success in implementation.

Conclusion

The study revealed the need to bring on board learners in subject implementation pre and post reviews. It brought to fore the history of CRS education in Ghana including some difficulties and problems that evolve in subject's implementation over time. It established how rarely are students involved in activities besides having the contents of the subject implemented on. It also had literature on implementation approaches, the stages, requirements and inhibiters for successful subject implementation. It found out from the midst of the difficulties available with CRS subject's implementation and to deduce from learners what they also think of the entire process of subject's implementation using the interview as the instrument to acquire data from learners based on the reviewed literature.

Students' opinions were noted to be deemed important since they were the individuals who always get a subject tried on and thus judged whether the subject is good to continue or bring to a halt. After the exploration, students concluded that two of the approaches could see a perfect subject implementation yet since the fidelity approach has been the preferred one and thus used by many centrally in Ghana, there is no turning back. However, very few resources to assist learning were noted to be a hindrance.

Recommendations

Teachers are to make regular and interactive implementation of the contents of curricula in order to promote success in subject implementation. Again, designers could use intelligent students in subject areas to assist reviews and even subject's designing. Selected stakeholders' interactions were also recommended to include parents because of their role they play in the education of the children. Students concluded that the language use in implementation could have the local language dominant in implementation. Suggestions were made that if extended periods could be made in addition to the regular teaching periods, such might bring about perfection in implementation.

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