# Teachers' Use of "Concept Cracking" Pedagogy in Christian Religious Studies in Ghanaian Senior High Schools: A Survey

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*Abstract*

*This research examined the use of Concept Cracking pedagogy by Christian Religious Studies teachers in the Senior High Schools in Central Region of Ghana. The study primarily looked at how the teachers unpack religious concepts, select concepts, engage students and relate students to religious concepts. The descriptive survey design was employed to carry out the study. The simple random sampling and census techniques were employed to select 327 students and 55 teachers respectively for the study. Questionnaires were used to collect the data and analyzed through the computation of frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation. The study revealed that to a very large extent, the CRS teachers in Central Region use Concept Cracking pedagogy. They unpack religious concepts by enlisting the various theological ideas underpinning a chosen topic. The concepts that were selected for teaching are those that were useful to students' life experiences. The study also found that with regard to the selection of concepts, teachers emphasized concepts that provoke an inquiry into values and commitment, as well as the usefulness of concepts to the life experiences of students. The study recommends that Ghana Education should adopt a strategy of organizing a regular professional development training for CRS teachers on the use of Concept Cracking pedagogy. This will go a long way to boost the pedagogical knowledge and skills of teachers and in turn help to improve the teaching of CRS.*

*Keywords: Concept Cracking, Pedagogy Unpacking, Selection*

## Introduction

The central aim of education is the development of whole person; mind, heart and hands. Throughout history, society has looked for better ways to educate children (Entz, 2006). Teaching is one of the ways of achieving this noble aim. Teaching is described as an interpersonal influence aimed at changing the behaviour potential of another. Onwuka (1981), sees teaching as an attempt to help someone to acquire or change attitude, knowledge, idea or appreciation. This essentially consists of setting the stage so that someone can learn. The primary concern of a teacher is to

facilitate learning by various means. Tharp (1999), asserts that the ways in which a teacher interact with students and organises instruction are critically important aspect of helping each student to learn. For this reason, Collins (2006) calls for pedagogical knowledge and skills which will enable the 'learner to develop and move towards becoming an independent, fully functioning, contributing member of the society. Pedagogy is described as a science of teaching and learning embodying both curriculum and methodology (Grimmitt, 2000).

Leach and Moon (1999), explains pedagogy as the practice that a teacher, together with a particular group of learners creates, enacts and experiences. It therefore means that pedagogy is a joint activity in which the learner has an active role to play. This synchronizes with Simon, (1991), assertion that the fundamental concern of pedagogy is to relate the process of teaching to that of learning on the part of the child. The origin of pedagogy can be traced to the ancient Greek word "paidagogeo" which literally means 'to lead the child'. It was believed in ancient Greek mythology that "Pedagogos" was a trusted slave who accompanied his master's child to classes, ensured his good behaviour in public, cared for his needs and tutored him with his homework (Entz, 2007; Owusu & Asare-Danso, 2014). This presupposes that pedagogy is about leading your learners. For this cause, Shulman (1987), suggests different kinds of pedagogical knowledge to promote teaching and learning. In Religious Education, many scholars have propounded several pedagogical models for the teaching of the subject. Chunk of these models have been practiced in Europe and America. The intentions differ from author to author although they all aimed at ensuring and improving effective teaching and learning of religion. Examples of these pedagogies are 'Gift to the Child' (Hull, 1996), 'Critical Realist' (Wright, 2000), 'Narrative' (Erricker, 1995), 'Life Themes' (Onsongo, 2002; Owusu & Asare-Danso, 2014), and 'Concept Cracking' (Cooling, 1994).

'Concept Cracking' is a religious education pedagogy which was advocated by Trevor Cooling in 1994. It was originally a project conducted by a group of Christian Teachers in England popularly called Stapleford Project in 1986 to produce a range of materials to support teaching about Christianity in schools (Grimmitt, 2000). The aim was to emphasize the importance of exploring meaning in Bible texts and the way in which this meaning infused the life and thinking of learners in the modern world. It was also based on the premise that the key to understanding information about Christianity is to understand the ideas that make the faith meaningful and significant (Grimmitt, 2000).

A major objective was to marry a distinctive theoretical rationale with classroom materials which would be accessible to even the non-specialist classroom teachers, whether they are Christians or not (Cooling, 1994). In line with objectives two and three of the current Christian Religious Studies syllabus, which demands that Bible concepts or themes be selected and related to the present-day experiences of the learners; 'Concept Cracking' Pedagogy is one of the best models appropriate for the teaching of CRS in the Senior High Schools (Asare-Danso, 2017). Although Concept Cracking has been explored adequately in Europe and for that matter England, not much has been done in Africa in general and Ghana in particular (Asare-Danso, 2017). It is therefore imperative to assess the CRS Teachers knowledge and usage of Concept Cracking approach in their teaching.

**Statement of the Problem**

Christian Religious Studies (CRS) is one of the quintessential elective subjects in Senior High Schools in Ghana. The subject is aimed at instilling in learners the spirit of tolerance and reconciliation and shapes the whole being of the student (Ogwu et al, 2016). According to Onwuka (2010), it is as a result of the invaluable contributions that moral values play in the society that enabled the missionaries to give priority to the subject. Onovughe and Mordi (2017), opined that, the essence of CRS includes academic, moral, civil and spiritual. In contributing to the significance of CRS in Senior High Schools, Omalle (2006) as cited in Ogwu et al asserted that to educating men without religion is to make them clever devils. But research conducted by Ogwu and Ezema (2017) observed that students are developing lukewarm attitude towards religion in general and CRS in particular. They believe that this has resulted in low enrolment and poor academic performance in the subject. This assertion confirms what Kay and Francis (1996) have already indicated.

Our own experience as CRS teachers in Cape Coast International School and Cape Coast Workers' College through casual observation of students gives credence to this assertion. According to Ogwu et al., (2016), and Sofowora (2012), this state of affairs is attributable to ineffective methods of teaching employed by CRS teachers. They were of the opinion that many CRS teachers have not been trained on unpacking and planning teaching activities which translate selected concepts into a form that makes sense in the students' world of experience. Every trained CRS teacher is expected to make links or bridges with the students' world and then designing learning activities that help the students to understand religious concepts.

Cooling (1994) observed that CRS subject is such that teachers are tempted to teach in abstract terms. To him, Christian stories and beliefs are in one sense a commentary on human life. They articulate how Christians have interpreted their experiences of the world in terms of God's presence and action. It is therefore a travesty to teach them just through dull exposition. ''Their relevance to human experiences therefore has to be demonstrated'' (Grimmitt, 2000 p. 41). White (2004) alleges that much of religious studies teachings is confined to a rather dull exposition of Christian believes without engaging with the learners' world of experience. This implies that teachers do not find parallels in the students' world which relate to topics they teach. This makes the subject boring and not interesting leading to low enrolment and poor student performance.

The situation may also be due to how teachers relate students to religious concepts or ideas. Many CRS teachers do not relate the Gospel to the real-life experiences of the learners. This may due to inadequate pedagogical training, the lack of ability to apply academic knowledge to real life situations, diverse religious background of students, negative teacher -students' relations and lack of audio-visual resources (Owusu, 2011; Grimmitt, 2000). This state of affairs corroborates Crawford and Rossiter (1985) assertion that the effectiveness of religious education has been judged on the content contained in the programmes in contrast to the manner in which it was being managed by educators. How then do teachers unpack religious concepts and relate it to the students' world of experience? For this cause, Burford (2002) proposed that ''if paradigms for teaching don't shift to meet the needs of uncertain future, we will fail our children and our stewardship as educators'' p.56. This presupposes that there should be appropriate pedagogic principles for teaching CRS subject. Grimmitt (2000) has advocated for pedagogical models appropriate for the teaching of religion in general and CRS in particular. He was of the view that

pedagogical knowledge and skills provide the foundation upon which all successful Religious Education depends. One of these is 'Concept Cracking'.

The current CRS syllabus demands that Bible concepts and themes be selected and related to the life experiences of the learners. This makes 'Concept Cracking' one of the best models appropriate for teaching CRS (Cooling, 1994; Asare-Danso, 2017). A study conducted by Asare-Danso (2017) observed that although "Concept Cracking" has been explored adequately in Europe not much has been done in Africa in general and Ghana in particular. He, therefore, recommended that tutors of Religious Studies should be abreast with this pedagogy to boost the interest of the learners. It is against this backdrop that this study is being conducted to assess CRS teachers' usage of the method and its associated principles.

## Research Questions
The study was guided by the following research questions.
1. How do CRS teachers unpack religious concepts during the instructional period?
2. What factors do CRS teachers consider in the selection of concept as a focus of attention in a lesson?

## Theoretical Review
The theoretical review of the study focused on discovery learning theory. The discovery learning theory is a cognitive theory that was championed by Jerome Brunner in 1983. The theory has four features. These are predisposition to learning, structure of knowledge, mode of representation and effective sequencing. Discovery learning can be defined as the learning that takes place when students are not presented with the subject matter in its final form, but rather required them to organise it themselves (Asihene & Oppong, 2005).

This requires learners to discover for themselves relationship that exist among items of information. The major theme in the theory is that learning is an active process in which learners construct new ideas or concepts based on their current or past knowledge or experiences (Rhalmi 2016). As far as instruction is concerned, the instructor should encourage learners to discover concepts and principles by themselves.

The teacher and the learners therefore must engage in an active dialogue. According to Brunner the main task of the instructor is to translate concept or information to be learned to a format appropriate to the learner's world view or state of understanding. Brunner believes that teachers should confront children with problems and help them to seek solutions either independently or organising in-group discussion. In this theory the CRS teacher's role is not to lecture but to develop the capacity of the students to think, discover and make rational decisions for their lives (Maani, 2013). This is possible when Concept Cracking pedagogy is used. The reason being that this pedagogical model gives opportunity for the learners to personalise the learning and reflect towards it. From the beginning to the end of the lesson the student is allowed to participate. In other words, Concept Cracking emphasises on active learner involvement.

True learning according to Brunner, (1983) involves figuring out how to use what you already think. He opined that when children are given a substantial amount of practice in finding their own solutions to problems, they do not only develop problem solving skills but also gain confidence in their own learning abilities as well as propensity of functioning later in life as problem solvers.

In his attempt to support discovery learning, Donaldson (1978) observed that discovery learning approach gives learners more opportunities to learn how to make informed decisions that affect their own lives. It therefore implies that the learners should be aided to 'construct and formulate their own ideas, attitudes and self-advice' (p. 29). The teacher's role, under this theory, is to create scenarios, challenges, case studies or educative tasks that will provoke the learners to generate the relevant knowledge, values or skills (Maani, 2013). Discovery Learning is a good approach in CRS because it helps learners to think (Asihene & Opong 2005) and make their own rational decisions.

## Methodology

### Research Design

The descriptive survey design was used for the study. Specifically, the cross-sectional survey type. This enabled the researcher to collect information on how teachers use the 'Concept Cracking' pedagogic principles of unpacking, selecting, engaging and relating in Senior High Schools in the Central Region of Ghana. Descriptive survey design seeks to explore and describe events as they are. The descriptive research design was deemed best for the study because, according to Pandey and Pandey (2021), researchers gather data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions or identifying standards against which existing conditions can be compared. As recommended by Mohajan (2018), this method is suitable for purposes of making generalisations from a sample to a population so that inferences could be made about the characteristics, opinions, attitudes and past experiences of the population.

### Population

The population for this study was 2393 comprising 55 teachers and 2338 students of CRS. The study focused on public Senior High Schools because most of the teachers there are professionally trained and are in better position to answer questions pertaining to pedagogy. CRS teachers were selected because of their place in the process of unpacking and selection of religious concepts and their ability to relate them to the students' experiences. The students of CRS were also involved in the study because they are the direct beneficiaries of any pedagogical principles which are employed during instructional periods and hence are able to provide valuable information concerning the topic under investigation.

### Sample and Sampling Procedure

A multi-stage sampling technique was used to sample students to participate in the study. First of all, out of the 55 public Senior High Schools in the Region, purposive sampling was employed to select the 54 which offered CRS as a course of study. Because the number of public schools that offer CRS were many, a sampling frame was constructed to cover all of them, after which the lottery method, one of the simple random sampling techniques was used to select 10 schools. This represents 18.5% of the schools which offer CRS as a course of study. This corresponds with the study conducted by Sarantakos (1997) and Simon and Goes (2012) who concluded that between 10 and 30 percent of a population would be an appropriate sample for any survey studies. This procedure was used to allow each of the schools to have an equal chance of being selected. Table 1 provides details of students sampled from each of the ten selected schools.

**Table 1: Population distribution of students sampled for the study**

| Name of School | Population | Sample |
|---|---|---|
| Academy of Christ SHS | 233 | 33 |
| Aggrey memorial SHS | 306 | 43 |
| Assin-Manso SHS | 179 | 25 |
| Boamponsem SHS | 164 | 23 |
| Eguafo-Abirem SHS | 202 | 28 |
| Ghana National College | 281 | 39 |
| Mfantsiman Girls SHS | 219 | 31 |
| Swedru Sch. of Business | 253 | 35 |
| University Practice SHS | 238 | 33 |
| Winneba SHS | 263 | 37 |
| **Total** | **2338** | **327** |

Source: G.ES Central Regional, 2023.

In selecting the sample size of the students for this study, the table for determining sample size from a given population advocated by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) was used. According to Krejcie and Morgan a sample size required of a population of 2338 is 327.Therefore, 327 students were involved. In determining the number of students (participants) from each school, proportional simple random sampling technique was used to select 14% of CRS students in each school. Respondents from each school were selected using the simple random sampling procedure. "This type of sampling gives all units of the target population an equal chance of being selected" (Sarantakos, 1997, p. 141). The sample unit were selected by using the table of random numbers of which the students' class register served as a sample frame because it was convenient and less time consuming. Census survey was used to select teachers. By this survey, all CRS teachers in the ten selected schools were contacted to provide data for the study. The rationale for the use of census survey for the teachers was that we could cover all the respondents since the number of CRS teachers were not large as recommended by Anderson (2019) and Cooper and Schindler (2014). The sample size for the study therefore was 382 comprising 55 teachers and 327 students.

**Research Instruments**

The instrument that was used to collect the data for this study was questionnaire. The choice of questionnaire was based on the assertion of Pandey and Pandey (2021) that it is widely used and also useful for collecting survey information, providing structured, numerical data and being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher Geuens and De Pelsmacker (2017) opined that questionnaires are "particularly advantageous whenever the sample size is large enough to make it uneconomical for reasons of time or funds to observe every subject" (p. 268). The questionnaire comprised both close and open-ended items. There were two sets of questionnaires- one for teachers and the other one for students. The teachers' questionnaire. The questionnaires were divided into sections according to the research questions

**Validity of Instrument**

The content-related evidence of validity of the questionnaire was established by submitting the questionnaire to my supervisors for their scrutiny and critique. Suggestions made by them were added and thereby improved the content validity of the questionnaire.

The instrument was pilot-tested before the actual data collection took place. The pilot-testing was conducted to ascertain the validity and reliability of the instruments. The schools that were used for the pilot-testing were; Ahantaman Senior High School, Adiembra Senior High School, and Secondi College. 12 Teachers and 28 students were used for the pilot testing. The pilot test results were used to determine the reliability of the instruments with Cronbach's Alpha (α) measure of internal consistency. The SPSS (Version 27) was used for the computation. All these actions were taken to ensure that the instrument was capable of collecting quality and useful data for the study. The table shows the result of the pilot test.

**Table 2: Summary of Reliability Statistics of Teachers' Instrument**

| Construct | Number of items | Cronbach alpha |
|---|---|---|
| How Teachers Unpack Religious Concepts | 8 | .74 |
| Factors Teachers Consider in the Selection of Religious Concepts | 9 | .72 |

**Table 3: Summary of Reliability Statistics of Students' Instrument**

| Construct | Number of items | Cronbach alpha |
|---|---|---|
| How Teachers Unpack Religious Concepts | 8 | .73 |
| Factors Teachers Consider in the Selection of Religious Concepts | 9 | .74 |

**Ethical Consideration**

A letter of consent was sent to participating schools to seek permission from the various heads of schools where the study was carried out. The letter spelt out the purpose of the study, the need for individual participation, anonymity as well as confidentially of respondents' responses. Informed consent was sought from the participant in the various schools.

**Data Collection Procedure**

The questionnaire was administered personally by the researcher to all the intended teachers and students who were involved in the study. The researchers used a period of one month to travel to all the sampled schools to administer the questionnaire. Also, because we pre-informed the respondents earlier through phone calls, the questionnaires were administered to the respondents and were collected on the same day.

**Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics was used for the data analysis. Specifically, frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data to answer all the four research questions. The data from the field was coded and entered into a computer software, specifically IBM SPSS Version 27 for windows to help the analysis. The results for the research questions were presented in tables.

**Results And Discussion**

**Research Question One:** How do CRS teachers unpack religious concepts during the instructional period?

This research question sought to find out how CRS teachers unpack religious concepts during the instructional period. Both teachers and students were asked to provide responses to eight items on a Likert-type scale as 4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree and 1=strongly

disagree. The criterion in Table 5 was calculated by summing up the categories 4+3+2+1=10 and dividing it by the number of categories (4), giving 2.5 (10/4=2.5). Therefore, any response that had a mean score of 2.5 and above was interpreted to mean agreed while any mean value below 2.5 was considered disagreement.

**Table 5:  How Teachers Unpack Religious Concepts**

| Items | Teachers | | Students | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | SD | M | SD |
| 1. Teachers make sure that students understand the range of concepts embedded in every chosen topic. | 3.53 | .50 | 3.36 | .73 |
| 2. Teachers explain difficult biblical concepts and make them clearer to the understanding of students. | 3.51 | .51 | 3.33 | .72 |
| 3. Teachers always clear on which concepts to be the focus of the lesson when covering a particular topic. | 3.60 | .49 | 3.44 | .69 |
| 4. Teachers stimulate students to view the Bible as a contemporary document relevant to the moral and spiritual development of the country. | 3.47 | .50 | 3.31 | .69 |
| 5. Teachers give students good knowledge of the general flow of the bible stories and events. | 3.51 | .51 | 3.37 | .71 |
| 6. Teachers enlist the various theological ideas that underpin each CRS topic during instructional hours. | 3.49 | .51 | 3.24 | .75 |
| 7. Teachers are competent in the teaching of CRS subject. | 3.55 | .50 | 3.31 | .65 |
| 8. Teachers translate religious concepts into a form that makes sense in the students' world of experience | 3.49 | .51 | 3.55 | 2.68 |
| **Overall mean** | **3.52** | **.50** | **3.36** | **.95** |

Source: Field Data, 2023.

The results from Table 5 showed that in sum, both teachers and students involved in the study agreed that teachers employed some practices to unpack religious concepts, teachers (M=3.52, SD=.50) and students (M=3.36, SD=.95). It was found that teachers strongly agreed that they are competent in the teaching of CRS subject (M=3.55, SD=.50). Teachers also strongly agreed that they make sure that students understand the range of concepts embedded in every chosen topic (M=3.53, SD=.50), explained difficult biblical concepts and made them clearer to the understanding of students (M=3.51, SD=.51), they are always clear on which concepts to be the focus of the lesson when covering a particular topic (M=3.60, SD=.49) and stimulated students to view the Bible as a contemporary document relevant to the moral and spiritual development of the country (M=3.47, SD=.50).

The study results further showed that students agreed that teachers give them good knowledge of the general flow of the bible stories and events (M=3.37, SD=.71), teachers explained difficult biblical concepts and make them clearer to the understanding of students (M=3.33, SD=.72), teachers always  are clear on which concepts to be the focus of the lesson when covering a particular topic (M=3.44, SD=.69) and teachers make sure that students understand the range of concepts embedded in every chosen topic (M=3.36, SD=.73).

The findings of the study indicated that, in general, CRS teachers and students agree that teachers use various means to unpack religious concepts. Both teachers and students concurred

that teachers are competent and for that matter well versed in the CRS subject. This finding corroborates with the position of Grimmit, (2000) that competency in a subject matter is a prerequisite for unpacking religious concepts. The reason being that religious concepts are in a 'pack' and before pupils can understand, it has to be 'unpacked' and this is much possible when the instructor is competent. It also confirms the findings of Shulman, (1987) and McNamara (1991) that teachers have to possess a good content knowledge before they can make positive impact in the classroom. It is also in line with the assertion of Ball, (2003) that 'knowing a subject matter sufficiently for teaching requires being able to unpack ideas and make them accessible as they are first encountered by learners, not only in their finished form' (p. 4).

As the result shows, it should be mentioned that, both teachers and students agree significantly that teachers enlist the various theological ideas that underpin each CRS topic during instructional hours. This is in line with the research findings of Cooling, (2003). According to Cooling, teachers can unpack religious concepts by enlisting the various theological concepts underpinning the chosen topic. The rationale here are to help the students to understand the range of concepts embedded in every chosen topic and also to make difficult concepts clear. The findings also concurred with the studies of (Ma,1999; Adewale, 2011) that Religious Studies teachers unpack concepts by identifying the underpinning theological ideas in a topic. According to Ma, 'teachers need to see the topic they teach as embedded in rich network of interrelated concepts so they should know where and when within those networks to situate the task they set their students' (p. 17).

In Concept Cracking, teachers are advised to unpack religious beliefs or concepts in order to make the lesson clear devoid of confusion. Within any topic there would be a number of concepts or beliefs. The teacher is expected to look at the topic to be covered and work out which concepts are in the topic. The teacher is therefore expected to be aware and identify the different concepts that underpin it and are important to understanding its meaning and significance. This will help the teacher to be focused and not teach all the concepts at the same time. For example, a topic like 'God's Creation' has underpinning concepts like, Stewardship, Human Beings Created in the image of God, Temptation and Sin, Punishment, something coming from nothing among others. The teacher here is also expected to focus on one or two concepts so as to make the lesson clearer and interesting.

The findings with regard to teachers giving students good knowledge of the general flow of the Bible stories and events is in accordance with postulation of Osei, (2012). According to Osei, teachers have to recognize the context of each passage in the Bible and see how different stories and events fit together and relate to the life situation of students. He also opines that this approach can sharpen the intellectual prowess of learners and thereby aiding them to perform well in the CRS subject as well as helping them to take good moral decisions. Similarly, the findings of teachers' ability to explain difficult Bible concepts and making them clearer to the understanding of the students goes with the work of Trimm, (2009) who postulated that to unpack religious concepts is to make the said concept clearer to the understanding of learners.

**Research Question Two:** What factors do CRS teachers consider in the selection of concept as a focus of attention in a lesson?

This research question sought to find out factors CRS teachers consider in the selection of concepts as a focus of attention in a lesson. Both teachers and students were to indicate their agreement and disagreement to nine items on Likert type scale. 4=strongly agree, 3=agree,

2=disagree and 1=strongly disagree. The responses were categorized into two main divisions: ''Agree'' and ''Disagree''. Table 6 presents the results of the data analysis in frequencies and percentages.

As shown in Table 6, the results revealed that in general, teachers and students agreed that teachers considered some factors when selecting of religious concepts. The study results indicated that all the teachers 100% agreed that they selected concepts that provoked an enquiry into values and commitment in living, considered the age of the learners in the classroom lesson illustrations, considered the usefulness of concepts to the experiences of the students in teaching and also agreed that most of the concepts are taught in consonance with the CRS teaching syllabus. It was again found that 91% of the teachers agreed that they discussed concepts which are important within Christianity during instructional period.

As regards students, it was observed that 84% students agreed that most of the concepts which are taught are in consonance with the CRS teaching syllabus. The study results also showed that 83% of the students agreed that teachers have a balanced scheme of work, 83% agreed that teachers discussed concepts which were important within Christianity during instructional period, 82% agreed that every selected concept by teachers was factored into instructional objectives in lesson delivery and 81% agreed that teachers considered the usefulness of concepts to the experiences of the students in teaching. The findings in the study indicated that generally, teachers consider certain criteria for selecting religious concepts before and during instruction hours as demanded in the Concept Cracking pedagogy. Factors indicated as relevant for selection include (a) concepts that provokes an enquiry into values and commitment, (b) age of the learners, (c) usefulness of concepts to the experiences of the students, (d) concepts which are important within Christianity, (e) time allocated for the lesson, (f) concepts which are in consonance with CRS teaching syllabus, and (g) the classroom environment.

The findings in terms of teachers selecting concept that provokes an enquiry into values and commitment are supported by the previous findings of Arnold, (2012). According to Arnold, relevant concepts that need to be taught by teachers are those that provokes an enquiry into values and commitment in the society. CRS is not about preaching and neither does it meant to convert people into Christianity. It however emphasis on enlighten students to apply Biblical material to practical life situations. Therefore, teachers must endeavour to encourage students to internalize values such as justice, patience, love, holiness, integrity among others because they affect both the individuals and the society.

The results also show that CRS teachers consider the age of students in the selection of religious concepts. This synchronizes with the observation of (Renee, 2015; Goldman, 1965). Renee, asserts that teachers have to involve students in the selection of topics for class discussions. That she believes increases the confidence of the learners. But, before that, teachers have to consider the age of the learners which she defines as preparedness and readiness to comprehend concepts.

**Table 6: Factors Teachers Consider in the Selection of Religious Concepts**

| Items | Teachers | | | | Students | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Agree | | Disagree | | Agree | | Disagree | |
| | Freq | % | Freq | % | Freq | % | Freq | % |
| 1. Teachers select concepts that provoke an enquiry into values and commitment in living. | 55 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 264 | 80.7 | 63 | 19.2 |
| 2. Teachers consider the age of the learners in the classroom lesson illustrations. | 55 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 247 | 75.6 | 80 | 24.5 |
| 3. Teachers consider the usefulness of concepts to the experiences of the students in teaching. | 55 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 266 | 81.4 | 61 | 18.7 |
| 4. Teachers discuss concepts which are important within Christianity during instructional period. | 50 | 90.9 | 5 | 9.1 | 270 | 82.5 | 57 | 17.4 |
| 5. Most of the concepts which are taught are in consonance with the CRS teaching syllabus. | 55 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 275 | 84.1 | 52 | 15.9 |
| 6. Teachers have a balanced scheme of work. | 55 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 272 | 83.2 | 55 | 16.9 |
| 7. Teachers consider the classroom environment in lesson delivery. | 55 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 245 | 74.9 | 82 | 25.1 |
| 8. Teachers consider time allocation for each lesson before any concept is chosen for discussion. | 55 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 238 | 72.8 | 89 | 27.2 |
| 9. Every selected concept is factored into instructional objectives in lesson delivery. | 55 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 267 | 81.6 | 60 | 18.4 |

Source: Field Data, 2023.

In the case of Goldman, he observed that religious concepts are mainly abstract in nature therefore learning of abstract concept could not be attempted on children who are before formal operational thinking stage. This is a direct contrast to Cooling's, (1994) research, from his findings, 'any concept can be taught to any child as long as it was appropriately translated' (p, 156). The point here is that not the abstract concepts that are the problem, but dumping abstract concepts on children using methods that are appropriate to adults.

Regarding the findings that teachers consider the appropriateness of concepts to the life of students is a confirmation of the earlier findings of (Sofowora, 2012; & Cooling, 2003). In the teaching and learning process, students are direct beneficiaries of the process, therefore it behooves on teachers to select concepts that are indeed useful and appropriate for the growth and development of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of students. The study also found out that teachers consider the importance of concepts within Christianity when they are selecting concept as a focus of learning. This is also in agreement with the findings of Cooling, (1994), which concluded that importance of a particular concept within Christianity is a factor that teachers must consider when religious concepts are being selected as a focus of a lesson. Again, in support of the findings from this study, Bart, (2015) asserts that, in choosing concepts for classroom discussion, teaching syllabus should not be avoided because it contains an outline and summary of topics to be covered in education.

**Conclusions**

On the basis of the findings obtained from the study, the following conclusions could be drawn. Concept Cracking pedagogy provides teachers with skills and information necessary to enhance teaching and learning. CRS teachers in the Central Region of Ghana to a large extent use Concept Cracking pedagogic principle in their teaching. During the process of unpacking, teachers do preliminary work to clarify their own understanding of the concepts. This is a very important way of giving a lesson a clear focus. With regard to the selection of concepts, teachers emphasized concepts that provoke an inquiry into values and commitment, as well as the usefulness of concepts to the life experiences of students.

**Recommendations**

On the basis of the conclusions outlined, the following recommendations are drawn for consideration in the teaching and learning of Christian Religious Studies.

1. Ghana Education should adopt a strategy of organizing a regular professional development training for CRS teachers on the use of Concept Cracking pedagogy. This will go a long way to boost the pedagogical knowledge and skills of teachers and in turn help to improve the teaching of CRS.
2. Teachers of CRS should adopt a practical and learner-centered strategies such as role play/drama and group presentations to engage students. This will build and sustain interest of students and also broaden their horizon.

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