Perceptions on Citizenship Education in Social Studies in Senior High Schools in Ghana

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Abstract: **This study was designed to examine citizenship education in social studies as perceived by teachers and students in six senior high schools in the Kumasi Metropolis. Four research questions guided this investigation which was grounded on the literature of models of citizenship and citizenship education. Cross-sectional survey was adopted for the study. Multiphase sampling procedure was employed to select six senior high schools out of 17 senior high schools and 300 third year students, but all the 49 social studies teachers were selected (census) for the study because the study was specific to social studies. Questionnaires were used to solicit responses from both students and teachers. Statistical Product for Service Solution (SPSS, version 21) was employed to analyze the data. Frequencies, percentages and tables were used to present the data. The findings revealed strong consensus among teachers and students that citizenship education matters a great deal for students' political development and for their countries. For the teaching practices, the study presents that the discussing and debating methods dominate citizenship education classrooms. The study concludes with recommendations to education policy-makers to consider teaching citizenship education as a specific subject such as History and Geography at the SHS level.**

Key words: **Citizenship; Citizenship Education; Integration; Pedagogies; Civic Engagement**.

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept "citizenship" dates back to the ancient Greek-State of Athens. Here, the population of the State was divided into two different classes. The first class was the citizens. These citizens enjoyed both political and civil rights and had direct and active cooperation in all the functions of the civil and military life and required to perform certain duties (Kapur, 1997). The slaves who constituted the second class had no such rights and as such suffered all kinds of political and economic disparities. Thus, the slaves were not entitled to the privileges of a citizen. However, the modern concept of citizenship has come to mean being a full member of a state and enjoying the rights and privileges of that state (Kapur, 1997). As every right has a corresponding duty, a citizen is required by the state to render his or her duties to the state.

For citizens to be able to perform their duties as required by the state and enjoy their rights as enshrined in constitutions, they must be educated in their rights and responsibilities, schools have been charged with the transmission of knowledge, understanding, right attitudes and skills needed by the citizens to perform their duties (Torney-Purta & Vermeer, 2004) and enjoy their rights. Schools serve as places that assist students by providing citizenship education in order to develop citizens' understanding of society and commitment to political and civic engagement. In this role, schools can help foster the knowledge, skills and dispositions that young people need to develop into politically and socially responsible individuals (Torney-Purta & Vermeer, 2004).

In Ghana, citizenship education is not new. Traditionally, the Ghanaian community prepares the youth through the informal system of education. The responsibility of training the youth was however the responsibility of both the nuclear and the extended family (MacWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1978). This type of education offered knowledge and practical skills for active participation in community life. The focus of citizenship education is thus on the provision of useful practical training as pre-requisite for citizens to participate effectively in all spheres of social, political and economic life, and the development of a sense of belongingness in the society in which they live.

In the formal education system in Ghana, citizenship education is seen as the responsibility of the school, with the subject area of social studies bearing particular responsibility for educating citizens. It is therefore seen as the cornerstone of social studies education which is meant to ensure that students are prepared for effective citizens and active participation in the local, national, and global communities (Westheimer & Kahne, 2003).

Although, a number of subjects such as Religious and Moral Education (RME), History, Sociology have been introduced for the purpose of teaching students to become active citizens (Ghana Education Service [GES] 2010), it is the social studies education, with its integrative and incorporated nature (integrating History, Sociology and other social sciences disciplines), that has been acknowledged as a major vehicle in promoting effective citizenship among Ghanaian students (GES, 2010). It is based on these that the National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS] (1994) describes the primary purpose of social studies as helping young people to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world. The major aim of citizenship education is to equip students with the practical skills of making meaningful contributions towards the development of their society. It is seen as a cross-discipline subject since it cuts across political, social, and economic boundaries (Smith, 1988).

It was based on the idea of developing civic competence among students in Ghana social studies was introduced into the education system and was even made a core subject at the basic and senior high school levels of education. It was hoped that when introduced into the Ghanaian educational system, it would enable all citizens to participate as fully as possible in cultural, economic, political and social life since citizenship education through social studies is meant to prepare the learner to be tolerant, patriotic, one who is devoted to freedom and has faith in democratic values and ideals of life.

Despite the provision made for introducing the learner to citizenship education through social studies education, it is widely acclaimed that very little attention is given to citizenship education at the senior high school. This situation threatens the development of the youth to becoming good citizens who are prepared to shoulder the responsibilities of Ghana (Kankam & Kwenin, 2010). The upsurge of moral decadence among the youth of Ghana these days seem to attest to the fact that citizenship education is either "untaught" or "under taught" in the senior high schools. This is also supported by evidence that young people graduate from senior high schools with little or no knowledge of or interest in community participation and decisions that affect their lives (McKinnon, 2007) which has led to a rise in political apathy, almost as fast as the increasing violent crime rate (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2006), the resurgence of vigilantism, the impact of global forces on local social traditions, the stresses created by increasingly multicultural societies, the decline of volunteerism in community activities, and the breakdown of moral fabric and democratic deficit (Mellor & Prior, 2004; Wilkins, 2003). One does not know if teachers and students do not hold the right perceptions about citizenship education, or do not understand the roles of citizenship education in preparing productive citizens. It is based on this backdrop that this study is being conducted to explore teachers' and students' perceptions about citizenship education in social studies. It is also meant to explore the importance as well as the challenges of promoting citizenship education through social studies education.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the direction of this research:

1. How do respondents understand citizenship education?
2. How do respondents perceive citizenship education in social studies?
3. What are the importance of teaching and learning of citizenship education at the senior
4. High school level?
5. What challenges characterize the teaching and learning of citizenship education at the
6. Senior high school level?

Research Methods

In this chapter, the various methods used to collect and analyze data are described. The section also describes the research design, the research participants; instrument used for data collection, data collection and data analysis procedures.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN

Descriptive research design was chosen for this study since the intention was to generalize from a sample of a given population so that inferences could be made about some characterizes and perceptions of the population. The research was limited to teachers who teach social studies in SHSs as well as SHS students of social studies in the Kumasi Metropolis. Two separate questionnaires were designed to collect data from the students and the teachers. The data were collected on how respondents understand citizenship education, how they perceive citizenship education in social studies, the relevance of teaching and learning of citizenship education at the senior high school level as well as the challenges that characterize the teaching and learning of citizenship education at the senior high school level. Random numbers method was used to 300 students from a population of 3653 social studies students. However, all the 49 social studies teachers were included (census) in the study due to their small size. The data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed according to the two categories of the sample from the teachers and the students. The data were organized into various themes and categories (four sections) based on the research questions and the purpose of the study such that each section provided answers for each of the research questions. Prior to coding and tabulating the questionnaires for analysis, the investigator edited all the items. The responses to the questionnaires were then coded by assigning numbers to the various categories of responses for the purposes of analyses. A short list was also prepared from a master of responses for the open-ended items in order to get the key responses that were given by the respondents. This was followed by a preparation of a sheet showing the coding scheme. After editing incomplete and inaccurate questionnaires, the questionnaires were transferred to a broad sheet (Statistical Product for Service Solution, version 21). The data were then cleaned by examining them for any errors and were finally analyzed using the SPSS. Percentages and tables were then employed. Because of the descriptive nature of the study, I employed descriptive statistical tools in analyzing the data. This programme helped to obtain descriptive statistics.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents' Understanding of Citizenship Education in Social Studies

This section gathered information on respondents' understanding of citizenship education in social studies. Their views were presented in Table 1.

The results in Table 1 indicate that both teachers (77%) and students (78%) agreed that citizenship is the development of ideas, beliefs, desirable behavior and attitude of students as responsible citizens. Similarly, 81% of students and 76% of teachers equally viewed citizenship education as empowering individuals with skills and tools for solving personal and societal problems. Kerr (1999) supports the views of both teachers and students when he stated that citizenship education is the kind of education that prepares individuals to participate as active and responsible citizens in a democracy. In support of the views of students and teachers, Blege (2001) stated that citizenship education is making conscious efforts aimed at equipping students with certain tools for solving their personal and societal problems.

Table 1-Respondents' Understanding of Citizenship Education in Social Studies

The meaning of citizenship education	Students										Teachers									
	SD		D		U		A		SA		SD		D		U		A		SA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Development of ideas, beliefs, desirable behavior and attitude of students as responsible citizens.	33	12	23	8	6	2	89	32	128	46	4	10	5	113	0	0	12	32	17	45
Inculcation of certain basic skills and tools in students for solving personal and societal problems.	18	6	26	9	10	4	133	48	92	33	3	8	2	5	3	8	16	42	14	37
Providing students with sufficient knowledge and understanding of national history and politics.	11	4	35	13	16	6	118	42	99	35	3	8	4	11	2	5	18	47	11	29
Knowledge of the constitution, principles values, history and application of contemporary life.	6	2	8	3	6	2	157	56	102	37	4	11	4	11	3	8	17	44	10	26
Conscious attempt to offer young generation moral, social, intellectual, and knowledge about cultural heritage.	15	5	7	3	12	4	111	40	134	48	0	0	3	8	2	5	14	37	19	50

Note: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, U = Undecided, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.

Another definition which supports the views of students and teachers is given by Eurydice (2005). According to them, school education for young people is the type that seeks to ensure that they become active and responsible citizens capable of contributing to the development and well-being of the society in which they live. Similarly, 77% of students and 70% of teachers viewed citizenship education as providing students with sufficient knowledge and understanding of national history and politics. Thus, the results from Table 1 indicate that the students' and teachers' understanding of citizenship education confirms that of Fullan (1991) who stated that citizenship education concerns providing information about national history and politics and describing relevant situations in a didactic and non-controversial way. This definition also confirms the outcome of a study by Torney-Purta et al. (1999) which revealed that teachers across all participant countries took the view that students should know about the country's national history, in order to become 'good citizen'.

Also, both students (93%) and teachers (87%) agreed that citizenship education is about knowledge of the constitution, its principles, values, history and application of contemporary life. Patrick (1986) shared the views of both the students and teachers when he reiterated that citizenship education is the knowledge of the constitution, its principles, values, history and application to contemporary life.

It is also revealed in Table 2 that both students 88% and teachers 87% supported the view that citizenship education is the conscious effort to offer young generation moral, social, intellectual, and knowledge about cultural heritage. In this regard, Aggarwal (2001) indicated that citizenship education involves many intellectual, social and moral qualities. This view is also shared by MacWilliam and Kwamena-Poh (1978) as well as Evans (2004) who indicated that citizenship education seeks to transmit the cultural heritage of the society. These definitions point to the fact that citizenship education is the inculcation of desirable attitude, values, behaviours, norms, customs, among others in students to become effective and responsible citizens in ever changing world. Thus, it provides the individual with the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for active participation in community development.

Respondents' Perception of Citizenship Education in Social Studies

This section gathered the views of teachers and students on their perceptions on citizenship education social studies

. Table 2-Respondents' Perceptions of Citizenship Education in Social Studies

Citizenship education:	Students										Teachers									
	SD		D		U		A		SA		SD		D		U		A		SA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Is best promoted through social studies but not the whole school subjects.	12	4	28	10	24	9	114	41	101	36	0	0	4	11	3	8	15	9	16	42
Should be taught as a specific subject.	33	12	41	15	11	4	105	38	87	31	2	5	5	13	4	11	19	50	8	21
Should be an extra-curricular activity.	11	4	33	12	15	5	117	42	102	37	11	29	18	47	2	5	4	11	3	8
Should be integrated into subjects related to human and social sciences.	97	35	89	32	21	8	37	13	33	12	10	26	9	26	4	11	8	21	6	16
Should be taught according to the standard curriculum requirements.	7	3	17	6	22	8	129	46	104	37	6	16	6	16	3	8	12	31	11	29

Note: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, U = Undecided, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.

From the responses given as shown in Table 3, both teachers (81%) and students (76%) shared similar perceptions regarding the effective ways of promoting citizenship education. They are agreed that citizenship education could best be promoted through social studies education. This outcome is not surprising since the ultimate goal of teaching social studies in schools is the development of reflective, concern and competent citizens who are better positioned in addressing societal challenges.

The outcome is shown in Table 2. From Table 2, it is evident that majority of the students, 215(76%) agreed that citizenship education is best promoted through social studies. This is contrary to the views of 40(14%) of the student-respondents who disagreed to the statement. The views of the teacher-respondents were not different from those of the students. While 31(81%) agreed, four representing eleven per cent disagreed that citizenship education is best promoted through social studies. This view confirms Banks' (1990) assertion that the shared responsibility of all school subjects towards the preparation of good citizens, but believed that this role is directly and primarily fulfilled by social studies. On their part, Wright and Sears (1997) posited that citizenship education is rightly situated within the Social Studies curriculum. In similar view, Dinkelman (1999) claimed that there is widespread agreement among social studies educators that preparing students to capably participate in democratic life provides the primary rationale for social studies in the modern school curriculum. Michael, Adeyemi and Boikhutso (2003) assertion that although all school subjects such as English, Mathematics, Integrated Science, Design and Technology and other related subjects are expected to contribute to the making of the well-rounded citizen, social studies is more related to the promotion of citizenship education in schools.

On the issue of teaching citizenship education as a specific subject, 192(69%) of students agreed and also 27(71%) of teachers agreed. Johnson's (1997) view supports the outcome when he argues that citizenship education should not be limited to one subject or school discipline, but shared with other disciplines such as language and literature courses or with geography or set within humanities approach. On the contrary to this view, Torney-Purta et al. (1999) found that the most popular approach to introduce civic education is through integrating it into other social science subjects. Both students and teachers also supported the view that citizenship education should be taught according to the standard curriculum requirements as shown by 233(83%) and 23(60%) for students and teachers. This means since concepts of citizenship education run throughout basic and senior high school levels, teachers must operate within a tightly controlled framework based on a structured syllabus and prescribed textbooks.

With regard to making citizenship education an extracurricular activity, there was a slight difference between students and teachers. While 219(79%) of students agreed that citizenship education should be an extracurricular activity, 7(19%) of the teachers supported the idea of making citizenship education an extracurricular activity. This means that the teachers attach less importance to making citizenship education extracurricular activity. This also implies that the teachers' views disconfirms the views of Kerr (1999); Nelson and Kerr (2005) that, citizenship education extends learning beyond the curriculum and classroom to all activities inside and outside school; but confirms a study conducted by Torney-Purta et al. (1999) which found that the extra-curricular model was regarded the least popular among teachers who took part in the study.

These differences in the perceptions of citizenship education eventually affect the ways teachers teach it as well as learners learn citizenship education. Interest therefore wanes as varied perceptions and attitudes characterize the teaching and learning of citizenship education through social studies education.

Importance of Citizenship Education

This section was devoted to discover the worth of teaching and learning citizenship education. Table 3 highlights the distribution of respondents' perceptions regarding the worth of citizenship education. In general, the results indicate that both students and teachers hold positive perceptions regarding the relevance of citizenship education.

Table 3 reveals that both students (74%) and teachers (84%) perceived citizenship education as helping in socializing young people into their culture. Rowe and Newton (1994) support this outcome when they wrote that citizenship education provides an essential element in the socialization process by helping young people to understand their society, contributing to it as informed, effective and responsible citizens.

Table 3-Respondents' Perception on the Worth of Citizenship Education in Social Studies

Citizenship education helps in:	Students										Teachers									
	SD		D		U		A		SA		SD		D		U		A		SA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Socializing young people into their culture.	30	11	28	10	23	5	92	33	115	41	2	5	3	8	1	3	14	37	18	47
community cohesion.	29	33	33	12	8	3	82	29	127	46	2	5	3	8	4	11	19	37	15	39
Developing a positive attitude in young people to participate in democracy.	13	5	21	8	6	2	140	50	99	35	5	13	2	5	3	8	19	50	9	24
Promoting political literacy and skills of community engagement.	23	8	14	5	12	4	156	56	74	27	2	5	5	13	2	5	12	32	17	45
Providing the means of social, political, and economic development.	6	2	16	6	20	7	115	41	122	44	0	0	3	8	4	1	15	39	16	42
Providing young people with the knowledge of the constitution.	12	4	7	3	19	7	109	39	32	47	3	8	0	0	2	5	21	55	12	32
Developing positive sense of identity and appreciation for the diversity of society.	14	5	18	6	13	5	13	49	98	35	3	8	6	16	6	16	12	31	11	29

Note: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, U = Undecided, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.

The study further revealed both students and teachers perceived citizenship education as promoting community cohesion, (75% and 76%). In supporting this view, Row and Newton (1994) asserted that community cohesion is more likely to thrive when schools focus deliberately on narrowing the achievement gap, building inclusion and directly addressing, within the curriculum, matters of identity, diversity and commonality. This means that when citizenship education is given its proper place as a statutory foundation subjects, these outcomes would be delivered.

Table 3 also reveals that citizenship education helps in developing positive attitude in young people to participate in democracy, (85% and 74%). Mitchell (1999) asserted that the development of democratic citizens is a necessary but insufficient condition for the development of democratic society. It lays the foundations for children's political literacy and promotes the skills of community engagement, and continues to be regarded as an essential tool for development.

In addition, both students and teachers believed that citizenship education helps in developing sense of identity and appreciation for diversity of society, (84% and 60%). Mitchell (1999) shared this view when he explains that knowledge in citizenship education creates consciousness of individuals as members of culturally diverse and democratic, interdependent society. As an important first step consciousness prompts the

need for reflection and action in solving and utilizing resources for development.

Finally, Table 3 indicates that respondents held the view that citizenship education provides young people with knowledge of constitution, (86% and 87%), which is in line with the views of Patrick (1986). According to him citizenship education helps to inculcate in students knowledge of constitution, its principles, values, history and application to contemporary life. He states further that understanding of the constitution as a symbol of nationhood and a means of governance was a pre-requisite to effective citizenship.

It can be deduced from Table 3 that citizenship education promotes active citizenship which is about revitalizing democratic public life, including school life. Citizenship education therefore nurtures well-informed citizens who are also caring, responsible and engaged, and have critical thinking skills. Promoting active citizenship therefore implies expanding current programmes of community service to include not only charitable activities and volunteer work, but also active involvement with democratic institutions, with political proposals and with contemporary public dialogues.

Challenges that Characterize the Teaching and Learning of Citizenship Education in Social Studies

Certain factors affect the teaching and learning of citizenship education in social studies. Hence, this section gathered respondents' views on the factors that negatively affect the teaching and learning of citizenship education in social studies. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 indicates that both students (74%) and teachers (87%) viewed inadequate teaching and learning resources as posing

major problem to the teaching and learning of citizenship education, although 84% of teachers equally considered low recognition of citizenship education as a major challenge facing the teaching and learning of citizenship education. The use of instructional materials is one of the most significant developments in the field of teaching. Students learn through their senses which create impressions on their minds by arousing and stimulating attention. Fokuo (1994) emphasised the use of instructional materials when he stated that the insatiable quest for social studies scholars to collect data to test hypotheses, answer questions and solve problems that have arisen in individual and group inquiry in response to instructional programmes necessitates the use of many and varied teaching resources.

With regard to negative school culture and climate affecting the teaching and learning of citizenship education, the views of students (82%) corresponded with those of teachers (87%). Research conducted by Fullan (1991) showed that the culture of schools and classrooms influences teachers and the approaches they adopt in teaching citizenship education. Ichilov (2003) agreed with these views when he explained that "open classrooms climate" contributes to effective learning process. This implies that school climate which is a set of internal characteristics that distinguishes one school from another influences the people (students, teachers, and administrators) in the school. This is because the climate of the school is in turn influenced by a number of factors such as the size and structure of the school, the leadership style, the communication networks, the goals of the school, technological adequacy, values, and the characteristics of members such as age and gender.

Table 4-Perceptions on the Problems of Teaching and Learning of Citizenship Education

Problems	Students										Teachers									
	SD		D		U		A		SA		SD		D		U		A		SA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Low recognition of Citizenship Education.	18	6	29	10	23	12	86	31	113	31	1	3	5	13	0	0	14	37	18	47
Negative school culture and climate.	13	5	18	6	20	7	70	25	158	57	0	0	3	8	2	5	12	32	21	55
Lack of appropriate modes of instruction.	15	5	42	15	22	8	102	37	98	35	3	8	2	5	4	11	15	39	14	37
Inadequate teaching and learning resources.	11	4	23	8	38	14	89	22	116	42	0	0	3	8	2	5	9	24	24	63
Teachers' competency or qualification.	34	12	26	9	30	11	98	35	91	33	6	16	8	21	4	11	10	26	9	26
Conflicts and different opinions in society.	18	64	38	14	19	7	115	41	89	32	6	16	3	8	6	16	12	31	11	29
Rapid changes in society.	20	7	12	4	35	13	140	50	72	26	5	13	4	11	6	16	15	39	8	21

Note: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, U = Undecided, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.

Both students (68%) and teachers (52%) also viewed teacher's competency and qualification as problems of teaching citizenship education. This implies that the views of students and teachers support that of Davies, Gregory and Riley (1999) that insufficient preparation of teachers is one difficulty encountered in the development of citizenship education. Similarly, Kerr (1999) stated that inadequacy of the preparation of teachers to handle citizenship education in the school curriculum has also been found to pose major problems in teaching citizenship education. He further pointed out that this inadequacy relates not only to a lack of teacher content knowledge but also to an inability to employ a range of teaching and learning approaches appropriately for citizenship education.

It must be emphasized that the role of the teacher, collectively and individually, is crucial in teaching citizenship education since teachers' unfamiliarity about what citizenship education is can influence their ability to carry out effective citizenship education in the classroom. This is particularly true when there is a general notion that everybody can teach citizenship education. It is common knowledge that untrained teachers or trained teachers who do not have any background in citizenship education could use their experience and knowledge in other subjects to teach citizenship education. It is important to note that an effective teacher of citizenship education needs to be well-grounded in the academic expertise that cuts across several related disciplines to be able to integrate knowledge satisfactorily for effective teaching and learning process.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Teachers and students have knowledge of citizenship education to include not only the inculcation of ideas, beliefs, desirable attitudes and behavior into young people to become responsible adults but also knowledge of the constitution, its principles, values, as well as history and its application to contemporary life. Besides, it includes the conscious attempt to offer the young generation moral, social, intellectual qualities and knowledge about cultural heritage.

Both teachers and students also perceived that citizenship education is best promoted through social studies, and that social studies has the primary responsibility of developing desirable attitudes, behaviour and values of students. This shows that they are positively predisposed to embracing any efforts to promote the teaching and learning of citizenship education.

Inadequacy of teaching and learning resources for social studies at the SHS level and low recognition of citizenship education pose serious problems to the teaching and learning of citizenship education in social studies. Besides, inadequacy of the preparation of teachers to handle citizenship education in the school curriculum was found to be a major challenge in teaching citizenship education. This inadequacy relates not only to a lack of teacher content knowledge but also to an inability to employ a range of teaching and learning approaches appropriately for citizenship education.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings and the conclusions drawn the following recommendations are made for practice.

It is recommended that in order to effectively implement citizenship education, it should be taught as a specific subject such as history and geography at the SHS level, but not through social studies. This will give citizenship education the needed attention as given to the other social sciences subjects.

If the teaching and learning of citizenship education in social studies is to be promoted in the SHS, then, necessary teaching and learning resources should be provided. Although the availability of well-equipped teachers with requisite knowledge in social studies and civic related subjects are no doubt important, the necessary teaching and learning resources which facilitate or support effective teaching and learning are equally important. Resources such as social studies room, museum, laboratory, reference books, and audio-visual materials which engage students' attention should be provided since learning occurs through the active behaviour of the learner. It is also recommended that regular in-service training, workshops, seminars, conferences and other continuous professional development programmes should be organized for teachers, especially, those who have taught for over 10 years in order to keep them abreast with current social issues.

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