

Sense of efficacy in implementing the basic school social studies curriculum in Ghana

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Abstract

Final year teacher-trainees' sense of efficacy in implementing the Basic School Social Studies curriculum in Ghana has become indispensable since the subject introduced solely to right the wrong in society is taught mostly by graduates from the Colleges of Education (CoE). Mixed method approach was used. Purposive and convenience sampling techniques were used to select 150 final year teacher-trainees for the study. Questionnaires and interviews were used to gather the data. The study revealed that pedagogical training is a strong predictor of teacher-trainees' conception about Social Studies. Critical thinking is the most important skill for problem solving, inquiry and discovery in Social Studies. Final year teacher-trainees (mentees) lack the needed knowledge and teaching skills to impart Social Studies as a problem/issue-oriented subject. It is recommended that Social Studies tutors of CoE should hold it a duty to help students have better, more realistic ideas about the multiple realities of what constitutes Social Studies in the real world since they (teachers) influence what is taught.

Keywords

Basic School, Curriculum, Curriculum Implementation, Sense of Efficacy, Social Studies, Ghana

1. Introduction and Background

This paper presents the outcome of the final year teacher-trainees' sense of efficacy in implementing the Basic School Social Studies curriculum in Ghana. The paper is structured into five (5) main sections namely; the Introduction and Background, Review of the Literature, Methodology, Findings and Discussion and the Conclusion. The first section introduces the structure of the paper, the context and aims and objectives of the paper. The literature review section reviews the relevant literature on issues pertaining to the teaching methods for Social Studies focusing on the affective modes of lesson delivery that will help change and develop positive attitudes of students. The methodology section presents a broad description of the methodology and procedures adopted in the conduct of the study on mentees' sense of efficacy in implementing the Basic School Social Studies Curriculum. Findings resulting from the study are

presented and discussed in the section following the methodology and conclusion, highlighting on some implications of the findings, and recommendations.

A research conducted by Bekoe and Eshun (2013a:44) on Social Studies curriculum feuding and implementation challenges in Ghana, revealed that "Teacher Training Institutions subscribe and use a particular conception of Social Studies curriculum for the production of Social Studies education graduates". It is claimed that teachers ability to effectively teach (self-efficacy) and in students' abilities to learn (outcome expectancy) have been correlated to classroom practice (Bandura, 1986; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). If the teacher is committed and has positive attitude then it is sure that his performance will be better and his effort will be fruitful. Richardson (2003) narrated that education is a nation building activity. The quality of education depends upon ability and efficiency of teachers. If the teachers are well trained, motivated and

committed with their profession learning will be enhanced. This suggests that the way Social Studies is taught need to get a makeover and be woven around relevant issues that will unearth positive behavioural change in learners. Eshun and Mensah (2013a:83) stressed that “Social Studies should be taught as a holistic subject, which should reflect behavioural change in students and not facts from other social sciences. Social Studies teachers should stress on teaching of skills more than the factual content. The main role of the Social Studies teacher is to emphasize the development of relevant knowledge, positive attitudes, value and problem solving skills of students.” This calls for the need of harmonizing all Social Studies curricular documents to reflect problem solving.

This notwithstanding, so many Social Studies teachers only teach by lecturing and expect rote memorisation from their students. This happens often because of the “overwhelming amount of material contained in a typical state Social Studies curriculum framework” (Vogler & Virtue, 2007: 55). The teachers have so much information they are required to cover that they “have trouble getting beyond the “just the facts” content coverage and into higher-level, critical thinking, especially because of the limited class time available” (Vogler & Virtue, 2007: 55).

One main reason teachers have to cover so much information is because of high stakes testing. Researchers have found that “teachers under the pressure of high stakes testing tend to increase their dependency on teacher-centred instructional practices (e.g. lecture) and the superficial coverage of content driven textbooks” (Vogler & Virtue, 2007:56). High stakes testing has caused teachers to move away from student-centred approaches “such as discussion, role-play, research papers, and cooperative learning” because they need to learn “just the facts” because that is what the tests cover (Vogler & Virtue, 2007:55).

What is disturbing about these facts is that research has shown that students learn more from student-centred approaches. Eshun and Mensah (2013b:185) assert that, “teaching Social Studies is stressed to be done in student-centred techniques and strategies.” The authors, further stressed that, brainstorming, role-playing, simulation, discussion and debate were the major techniques stressed by both Colleges of Education curriculum and the Junior High School (JHS) social studies syllabus in Ghana. This makes it prudent for the Social Studies teacher to be familiar with the major objectives in the subject area in order to formulate objectives in all the domains of learning following the different classifications by Bloom (1956), Krathwohl (1956) and Taba (1962). This makes information becomes more meaningful to them; therefore, they retain it for longer periods of time. “Brain research has found that the brain searches for patterns and connections as its way of building meaning, if students are not actively engaged in their learning, then they are unable to make the connections necessary to make learning meaningful” (Cuthrell & Yates, 2007:22). Cuthrell and Yates (2007) found that Social Studies content should be in-depth with lessons and activities. The type of

lessons an educator teaches is based on the conception of the subject and the philosophy of teaching and learning. Each teacher should possess philosophy which “provides guidance and direction in choosing objectives, learning activities, and assessment procedures” (Ediger, 2007:18).

In Ghana, according to Quashigah, Dake, Bekoe, Eshun, & Bordoh (2014:3) the teaching syllabus for Social Studies prepares the individual by equipping him or her with knowledge about the culture and ways of life of their society, its problems, its values and its hopes for the future. These clearly show that it is accepted that the ultimate aim of Social Studies is seen as Citizenship Education.

The issue has been this, “although Social Studies is seen as an integrated body of knowledge of the social sciences, there is an issue of acceptable level of integration” (Bekoe & Eshun, 2013a:43). As a result of this according to Bekoe and Eshun (2013b:92) “teachers have varied conceptions about Social Studies as an amalgamation of the social sciences, citizenship education, reflective inquiry or problem solving”. Bekoe and Eshun (2013c:111) concluded that “the background knowledge of Social Studies teachers is built from their training institutions and this goes to influence the way they teach (i.e. selection of content, unit or topic, formulation of objective(s), mode of teaching, and assessment tool(s) used”.

This paper has become necessary because according to Kankam, Bekoe, Ayaaba, Bordoh and Eshun (2014) curriculum differences seem to be evidenced in the Social Studies scope of content for Colleges of Education and how the Basic School teaching syllabus for Social Studies is structured in Ghana. The clear curricular difference is seen as a problem in a sense that Social Studies syllabus they will use to teach at the basic schools will not be in consonance with what they were taught while in college. There was therefore the need to conduct a study that will examine the final year teacher-trainees’ (mentees) sense of efficacy in implementing the Basic School Social Studies curriculum in Ghana.

The purpose of the study was to ascertain the final year teacher-trainees’ sense of efficacy in implementing the Basic School Social Studies curriculum in Ghana. The research was guided by this question-What are the levels of efficacy by teacher-trainees in implementing the Basic School social studies curriculum in Ghana? The research covered three (3) public Colleges of Education in the Western Region out of the thirty-eight (38) public colleges in Ghana. In addition, the study covered only the Social Studies curriculum at the Colleges of Education, the Basic School and the final year teacher-trainees. The colleges have homogenous curriculum and population characteristics.

2. Review of the Literature

In the teaching and learning of Social Studies as a subject, Schmidt (2007) suggested three aspects of instruction - content, learning and outcomes - that need to be reconnected with the fundamental humanity of this discipline. According

to Schmidt (2007:4-5) putting the social back in content means re-establishing human beings as the central subject of Social Studies-their lives and stories, their triumphs and abysmal failures, the enduring dilemmas embedded in the study of family and society over time. Putting the social back in learning means creating learning environments and using instructional practices that are compatible with the natural recurring cycle of learning in human beings. Putting the social back in outcomes means incorporating into your curriculum challenging problems, authentic experiences, and real-life tasks that have consequences in the community or world, and teaching your student to accomplish it." This means that aside content, the teacher trainees need to learn methodology before going on practice. This indicates that techniques of teaching and assessment need to be taken seriously to reflect the subject objective of building positive attitudes.

According to Quashigah, Eshun and Mensah (2013:77) the pedagogical content knowledge of Social Studies teachers and their assessment practices are seemingly affecting the teaching and attainment of the objectives of Social Studies adversely at the Senior High School level in Ghana. Social Studies assessment, with a focus on the affective domain, occupies a critical position in both Junior High School and Senior High School curriculum in Ghana. The success of instruction can only be determined by a proper evaluation; hence it is important that teachers possess the necessary skills for affective evaluation. Pierre and Oughton (2007), claim that although many college teachers outline and plan lesson with affective outcomes, they fail to indicate how these will be taught and evaluated. This implies that there is an existence of an enormous gap between intended objectives and actual classroom practices in the teaching of Social Studies in Ghana.

According to Eshun and Mensah (2013b:194) "discrepancies exist between what teachers said they assessed and what they actually assessed in Social Studies. Test items addressed in the end of term examination in Social Studies were mainly those measuring cognitive outcomes. Within the cognitive domain, the only levels which were covered are knowledge of recall and a little bit of comprehension. More objective test questions were used than the essay type of questions." The authors concluded that these results are a clear indication that the way students are tested in the Social Studies end of term examination are contrary to the main goals and objectives of the subject which is to develop a reflective, concerned, responsible and participatory citizen in the civic life of individuals in a country. Quashigah *et al.* (2014) assert that Social Studies prepares the individual to fit into society by equipping him/her with knowledge about the culture and ways of life of their society, its problems, its values and its hopes for the future. This task calls for effective curriculum implementers. Eshun, Bordoh, Bassaw and Mensah (2014:46) assert that "effective formative assessor requires someone who has the necessary depth of content knowledge of the subject s/he is teaching". To them, lesson delivery is seen to be a two way

affair only if teachers share achievable success criteria with student in lesson presentation; using relevant activities from the beginning of the lesson to the end. Achieving this lofty goal of Social Studies to a large extent depends on how well the teacher handles the subject; able to develop teaching and learning methods that will lead to the effective attainment of the subject goal - developing of positive attitudes of students.

Teaching, according to Borich (2004), is a complex and difficult task that demands extraordinary abilities. According to Kyriacou (1995), effective teaching is essentially concerned with how best to bring about the desired pupil learning by some educational activities. To inculcate the right skills, values, knowledge, and attitudes in students to see Social Studies as problem-solving activity, there is the need for effective teaching in all the phases of teacher education. Duodu (2002) posits that effective teacher education depends on the quality of instruction given in training institutions and the induction given to them at their new stations. This implies that imbuing of appropriate skills should be given priority in teacher preparation and in-service training as a support for the transition into full professional teacher status and survival of a novice teacher.

The inculcation of the right attitude, values and skills in learners, in the view of Bekoe and Eshun (2013c:111), depends on the selection of content, teaching and assessment techniques, which the ideal Social Studies teacher must be competent enough to possess. This however, according to Bekoe, Eshun and Bordoh (2013) due to hasty nature in formulating formative assessment and scoring, tutors rather laid emphasis on cognitive domain to the neglect of affective and psychomotor domains which are also of paramount importance. This implies teaching and learning has not taken place until the learner has shown observable evidence of change in attitude. Making good use of formative strategies in assessing students helps them to examine their strength and weakness and this result in improving teaching practice (Eshun *et al.*, 2014). This suggests that there is the need for effective teaching and learning for students to imbue the affective skills for them to do right things and to be problem solvers.

Affective learning according to Plutchik (1982) is the outcome or the feeling or tone that is expressed by such term as attitude, beliefs, values, appreciation or interest. To him, these are concepts that many teachers are not likely to know that they can be taught. They therefore pay little attention to its pedagogy. The implication here is students are always taught facts and how these facts are memorised for examination purposes.

This shows that in Social Studies, we do not simply learn. What we learn is influenced and organised by emotions and mind set based on expectancy, personal biases and prejudices, degree of self-esteem, and the need for social interaction. Emotions operate on many levels, somewhat like the weather. They are on-going, and the emotional impact of any lesson or life experience may continue to reverberate long after the specific event (Caine & Caine, 1991). It is suggested that if Social Studies actually is to modify and change students'

behaviour in the direction of acceptable norms, values, beliefs, attitudes and practices of the society, then much effort should be made to deal with selection of content, effective instructional strategies and concrete perceptual formation of the subject by its pedagogues.

This call for the need for a Social Studies teacher to be abreast with the use of affective modes of lesson delivery that will help change and develop positive attitudes of students. There have been numerous articles written and studies done on the topic of teaching methods for Social Studies. Critical thinking is the most important skill for problem solving, inquiry and discovery in Social Studies. It is the systematic approach of skilfully evaluating information to arrive at the most feasible solution to a variety of structured and ill-structured problems (Laxman, 2010; Shah, 2010). Yet teaching Social Studies does not always result in this outcome. Teaching for critical thinking competence necessitates a philosophical shift in focus from learning to thinking (Chun, 2010), drill and practice to problem-based learning (Savery, 2009), subject isolation to subject integration, output to process, what is convenient to what is needed, and now to the future. Guiding students through the process of thinking like researchers and participating in activities helped them to appreciate the importance of not jumping to conclusions (Parker, 2009).

Although traditional and contemporary theories have provided a base for teaching for critical thinking in Social Studies, many schools are still graduating students who are ill-equipped to problem-solving. This may be due to a variety of factors including; how teachers interpret critical thinking (Jones, 2004), their feeling of self-efficacy to support students to develop problem solving competences (Wheatley, 2002), the students' own self-efficacy regarding their critical thinking abilities (Caliskan 2010), students' inadequate information-searching skills (Laxman, 2010), and teachers' preference for more behaviourist than constructivist approaches to teaching.

Certainly a paper that requires students to annotate, outline, summarise, synthesise, contextualise, explore the use of figurative language, identify patterns of opposition and evaluate the logic of arguments before taking a reasoned perspective and arriving at a conclusion will engage students in similar critical thinking processes (Jonassen & Bosung 2010). In addition to projects and written papers, verbal techniques such as argumentation, is an excellent way for students to demonstrate their ability to think critically in Social Studies. According to Jonassen and Bosung (2010:440) "argumentation is valued for its role in facilitating conceptual change particularly for less structured problems. That is, learners alter their comprehension or adjust their frames of reference to accommodate new perspectives". Above all, a holistic approach to teaching for critical thinking in Social Studies should involve a set of appropriate goal-oriented assessment tasks that enable students to manipulate both affective and cognitive skills.

Also, persuasive messages in lesson can be used by Social Studies teachers to instil the right ideals in students-positive

attitude building and behavioural change. Learning theories of attitude change, no longer as popular as they once were, focus on reinforced behaviour as the primary factor responsible for attitude development. Early research on attitude change drew on Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory, which posits that, when a person is persuaded to act in a way that is not congruent with a pre-existing attitude, he or she may change the attitude to reduce dissonance (Smith & Ragan, 1999). To use dissonance to produce attitude change, the persuader must first establish the dissonance, and then provide a method to reduce it. Ideally, this will involve making the chosen alternative attractive, showing a social group with the desired attitude, demonstrating the issue's importance, providing free choice, and establishing a wide latitude of acceptance through successive approximation (Martin & Briggs, 1986). The most effective persuasive messages are those "that get the audience to think about an issue or object in concrete, vivid images that have definite implications for behaviour" (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991:194).

Social learning theory is also a learning theory that can be used by a Social Studies teacher to effect positive attitude building and concrete change in students. Social learning theory focuses on the development of cognitions related to the expected outcome of behaviour. This theory suggests that an individual learns attitudes by observing the behaviours of others and modelling or imitating them. An observed behaviour does not have to be reinforced to be learned (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991), and the model "can be presented on film, by television, in a novel, or by other vicarious means" (Martin & Briggs, 1986:28). The model must be credible to the target audience (Bednar & Levie, 1993). Credibility is largely a function of expertise and trustworthiness. Observational learning is greater when models are perceived as powerful and/or warm and supportive, and "imitative behaviour is more likely when there are multiple models doing the same thing" (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991:51).

Simonsen and Maushak (2001) also drew on findings from a number of studies to create a series of six guidelines for effective design of attitude instruction. These are: make the instruction realistic, relevant, and technically stimulating; present new information; present persuasive messages in a credible manner; elicit purposeful emotional involvement; involve the learner in planning production or delivery of the message; and provide post-instruction discussion or critique opportunities.

Smith and Ragan (1999) focused on the behavioural aspect of attitude learning and emphasise the importance of three key instructional approaches: demonstration of the desired behaviour by a respected role model; practice of the desired behaviour, often through role playing; and reinforcement of the desired behaviour. Bednar and Levie (1993:282) made similar recommendations: When designing instruction for attitude change, three approaches emerge from the theoretical literature: providing a persuasive message; modelling and reinforcing appropriate behaviour; and inducing dissonance between the cognitive, affective, and behavioural

components of the attitude. These approaches are ideally used in tandem.

Summary from the number of studies on guidelines for effective design of attitude instruction from the above suggest that children should take integral part in teaching and learning activities and without their involvement in classroom activities implies learning has not taken place. Teachers must not only be abreast with teaching skills in the affective but must also be knowledgeable on how to assess attitude learning.

3. Methodology

The research methods chosen for this study are; both qualitative and quantitative (mixed method). The two methods were given equal priority. Methods were combined both for triangulation and complementarity. Triangulation was used to test the consistency of findings obtained through different instruments used, whilst complementarity clarifies and illustrates results from one method with the use of another method. The population for this study included all final year teacher-trainees offering the general programme for Diploma in Basic Education (DBE) certificate in the three Colleges, namely Enchi, Holy Child, and the Wiawso Colleges of Education in the Western Region of the Republic of Ghana.

One hundred and fifty final year teacher-trainees were sampled from the three Colleges of Education. Non-probability sampling method (purposive and convenience sampling techniques) was used to select the sample of districts, colleges and respondents for the study. In all there are thirty-eight (38) public Colleges of Education in Ghana.

Out of the sampled size of one hundred and fifty (150) teacher-trainees, convenience sampling technique was used to select thirty final-year teacher-trainees: ten from each of the three colleges were interviewed. Data Collection was facilitated through the administration of questionnaire and interview.

The quantitative data entry and analysis was done by using the SPSS software package. The data was edited, coded and analysed into frequencies, percentages with interpretations. The qualitative data was analysed by the use of the interpretative method based on the themes arrived at during the data collection. The themes were related to the research question and interpreted on the number of issues raised by respondents. These were based on question on the semi-structured interviews.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1. Mentees' Sense of Efficacy in Implementing the Basic School Social Studies Curriculum

From the literature, the main objective is to establish whether the differences in conceptions and curricula structures of Social Studies have differential impact on the

final year teacher-trainees as to how they think the subject ought to be taught at the Junior High School (JHS) level. Outcomes of mentees' conceptions of how Social Studies ought to be taught using questionnaires were triangulated with interviews.

Item 1 which is - *Amalgamation of the social sciences is the best approach for Social Studies* shows that out of the 150 final year teacher trainees from the three Colleges, 98 (65.3%) agreed, 25 (16.7%) were not certain, whilst 27 (18.0%) disagreed. The 98 (65.3%) agreeing out of the 150 of the respondents implies that greater percentage of the trainees agreed to the assertion. If mentees should have in mind that amalgamation of the social sciences is the best approach for Social Studies then there is the likelihood that they will teach the subject by bootlegging facts from the social sciences. As a result of this the colleges should hold it a duty to help students have better, more realistic ideas about the multiple realities of what constitutes Social Studies curriculum in the real world-providing students with the inter-and cross-disciplinary perspectives required to respond to challenges of this 21st century world.

Item 2 which is - *Citizenship Education is the best approach for Social Studies* shows that out of the 150 final year teacher-trainees from the three Colleges, 103 (68.7%) agreed, 29 (19.3%) were not certain, whilst 18 (12.0%) disagreed. The 103 (68.7%) agreeing out of the 150 of the respondents implies that greater percentage of the mentees agreed to the assertion. This shows that teachers need to be sensitized in effective teaching in citizenship education. Citizenship education needs to be done by packing its content with attitude building approaches in teaching and learning.

Item 3 which is - *Method integration is the best approach for Social Studies* shows that out of the 150 final year teacher-trainees from the three Colleges, 117 (78.0%) agreed, 25 (16.7%) were not certain, whilst 8 (5.3%) disagreed. The 117 (78.0%) agreeing out of the 150 of the respondents implies that greater percentage of the trainees agreed that method integration is the best approach for Social Studies. For clarification, this question on the interview guide was asked-*What is "method" integration in designing the Social Studies curriculum and how is it done?* One of the mentees, Ama (not the real name) said "*I think Social Studies has a distinctive approach to teaching different from the other social sciences...so the method integration is going for different techniques of teaching which are unique to the subject...examples are debate, role-play, field trip, simulation, and discussion.*" The outcomes from the questionnaire and the interviews indicated that mentees have in mind that Social Studies teaching must go with method, techniques and strategies that will help solve societal problems.

Item 4 which is - *Content integration is the best approach for Social Studies* shows that out of the 150 final year teacher-trainees from the three Colleges, 83 (55.3%) agreed, 33 (22.0%) were not certain, whilst 34 (22.7%) disagreed. The 83 (55.3%) agreeing out of the 150 of the respondents implies that greater percentage of the trainees agreed that content integration is the best approach for Social Studies.

For clarification, this item on the interview guide was asked - *What is "content" integration in designing the Social Studies curriculum and how is it done?* Kweku (not the real name) a lead mentee has this to say "*content integration is going for the important topics from other subjects in the social sciences and a whole lot of other subjects...Social Studies is the essential elements of the knowledge drawn from different subjects...brought together into a given subject.*" Abeiku (not the real name) said "*It deals with relevant themes from many subjects into a given entity called Social Studies...that learning all the subjects makes one to become intelligent...knowing a lot of things around him/her...making one a critical thinker in society.*" However, Affi (not the real name) said "*it is the bringing together the subjects in the social sciences...given it a new name, Social Studies.*" Although, the responses from the questionnaire attest to mentees agreeing on the concept, the interviews conducted show that respondents were having divided conceptions and not a fair idea about the content integration of Social Studies which need to be a holistic subject in nature. This support Bekoe and Eshun (2013:43a) "Although Social Studies is seen as an integrated body of knowledge of the social sciences, there is an issue of acceptable level of integration.

Item 5 which is - *Presentation of facts to students from the Social Studies syllabus is the best approach for teaching the subject* shows that out of the 150 final year teacher-trainees from the three Colleges, 87 (58.0%) agreed, 27 (18.0%) were not certain, whilst 36 (24.0%) disagreed. The 87 (58.0%) agreeing out of the 150 of the respondents implies that greater percentage of the mentees agreed to the assertion. This is seen as a problem because Social Studies as a subject has been conceptualised differently by its practitioners over the years since its inception (i.e. amalgamation of the social sciences; citizenship education etc.), however, it seems that there is an agreement of its being seen as a problem solving subject.

Item 6 which is - *Writing narratives in Social Studies classes can prove effective at helping students learn about historical figures in a challenging and enjoyable way* shows that out of the 150 final year teacher-trainees from the three Colleges, 103 (68.7%) agreed, 30 (20.0%) were not certain, whilst 17 (11.3%) disagreed. The 103 (68.7%) agreeing out of the 150 of the respondents implies that greater percentage of the mentees agreed to the assertion.

Item 7 which is - *Role-play is the best technique to help pupils grasp the ideals of Social Studies* shows that out of the 150 final year teacher trainees from the three Colleges, 115 (76.7%) agreed, 20 (13.3%) were not certain, whilst 15 (10.0%) disagreed. The 115 (76.7%) agreeing out of the 150 of the respondents implies that greater percentage of the mentees agreed to the assertion. This indicates that role-play is an ideal child-centred technique that must be used in teaching Social Studies lessons.

Item 8 which is - *Discussion technique can be effective because they can be challenging, promote learning and encourage tolerance* shows that out of the 150 final year teacher-trainees from the three Colleges, 129 (86.0%) agreed,

16 (10.7%) were not certain, whilst 5 (3.3%) disagreed. The 129 (86.0%) agreeing out of the 150 of the respondents implies that greater percentage of the mentees agreed that discussion technique can be effective because they can be challenging, promote learning and encourage tolerance. This implies that discussions can make learning meaningful as child-centred approach if they are done correctly in Social Studies class.

Item 9 which is - *Argumentation is an excellent way for students to demonstrate their ability to think critically* shows. The outcome shows that out of the 150 final year teacher-trainees from the three Colleges, 106 (70.7%) agreed, 15 (10.0%) were not certain, whilst 29 (19.3%) disagreed. The 106 (70.7%) agreeing out of the 150 of the respondents implies that greater percentage of the mentees agreed to the assertion. The outcome suggests that teaching for critical thinking in Social Studies involves a set of appropriate goal-oriented assessment tasks that enable students to manipulate both affective and cognitive skills, thereby imbuing in them tolerance.

Item 10 which is - *Cooperative learning has been found to be an effective strategy for Social Studies classes* shows that out of the 150 mentees from the three Colleges, 128 (85.3%) agreed, 13 (8.7%) were not certain, whilst 9 (6.0%) disagreed. The 128 (85.3%) agreeing out of the 150 of the respondents implies that greater percentage of the mentees agreed to the assertion. The outcome suggests that techniques like role-playing, debate, discussion which are types of cooperative learning activities should be used in teaching and learning of Social Studies.

Item 11 which is - *Persuasive messages in lesson can be used by Social Studies teachers to instil the right ideals in students - positive attitude building and behavioural change* shows that out of the 150 final year teacher-trainees from the three Colleges, 89 (59.3%) agreed, 36 (24.0%) were not certain, whilst 25 (16.7%) disagreed. The 89 (59.3%) agreeing out of the 150 of the respondents implies that greater percentage of the final year teacher-trainees agreed to the assertion. This shows that Social Studies teachers should be well abreast with learning theories of attitude change and incorporate them into their classroom activities.

Item 12 which is - *Social Studies professionals should begin educational planning by focusing first on social and political issues that will affect students and society* shows that out of the 150 final year teacher-trainees from the three Colleges, 110 (73.3%) agreed, 19 (12.7%) were not certain, whilst 21 (14.0%) disagreed. The 110 (73.3%) agreeing out of the 150 of the respondents implies that greater percentage of the mentees agreed to the assertion.

Item 13 which is - *There is no objective about what Social Studies should be* shows that out of the 150 final year teacher trainees from the three colleges, 22 (14.7%) agreed, 40 (26.7%) were not certain, whilst 88 (58.7%) disagreed. The 88 (58.7%) disagreeing out of the 150 of the respondents implies that greater percentage of the mentees disagreed to the assertion.

Item 14 which is - *There is no universal reality about what*

Social Studies should be shows that out of the 150 final year teacher-trainees from the three Colleges, 45 (30.0%) agreed, 29 (19.3%) were not certain, whilst 76 (50.7%) disagreed. The 76 (50.7%) disagreeing out of the 150 of the respondents implies that greater percentage of the mentees disagreed to the assertion.

Item 15 which is - *The primary role of a Social Studies teacher is to increase student's awareness of social issues* shows that out of the 150 final year teacher-trainees from the three Colleges, 135 (90.0%) agreed, 6 (4.0%) were not certain, whilst 9 (6.0%) disagreed. The 135 (90.0%) agreeing out of the 150 of the respondents implies that greater percentage of the mentees agreed to the assertion. Item 16 which is - *Primary role of a Social Studies teacher is to help students learn how positive attitude can impact on one's community to develop* shows that out of the 150 final year teacher trainees from the three Colleges, 135 (90.0%) agreed, 10 (6.7%) were not certain, whilst 5 (3.3%) disagreed. The 135 (90.0%) agreeing out of the 150 of the respondents implies that greater percentage of the mentees agreed to the statement.

Item 17 which is - *The scope of Social Studies education is based on current issues in society* shows that out of the 150 final year teacher-trainees from the three Colleges, 63 (42.0%) agreed, 20 (13.3%) were not certain, whilst 67 (44.7%) disagreed. The result indicates that those who disagreed were close to those who disagreed that the scope of Social Studies education is based on current issues in society. In teaching and learning of Social Studies the current issues in society should be linked to how problems are solved. Item 18 which is - *The scope of Social Studies education is based on solving issues that threaten human survival* shows that out of the 150 final year teacher-trainees from the three Colleges, 106 (70.7%) agreed, 20 (13.3%) were not certain, whilst 24 (16.0%) disagreed. The 106 (70.7%) agreeing out of the 150 of the respondents implies that greater percentage of the mentees agreed to the assertion.

Item 19 which is - *The aim of Social Studies Education should be to cultivate the rational thinking abilities of students*, shows that out of the 150 final year teacher-trainees from the three Colleges, 129 (86.0%) agreed, 13 (8.7%) were not certain, whilst 8 (5.3%) disagreed. The 129 (86.0%) agreeing out of the 150 of the respondents implies that greater percentage of the mentees agreed to the assertion.

Item 20 which is - *The purpose of Social Studies education is to prepare students for life* shows that out of the 150 final year teacher-trainees from the three Colleges, 132 (88.0%) agreed, 15 (10.0%) were not certain, whilst 3 (2.0%) disagreed. The 132 (88.0%) agreeing out of the 150 of the respondents implies that greater percentage of the mentees agreed to the assertion. The above responses are supported by the interview item - *Are you a change person undergoing a course in Social Studies? Explain your answer.* With the above question, the respondents have the following to say: Amoah (not the real name) said "yes because nowadays I do things that I think is normal as a result of learning the subject ... at first I will even drink "pure water" and dump

the sachet rubber anywhere...now I know it is very bad to do a whole lot of things... I am now a happy person...I have inner joy anytime I get to know that I am doing something good and I get appreciated". Nhyiraba, (not the real name) has this to say "yes, it is making me a problem solver... I now think in a positive way and try to do the right things as expected of me by society". However, Kojo, said "because I studied the subject well I was able to pass all my Social Studies examinations and will be happy teaching it after graduating from the college". Almost all of the interviewees responded yes with varying reasons that undergoing a course in Social Studies has helped them to be changed persons. Social Studies curricula of teacher training institutions should aim at equipping individuals to pursue good life.

Item 21 which is - *Social Studies education is designed to help students have positive attitudinal change* shows that out of the 150 final year teacher-trainees from the three Colleges, 140 (93.3%) agreed, 3 (2.0%) were not certain, whilst 7 (4.7%) disagreed. The 140 (93.3%) agreeing out of the 150 of the respondents implies that greater percentage of the mentees agreed to the statement. If the pith and core of Social Studies is seen as citizenship education then its instruction must be done in a way to help students have positive attitudinal change. Item 22 which is - *Social Studies is the social science in practice* shows that out of the 150 final year teacher trainees from the three Colleges, 100 (66.7%) agreed, 39 (26.0%) were not certain, whilst 11 (7.3%) disagreed. The 100 (66.7%) agreeing out of the 150 of the respondents implies that greater percentage of the mentees agreed to the assertion.

Item 23 which is - *Differences between students arise from their particular cultural and social situation and can be minimised as they recognise their common needs and problems through Social Studies education* shows that out of the 150 final year teacher trainees from the three Colleges, 112 (74.7%) agreed, 35 (23.3%) were not certain, whilst 3 (2.0%) disagreed. The 112 (74.7%) agreeing out of the 150 of the respondents implies that greater percentage of the final year teacher-trainees agreed to the assertion. Item 24 which is - *The role of the Social Studies teacher is to guide students in their mastery of problem-solving processes* shows that out of the 150 final year teacher-trainees from the three Colleges, 117 (78.0%) agreed, 21 (14.0%) were not certain, whilst 12 (8.0%) disagreed. The 117 (78.0%) agreeing out of the 150 of the respondents implies that greater percentage of the trainees agreed to the statement. The Social Studies teacher guiding students in their mastery of problem-solving processes, means inculcating the right skills, values, knowledge, and attitudes in students to see Social Studies as problem-solving.

Item 25 which is - *Social Studies professionals should encourage students to examine their values and beliefs and to raise critical questions, especially about societal values* shows that out of the 150 final year teacher-trainees from the three Colleges, 127 (84.7%) agreed, 14 (9.3%) were not certain, whilst 9 (6.0%) disagreed. The 127 (84.7%) agreeing out of the 150 of the respondents implies that greater percentage of the final year teacher-trainees agreed to the statement.

5. Conclusions

There were verifiable evidence of diverse knowledge base of final year teacher-trainees about the conceptions of Social Studies and its effective teaching. Mentees have varied conceptions about how Social Studies ought to be taught. Mentees see the following as the best approach for Social Studies - amalgamation of the social sciences; citizenship education; method integration; content integration; and the presentation of facts to students from the Social Studies syllabus.

Teacher-trainees were confused whether Social Studies education is based on current issues in society. Mentees disagreed that there is no objective about what Social Studies should be; and that there is no universal reality about what Social Studies should be.

Pedagogical training is a strong predictor of teacher-trainees' conception about Social Studies. Content knowledge alone does not adequately prepare teachers for the challenges they face in today's Social Studies classrooms.

Critical thinking is the most important skill for problem solving, inquiry and discovery in Social Studies. Mentees lack the needed knowledge and teaching skills to impart Social Studies as a problem/issue-oriented subject to pupils. Their sense of efficacy on the current knowledge base about Social Studies as a problem solving was inadequate.

It is recommended that Social Studies tutors of CoE should hold it a duty to help students have better, more realistic ideas about the multiple realities of what constitutes Social Studies in the real world since they (teachers) influence what is taught. Since the basic knowledge for using cooperative techniques in teaching for critical thinking in Social Studies by mentees was seen as a challenge, it is suggested that in teaching and learning of Social Studies, problem solving approach must be stressed emphasising on how to assess attitudinal learning.

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