

An Examination of Classroom Practices of Social Studies Teachers at the Senior High School Level in the Asante Akim North Municipality to Find Whether their Knowledge of the Goals and General Objectives Have Any Influence on their Selection of Contents and Activities

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I. INTRODUCTION

Education in any part of the world is seen as the bedrock for national development and the key factor in human resource development. It is increasingly obvious that the world is becoming more complex. In response to this situation, governments all over the world are committed to providing education to meet the changing challenges of the complex economic and political system confronting them. In all developing countries such as Ghana, there is a widespread desire to change the structure and system of education to meet the new needs. In these countries, the tendency for high rate of school drop-outs, indiscipline and unemployment of school leavers have also posed new treats to education (Blege, 1986:7).

School is an institution set up by society for the purpose of addressing the needs, aspirations and challenges of the society, and for that matter, the country. These needs are captured in the national goals of education in every country. The school seeks to achieve these great ideals through the study of the various subjects. This implies that any subject that merits inclusion in the school curriculum can contribute in addressing the needs, aspirations and the challenges of the society. Every discipline (subject) is expected to contribute positively towards the realisation of the national goals of education and the national agenda. The report of the President's Committee on Review of Education Reforms in Ghana (2002) stated that the philosophy of education in Ghana should be creating well-balanced intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical beings with the requisite knowledge, skills, values and attitude for self-actualisation and for socio-economic and political transformation of the nation. Ayaaba (2008) was emphatic about Social Studies education as a major contributory factor to the attainment of social goals.

The educational reforms of 1987 in Ghana brought in its wake-up calls the introduction of Social Studies as a core subject at the then Junior Secondary School (JSS) and Teacher Training Colleges. Social Studies in Ghana went through a radical change in 1995, and it was introduced at the Senior Secondary level in Ghana. It evolved from a collection of mainly History, Government, Economics and Geography topics, which were used to represent the early Social Studies curriculum, instead of an issue-centred (trans-disciplinary) subject (Bekoe, 2007). This evolution or change succeeded in transforming Social Studies from the amalgam (Kissock, 1981 in Bekoe 2007) of discrete traditional social science disciplines to one that is issue-centred and problem solving in nature (Martorella, 1994).

In the Ghanaian context, Blege (2001) opined that Social Studies is citizenship education which aims at producing reflective, competent, responsible and participatory citizen. Again, according to Quarley (1984) Social Studies is the study that equips the youth with tools necessary in solving personal and community related problems. According to Quarley (1984), defining Social Studies will not just aim at giving out knowledge but will emphasise inculcating into humans a certain distillate knowledge which will help them in acquiring the tools necessary for life. What he termed as tools are knowledge, values, attitude, and skills. These tools should help the child in solving both personal and societal related problems. This supports the view of the National Council of Social Studies (NCSS, 1994) in United States of America that "the primary purpose of Social Studies is to help the young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse nation in an interdependent world" (p. 18).

In order to maintain our values and system of governance, citizens need to care about their common good and participate

in public life. To achieve this, the Social Studies curriculum must prepare students to identify, understand and work to solve the problems facing them in their various communities, as well as in our increasingly diverse nation and interdependent world. All these cannot be possible without well-trained and well-equipped teachers to implement them in the school system. Every teacher of Social Studies needs adequate knowledge of the philosophy of the subject for effective teaching and learning (Quarthey, 1984). The philosophy provides guidance and direction in choosing objectives, statement of content, choice of teaching techniques and nature of assessment. The development and survival of a state or nation depends upon the capacity building which Social Studies and other subjects in the curriculum equip the learners through the use of complementary instructional processes.

Many efforts have been made to improve the teaching of the subject through curriculum innovations and upgrading of institutions of learning like the Colleges of Education in Ghana, from the Post-Secondary Certificate to Diploma and University of Education, Winneba, from the diploma levels to the first and second degree levels to produce Social Studies scholars. It is still suspected that the goals of Social Studies are not being achieved. Quarthey (1984) wrote that the then head of state of Nigeria, Lt. General Olusegun Obasanjo, in his speech at the commissioning of the National Advisory Council on Education for Citizenship in Nigeria that many Nigerians in all walks of life have expressed concern at the indiscipline, excessive materialism, laxity and lack of compassion that are so rampant at all levels of our society. Indiscipline manifests itself in different forms of dishonesty, lack of respect and consideration for elders and those in position of authority, rudeness, absenteeism, and lateness to work, selfishness and disregard for life on our roads, to name but a few.

The above statement made by the former head of state of Nigeria, Lt. General Olusegun Obasanjo, about indiscipline of the people of Nigeria is not different from what pertains in Ghana. In recent times, Ghana has been bedevilled by many problems which threaten the very fabric of our society. Cherished attitudinal standards are falling drastically. Greed, desire to cheat others through dubious practices, and general distrust for everybody are some of the problems (Quarthey, 1984). In addition to the above are examination leakages, careless driving on our roads, increase in divorce rate, street children, indecent dressing, bribery and corruption, absenteeism and lateness to work, laziness, prostitution, adultery, armed robbery, pilfering at work place, cyber fraud, to mention but few are all rampant in Ghana today. These create a doubt about whether the goals of our educational system are being met.

Schmidt (2007:34) reiterated that Social Studies instructional activities should foster individual and cultural identity which examine the forces that hold society together or pull it apart; provide opportunity for participation in the school and

communities; address critical issues in the world; prepare students to make decisions based on democratic principles, and teach the skill needed for citizenship participation in public affairs.

To inculcate the right skills, values, attitude and knowledge in students, there is the need for effective teaching based on the goals of the subject. Borich (2004) pointed out that teaching is a complex and difficult task that demands extraordinary abilities. McEwan (2002) argued that teaching is a dynamic activity. This means, the teaching strategies and activities also keep on changing. Therefore, teachers are expected to teach to suit the changing needs of the society which are also the goals and objectives of Social Studies.

Kyriacou (1995) posited that effective teaching is essentially concerned with how best to bring about the desired learning through some education activities. In addition, to him, the term effective teaching is also derived from a psychological perspective on thinking about teaching, where the implicit emphasis is on identifying observable behaviour in the classroom which can be linked with an influence on observable and measurable product variable. This is in line with the general psychological perspective regarding how to best explore human behaviour. Parkay and Stanford (2001:19) said effective teachers use a repertoire of teaching models and assessment strategies, depending upon their situations and the goals and objectives they wish to attain. It is deduced from this that the effective teacher plans his or her lessons with some objectives to be achieved at the end of the lesson in order to instil in the learners the desirable knowledge, attitudes, values and skills for the attainment of the goals of the subject.

Blege (2001:8) illustrated these goals and objectives focus stating, "When we play soccer, we try as much as possible to put the ball into the net behind the opposing team's goal post". Looking at this scenario, all the efforts of the players of the game are geared towards arriving at the goal. In the same way, when we teach or educate people, we must have a purpose or a goal towards which we must direct all our efforts to achieve the goals of the subject.

Goals are about setting realistic and easy steps in place towards fulfilling something that one wants. Goals are derived from standards to more specifically what must be accomplished and who must do what in order to meet the standards. Goals express standards from the teacher's, learner's or school point of view and identifies what teachers must teach, students must learn, and school must do (Borich, 2004). Goals energise and motivate teachers, students and schools to become actively engaged and committed to meeting standards. In identifying a country's goals of education, we must be concerned about the extent to which these goals can help us to solve our social problems.

Statement of the Problem

The background to the study provided an outline of the place of teaching of Social Studies to foster acceptable attitudes and values in the youth for nation building. Any newly developed programme of study (discipline) has its plans for teaching. Although studies have shown great emphasis made on teaching method, very little attention has been paid to the classroom practices of the teacher that can help achieve effective skills in students.

Social Studies is being taught as a core subject at the pre-university level in order to imbibe the right attitudes, values, and critical thinking in the decision making process of the students. However, the conditions within Ghana as a country leave much to be desired. Indications of the current trends reveal that social vices in Ghana are rather increasing. What is even alarming is the fact that many of the culprits are Senior High School graduates who are supposed to have passed through at least six years of Social Studies Education.

The problem is, with all the efforts being made to improve the quality of teaching Social Studies, there is still a gap between what is expected of the Social Studies learners and what they are exhibiting. It seems the subject is not achieving its goal at the Senior High School level and students too are not taking the content of the subject serious.

Heafner (2004) stated that many teachers struggle with motivating students to learn especially in Social Studies classrooms because students see Social Studies as a boring subject. There is the need for teaching activities that will motivate students by engaging them in the learning process with the use of a familiar instructional tool that improves students' self-efficiency and self-worth.

According to Ayodele (1999), it is argued that although the failure of classroom practices to achieve educational objectives could be attributed to a multitude of varied factors such as teachers' pressure, students' reluctance to learn, unfavourable classroom atmosphere, and many others, no other factor appears to be more central in this phenomenon than the teacher, that is, teacher effectiveness. This implies that the single most important factor in the educational process that has an impact on student learning is the teacher who is the pivot of classroom instruction. In this regard, teachers need to grasp and understand the content, goals and the general objectives of the subject they teach. Quartey (1984) asserted that these general objectives guide teachers in their selection of contents and activities in their teaching. In supporting this assertion, Akinlaye (2003) emphasized that any new curriculum package is only as good as the teachers who use it. There is therefore the need to examine the classroom practices of Social Studies teachers at the Senior High School level in the Asante Akim North Municipality to find whether their knowledge of the goals and general objectives have any influence on their selection of contents and activities.

II. REVIEW OF EXTANT LITERATURE

2.1 The evolutionary trend of Social Studies

Social Studies is one of the subjects that can help change attitudes of citizens and thereby contribute to the socio-economic development of a nation, but educators of the subject have long argued over what exactly is meant by Social Studies as a field to study. The term "Social Studies" according to Ayaaba (2008) was first used in 1905 by Thomas Jesse in the United States of America. The National Education Association (NEA) first introduced the term "Social Studies" in 1913 with a broad definition as, "all subject matter dealing with human society". The definition was never popularly accepted and a great deal of effort has been made to come out with an acceptable definition since then.

In 1916, Social Studies was formally used as part of The National Education Association Report on the re-organization of secondary school education (Saxe, 1991). According to Saxe (1991: 18), the evolution of Social Studies to its present form can be traced from the early stages where it was "rooted in the social sciences for the purpose of attending to social welfare" and subsequently "grounded in the social sciences for the purpose of directly educating future citizens". Social Studies, thus, evolved as a curricular need to provide a descriptive label that would serve a curricular purpose for the development and nurturing of young citizens (Ayaaba, 2008).

2.2 Goals and Objectives of Social Studies

According to Odumah (2008), Social Studies from its early beginnings was intended as a nation-building subject and a country's aspirations therefore constitute the bases for teaching it. The 2007 and 2010 Senior High School Social Studies Syllabus designers claim that, the subject prepares the individual to fit into society by equipping him or her with knowledge about the ways of life of their society, its problems, its values and its hopes for the future (CRDD, 2007; 2010). As a subject, Social Studies helps students to understand their society better, to investigate how their society functions and hence assists them to be critical about their conduct and at the same time resort to a developmental kind of mind that transforms societies. If students understand the Ghanaian society better, and are able to examine the society's institutions, ways of life with a critical and constructive mind, the country will be on the path of better and faster growth in development.

2.3 Teacher's Perception about Social Studies as a Subject

According to Quartey (2003:2), "the philosophy of a subject is the main core that links the content, teaching and assessment of that subject". It is necessary for the practitioners of the Social Studies to be clear about what the subject (Social Studies) is. Akinlaye (2003:7) shared a similar view by stating that, "the competence in teaching Social Studies depends largely on sound understanding of its philosophy". The extent to which a subject can be in harmony with its goals and

objectives depends largely on how it is (the subject) perceived by its practitioners (Evans, 2004 and Akinlaye, 2003).

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2000), research design is the ‘blueprint’ that enables the investigator to come up with solutions to problems and guides him or her in the various stages of the research. The study was mainly on teaching effectiveness under Social Studies. The researcher therefore adopted descriptive design for the study which involves the observation, interview and focus group discussion. This enabled the researcher to obtain the real situation on the ground and the information gathered to reduce false idea or information about the situation under study. The researcher went by this design considering his desire to obtain first-hand information data from respondents.

3.2 Population

The general population for this study included all Social Studies teachers and students at the Senior High Schools in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The target population for the study consisted of all Social Studies teachers and students in the Senior High Schools in the Asante Akim North Municipality of the Ashanti Region.

3.3 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample size for the study was sixty – seven (67) respondents. This was made up of seventeen (17) Social Studies teachers and fifty (50) students in the Senior High Schools at the Asante Akim North Municipality. In all, there were six (6) Senior High Schools which were made up of four (4) government assisted and two (2) private registered ones at the Asante Akim North Municipality at the time of conducting the research (Ghana Education Service (GES): Ashanti Region Office).

Purposive, convenient and simple random sampling techniques were used to select the schools, teachers and students for the study. Six (6) Senior High Schools were conveniently selected for the study. The schools were conveniently selected for this study because of the accessibility to the researcher, the proximity for easy follow-up, cost consideration, and the fact that the researcher is a resident in the study area.

Table 3.3.1: Distribution of Teachers Selected For the Study

Name of School	Number of Teachers	Percent (%)
Agogo State S.H.S	4	23.5
Agogo Collins Comm. S.H.S	4	23.5
Konongo Wesley S.H.S	1	5.9
Konongo-Odumasi S.H.S	5	29.4
Owereman S.H.S Domeabra	2	11.8
Patrensa S. D. A S. H.S	1	5.9
TOTAL	17	100

Source: Field Survey(2019)

Table 3.3.2: Distribution of Students Selected For the Study

Name of School	No. of Students	Percent (%)
Agogo State S.H.S	9	18
Agogo Collins Comm. S.H.S	8	16
Konongo Wesley S.H.S	8	16
Konongo-Odumasi S.H.S	9	18
Domeabra- Owereman S.H.S	8	16
Patrensa S. D. A S. H.S	8	16
TOTAL	50	100

Source: Field Survey(2019)

IV. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Knowledge of Goals and Objectives of Social Studies

This research theme sought to determine how Social Studies teachers used the goals and objectives of Social Studies in their way of lessons delivery. The researcher adopted observation and interview as the tools for collection of the data on this theme. Teachers’ lessons were observed in the classrooms as they were teaching on three (3) different occasions to ensure that what was observed for the first time was repeated for the subsequent times or was changed. Interviews were also granted to the teachers after their lessons were observed for two (2) times in different occasions. This was done to make sure that the latter data collected were compared with the first data collected. All the 17 respondents’ lessons were observed. With this, an observation checklist rated “Very Good”, “Good”, “Average”, “Below Average” and “Not Available” were used. These items under this research question included *the extent to which the topic treated is problem oriented, quality of specific objectives for the lesson and relevance for the lesson*. Frequencies and percentages were used to compute items 1-3 in the observation guide. The results are presented in table 4.2.1.

Table 4.2.1: Teachers’ Knowledge of Social Studies Goals and Objectives

Item	Very Good	Good	Average	Below Average	Not Available	Total
1. The extent to which the topic treated is problem oriented.	17(100%)	0	0	0	0	17(100%)
2. Quality of specific objectives for the lesson	1(5.9%)	4(23.5%)	1(5.9%)	11(64.7%)	0	17(100%)
3. Relevance of specific objectives for the lesson.	1(5.9%)	4(23.5%)	1(5.9%)	11(64.7%)	0	17(100%)

Item 1 of Table 4.2.1 which is *the extent to which the topic treated is problem oriented* reveals that the topics chosen by all the 17 respondents were problem oriented which rated Very Good represented by 17 (100%). This shows that all the 17 respondents selected topics which were problem oriented. The data also revealed that with item 2 of Table 4.2.1 which is *quality of specific objective for the lesson*, 1 (5.9%) out of total number of 17 was rated Very Good, 4(23.5%) were rated Good, 1(5.9%) was rated Average while 11 (64.7%) were rated Below Average. Also, on item 3 which talks of the relevance of specific objectives for the lesson, the table reveals that 1(5.9%) out of total number of 17 was rated Very Good, 4(35.3%) were rated Good, 1(5.9%) rated Average and the remaining 11(64.7%) rated Below Average. This indicates that only 6 (35.3%) set objectives that were relevant for the lessons taught.

Furthermore, after the observation of the respondents' lessons, they were interviewed on the topics that they taught during the observation. In discussing this under the above theme, the emphasis or what to find out was on the level of importance that Social Studies teachers attached to the goals and general objectives of the subject and how familiar they were with the goals and general objectives of the subject in their lesson presentations. Interpretative technique was used to analyse the findings. Items 3-5 of the interview guide was considered in analysing this research theme. This theme was investigated through one-to-one interview. Item 3 on interview guide reads - Why do you consider this topic relevant to Social Studies? The result from this item indicates that out of the 17 respondents interviewed, 5 (29.4%) responded that they considered the topics relevant to Social Studies because the topics are problem oriented and Social Studies deals with issues in the society which are relevant to the individual. Also, 6 (35.3%) out of the total number of 17 responded that the topic taught was relevant because the topic will help the students to have broad knowledge about the other Social Sciences (Economic, History, Government and Geography) while 6 (35.3%) said the topic was taught because it is found in the textbooks given them to teach the students. This shows that most of the Social Studies teachers interviewed maybe did not understand the relevance of what they taught to the goals and objectives of the subject that they were teaching.

Item 4 on the interview guide: What is the essence of teaching Social Studies in the Senior High School? The response from 5 (29.4%) out of the 17 respondents was that to inculcate the right knowledge, skills, values and attitude into the students and to enable them solve their personal and societal problems. Eight (47.1%) said Social Studies was introduced at the Senior High School to replace the general paper during the Advanced Level (A' Level – G.C.E) and the last 4(23.5%) responded that it was meant to enable the students to get good grades to enter the tertiary institutions. This indicates that majority of the respondents were not aware why Social Studies was introduced at the Senior High School level. Only

5 (29.4%) were able to explain the reasons why Social Studies was introduced in the Senior High Schools.

Item 5 of the interview guide reads: *state the general aim of Social Studies you considered relevant to this lesson*. The result from this item indicates that out of the 17 respondents interviewed, 12(70.6%) indicated that they were not familiar with the general aims of Social Studies while 5 (29.4%) mentioned the following:

- To help the child develop positive attitudes and values towards individual and social issues.
- To enable students become responsible citizens, capable and willing to contribute to social advancement.
- To help students develop national consciousness and unity.

Results from items 3 show that a greater proportion of the respondents that is, 12(70.6%) out of the 17 respondents did not know the importance of the topic selected for the lessons during the observation to Social Studies and its goals and objectives. Only 5 (29.4%) responded that the topics are relevant to Social Studies because they were problems oriented and they constitute problems of man's survival. Also responses from item 4 on the interview guide revealed that 5 (29.4%) believed that Social Studies which is taught at the Senior high school will equip the students with the right knowledge, values, skills and attitude to enable them solve both their personal and community related problems while 12(70.6%) could not give the exact reasons of teaching social studies at the Senior High school level. This, as indicated in the literature review, that Social Studies equips the individual with tools necessary in solving both personal and community related problems (Quartey, 1984). Furthermore, item 5 which focuses on the general aims of Social Studies reveal that as many as 12(70.6%) respondents indicated that they were not familiar with the general aims of Social Studies while only 5(29.4%) were able to mention some of the general aims of Social Studies that were considered relevant to their lessons.

Results from research question one showed that most of the respondents were not familiar with the goals and general aims of Social Studies. But the purpose of the research question was to find out how familiar the respondents were with the goals and general aims of Social Studies and the importance they attached to them. As it is indicated in the literature review, an effective teacher should be familiar with the goals of the subjects he or she teaches which serve as direction and a guide in his or her instrumental teaching. Ayaaba (2008) indicated that Social Studies will perform a useful role in reforming the society only if teachers will bear its nature in mind and teach in consonance with its goals. The implication here is that much is needed to assist Social Studies teachers to acquire the knowledge of Social Studies goals and general aims to improve the quality of teaching and learning of Social Studies at the Senior High School level. It is the objective of every lesson that form the basis for the selection of content,

teaching and learning activities and resources that would help bring about effective teaching and learning. This therefore means that effective teaching of Social Studies requires teachers to exhibit certain behaviours and practices which are relevant for the attainment of the goals and objectives of Social Studies Education (Ayaaba & Odumah, 2007).

Responses gathered from the respondents during the interviews confirmed the goals and objective of Social Studies on how their lessons were taught.

REFERENCES

As prescribed by journal