



# **An Evaluation of the Implementation of the Social Studies Curriculum in Ghana: A Case Study of the Asante Akim North District**

**Isaac Eshun <sup>a\*</sup>, Anthony Bordoh <sup>a</sup> and Prince Opoku-Afriyie <sup>b</sup>**

<sup>a</sup> Department of Social Studies Education, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana.

<sup>b</sup> Department of Social Science. Presbyterian College of Education, Akropong-Akwapim, Ghana.

## **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all the authors. All authors read, edited and approved the final manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

"The purpose of this study was to evaluate the Social Studies Curriculum for Senior High Schools in Ghana to determine whether the subject has attained its goal(s). The study took place in the Asante Akim North District. The population for study were all Social Studies teachers and students in the district. The multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for the study and the sample size was 120, made up of 100 students and 20 teachers. The concurrent mixed method approach was adopted. The main instruments used for collecting data were questionnaires, interviews (focus group and semi-structured interview) guide, observation and documentary analysis. Quantitative data were tabulated, organized, analysed and interpreted to draw sound conclusions and generalizations. The data were presented in the form of tables and percentages. Words were used to interpret the tables and percentages for easy understanding. The qualitative data responses were described and explained in the form of themes. Sometimes responses were quoted verbatim

\*Corresponding author: Email: isaaceshun@uew.edu.gh;

to authenticate claims made. The study revealed that most of the teachers who are the curriculum implementers have forgotten the subject's general objectives. Therefore, they teach the subject without any cognizance of the attainment of these objectives. Concerning the findings of the study, it is recommended that the district education directorate should organize periodic workshops, in-service training and seminars for teachers teaching the subject. This will help Social Studies teachers acquire the relevant knowledge and the pre-requisite skills needed to effectively implement the Social Studies curriculum in the Asante Akim North District.”

*Keywords: Observed antecedents; curriculum implementation; social studies; curriculum; senior high school; Ghana.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The National Council for Social Studies (NCSS), states that “the primary purpose of Social Studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world” [1]. Similarly, Martorella opined that “the enduring goal of Social Studies is to produce reflective, competent, concerned and participatory citizens who are both willing and capable of contributing positively toward the progress of democratic life in their societies” [2]. This is in sync with Banks as he points out that, “the major goal of Social Studies is to prepare citizens who can make reflective decisions and participate successfully in the civic life of their communities and the nation” [3].

In Africa, the Social Studies programme was introduced in 1968 after the Mombasa Conference in Kenya although some scholars like Obebe posit that, Social Studies started far back in the 1950s in some West African countries like Ghana and Nigeria [4]. There were challenges the proponent institutions and scholars faced in trying to introduce and sustain the reasons for Social Studies in the various parts of the world [5]. “All notwithstanding, the purpose of introducing Social Studies in Africa was in three folds: to promote national integration; deal with problems of rapid economic development and promotion of self-confidence and initiative based on an understanding of one’s worth and the essential dignity of man” [5]. This, in a nutshell, would make children become well-informed and reasoned citizens, willing and capable of contributing to national development.

In Ghana, the situation was not different. “The Social Studies programme was introduced in the country to inculcate in learners with the relevant knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to deal with societal problems. Social Studies as

a subject provides us with ways of looking at society to understand its structure and its problems and to look for ways of solving the problems of society” [6]. Therefore, the subject was introduced in the country with the philosophy of solving problems of Ghana which are persistent, contemporary, and threatening to the survival of individuals and society [7, 8]. Hinging on this philosophy and goal, Social Studies was introduced as a subject into the Ghanaian basic school curriculum in 1987 and later as a core subject in 1998.

The subject is taught at all the country's Basic and Senior High Schools. As a core subject at the SHS level, every student is required to study it. However, with emphasis placed on English, Maths and Science, Social Studies seems to be losing its worth in our Senior High Schools. Some Headmasters/mistresses think every teacher can teach the subject so several untrained Social Studies teachers are handling the subject in almost all Senior High Schools in the country. This is evidenced by several out-of-field teachers who are normally seen handling Social Studies in the country. This has resulted in the poor teaching of the subject at the SHS level. This is supported by Kumari when he bemoaned that, “the teaching of Social Studies has suffered very much from poor teaching, especially at the elementary stage” [9]. He further said that “it is in general held that anyone could teach Social Studies.” All that is needed is a textbook and the ability to read, and truly this is the case in our Senior High Schools. The teaching of Social Studies has been restricted to the four walls of the classroom with most teachers teaching without any aid of teaching and learning materials which is in sharp contradiction to what Social Studies stands for.

However, when the subject was incorporated into the Ghanaian school curricula in 1987 and became a core subject in 1998, one thought our

problems as a country were over, but contrary, social problems like armed robbery, sexual violence, drug abuse, corruption, poor sanitation, greed, political intolerance, examination leakages, indiscipline, indecent dressing and destruction of water bodies especially through galmsey activities have skyrocketed. The question then is, has Social Studies failed to achieve its goal or the subject has underachieved or is achieving its goal? This question can best be answered if empirical evidence is provided through an evaluation of the implementation of the Social Studies curriculum. Hence, this study sought to present empirical evidence on the attainment of Social Studies goals by involving some Senior High School students in the Asante Akim North District of Ghana.

It is argued that "Social Studies is not about the accumulation of selected facts for later recall but should aim to: produce a responsible person able to cope with change, capable of making reasonable decisions, who is an intelligent consumer and controller of science and technology, able to live with and appreciate human diversity, and support and defend human dignity" [9]. Given this, the subject aimed at equipping the learner with the relevant knowledge, skills, positive attitudes and values to deal with personal and societal problems. "The rationale for teaching the subject at the SHS level is to prepare 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" [10]. To achieve this rationale, the general objectives of teaching the subject as spelt out in the 2010 Social Studies Teaching Syllabus are to: 1) Develop the ability to adapt to the developing and ever-changing Ghanaian society; 2) Acquire positive attitudes and values towards individual and societal issues; 3) Develop critical and analytical skills in assessing issues for objective decision-making; 4) Develop national consciousness and unity; 5 Use enquiry and problem-solving skills for solving personal and societal problems; and 6) Become responsible citizens capable and willing to contribute to societal advancement" [10].

This implies that the teaching of Social Studies at Senior High Schools should be geared towards the attainment of these objectives and thus, it is envisaged that, students who passed through the Social Studies programme at the Senior High School level should develop and

internalize the relevant knowledge, positive attitudes, values and skills to solve their problems and that of their communities to make the goal of Social Studies (producing informed, reasoned and participatory citizens) realized. However, there seems to be an upsurge in social problems such as indiscipline among the youth who are mostly products of Social Studies as well as the rife of corruption, greed, apathy, and disloyalty among others in the country which raise questions about whether the subject is achieving its goal or is failing to achieve its goal.

However, since the introduction of Social Studies as a school subject in basic schools in Ghana and subsequently the Senior High Schools in 1998, not many studies have been conducted on the impact it is making on learners. It is therefore important a study is conducted on the evaluation of Social Studies curriculum implementation to fill the gap in the literature as to whether or not the implementation of the Social Studies curriculum in Ghana is leading to the attainment of its objectives and goals.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the implementation of the Social Studies curriculum at the Senior High School level and provide empirical evidence on the attainment or otherwise of its goals and objectives in the Asante Akim North District of Ghana. To achieve the purpose of the study, this research question was formulated to guide the study: To what extent are the intended antecedents in the implementation of the Social Studies curriculum, as provided for in the syllabus, congruent with those that are being applied in Senior High Schools in the Asante Akim North District?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study was grounded in the "Goal Setting Theory" by Locke and Latham [10]. "In the late 1960s, Locke's pioneering research into goal setting and motivation gave us our modern understanding of goal setting. In his 1968 article "Toward a Theory of Task Motivation and Incentives" he showed that clear goals and appropriate feedback motivate employees. He went on to highlight that working toward a goal is also a major source of motivation, which, in turn, improves performance. A few years later Locke and Latham studied the effects of goal setting in

the workplace [11]. His results supported Locke's findings that "there is an inseparable link between goal setting and workplace performance." Thus, the Goal Setting Theory emphasizes the important relationship between goals and performance. "Through an understanding of the effect of goal setting on individual performance, organizations can use goal setting to benefit organizational performance." Locke and Latham have indicated "three moderators that indicate goal-setting success which is:

- The importance of the expected outcomes of goal attainment, and
- Self-efficacy - one's belief that they can achieve the goals, and
- Commitment to others - promises or engagements to others can strongly improve commitment" [11].

Expanding the three from above, it is obvious that the attainment of a goal depends heavily on the importance the implementers and the recipients attach to the goal. Locke and Latham (2006) argue that it is not sufficient to urge employees to "do their best". "Doing one's best" has no external referent, which makes it useless in eliciting specific behaviour. To elicit some specific form of behaviour from another person, this person must have a clear view of what is expected from him/her. The researchers believe that in the Social Studies curriculum what is expected of learners has been stated in the syllabus but as to whether this has been communicated to the students and as to whether students are guided toward the attainment of this goal is what this study seeks to unravel.

"Goal setting can advance learning by guiding pedagogy. For instance, "backward design" is a well-known instructional design model that uses goal setting as the focal point of lesson design" [12]. "When using backward design, instructors identify learning goals for the course first, considering what they want students to have learned and be able to do when they finish the course, then determine acceptable evidence on whether those goals are met, and plan learning experiences and instruction to achieve those learning goals" [12]. "This process can encourage instructors to evaluate the relative importance of course concepts and to account for their students' prior knowledge when formulating a pedagogical approach." It is on this implication for human resource development that Eshun and Ashun assert "Since effective

teaching is an important objective to be achieved, there is the need for proper training of students for the teaching profession" (p. 109) [13].

"Self-efficacy on the other hand according to Locke and Latham is an internal belief regarding one's job-related capabilities and competencies. If employees have high self-efficacies, they will tend to set higher personal goals, believing they are attainable" [11]. "Locke and Latham posit that a goal that is too easily attained will not bring about the desired increments in performance. The key point is that a goal must be difficult as well as specific for it to raise performance" [11]. However, there is a limit to this effect. Although organization members will work hard to reach challenging goals, they will only do so when the goals are within their capability.

"As goals become too difficult, performance suffers because organization members reject the goals as unreasonable and unattainable. Research offers various models describing quality goals. Some researchers identify difficulty, specificity, and proximity as key features of effective goals, whereas others state that high-quality goals should be SMART; that is, learning goals should be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound" [13]. "Studies have also found that higher results are achieved if goals are specific, measurable, and challenging, not unrealistic or outside the student's capacity. A major factor in the attainability of a goal is self-efficacy" [14, 15]. "The first key to successful goal setting is to build and reinforce employees' self-efficacy. Research supports predictions that the most effective performance seems to result when goals are specific and challenging when they are used to evaluate performance and linked to feedback on results and create commitment and acceptance. The motivational impact of goals may be affected by moderators such as ability and self-efficacy. In support, Kreibig, Gendolla and Scherer opine that, there is an effective aspect of goal attainment" [16]. "They further argue that when students accomplish self-relevant goals, their success elicits positive emotions such as interest, joy, and pride. The sense of competence resulting from successful goal achievement encourages students to set more challenging goals and eventually adopt goal-directed mindsets. According to Meta motivational Self Determination Theory (SDT), goal choice and a sense of competence in a classroom learning community will motivate

students to continue on their learning trajectories” [17]. Therefore, it is important to set desired and attainable goals which the researchers believe the developers of the Social Studies curriculum have done.

The theory also states that “people perform better when they are committed to achieving certain goals. The researchers opine that when students have self-commitment to achieve something they work tirelessly to achieve it. Thus, the effect of goal setting on achievement depends critically on the students’ investment (or commitment) in that goal [18]. There are several reasons for this. “First, once someone commits, s/he will likely behave consistently with that commitment. Second, people are model likely to seek and receive feedback when they commit to attaining their goals. Third, individuals are also quite successful at suppressing alternative goals when they are engaged in the pursuit of their goals. This notwithstanding, the theory also holds that the level of commitment is influenced by external factors such as the person assigning the goal, and setting the standard for the person to achieve/perform. This influences the level of commitment by how compliant the individual is with the one assigning the goal. An external factor can also be the role models of the individual” [19]. Thus, in the Social Studies curriculum teachers are the role models and how they present the curriculum to learners will determine how well students will be motivated towards Social Studies instruction. When instructors set explicit learning goals, students have a clear picture of course expectations, helping them to concentrate their efforts efficiently toward the attainment of those goals.

According to the theory, “there appear to be two cognitive determinants of behaviour: values and intentions (goals). A goal is defined simply as what the individual is consciously trying to do. Over here, what Social Studies student wants to do consciously is to produce reflective competent and participatory citizens” [20, 21]. Locke and Latham postulate that the form in which one experiences one’s value judgments is emotional. That is, one’s values create a desire to do things consistent with them hence if Social Studies students value Social Studies instruction they will develop a consistent desire. Finally, the theory holds that without proper feedback channels, employees cannot adapt or adjust to the required behaviour. Managers should keep track of performance to allow employees to see how effective they have been in attaining their

goals. Providing feedback on short-term objectives helps to sustain motivation and commitment to the goal and without it, goal setting is unlikely to be successful. Feedback should be provided on the strategies followed to achieve the goals and the outcomes achieved, as well. Feedback on strategies used to obtain goals is very important, especially for complex work, because challenging goals focus on outcomes rather than on performance strategies, so they impair performance.

A research synthesis noted the following principles of quality feedback: “First, feedback should be timely (the longer we wait the less effect it has on achievement). Feedback should be specific (criterion-referenced) and “corrective” to show what went well, what needs improvement, and how to improve (all three components needed for maximum achievement). Feedback can be verbal and written and can come from teachers, peers, or the student himself/herself. It should ask students to interpret data and self-assess in the light of their goals and intentions, rather than ask them to react to our interpretation. Finally, feedback should allow students to make decisions as to the nature of the improvements and adjustments that need to be made. This clearly shows that the researchers’ intention of evaluating the Social Studies curriculum is in order” [22, 23].

From the above, it is axiomatically consistent with associating the evaluation of the Social Studies curriculum with the Goal-setting theory by Locke and Latham [10]. In the Social Studies curriculum, the goal that has been set is the development of informed, reflective, competent and participatory citizens and to achieve this goal the general objectives for teaching the subject are stated in the teaching syllabus. This is to inform the users to be well abreast of what to do in terms and teaching to realise the general goal of the subject.

These objectives should be achieved after learners have gone through the curriculum to improve upon performance and hence, teachers and students are motivated to achieve these objectives. However, Locke and Latham assert that “feedback must be provided on goal attainment” [10]. It is therefore imperative to evaluate the Social Studies curriculum to know how far these objectives are being attained and again, to what extent have these goals affected learners who have gone through the Social Studies curriculum. From the above a conceptual

framework was deduced from the theory to ground the study. This is shown in Fig. 1.

From the conceptual framework, the red-shaded portion represents the goal of Social Studies which has been expanded into six broad objectives and can be found on page ii of the 2010 Social Studies Teaching Syllabus [10]. It is envisaged that these objectives will be achieved after learners have gone through the Social Studies curriculum.

To make these clear and achievable, specific objectives have been formulated for every topic as Moeller, Theiler and Wu put it, "goal setting is the process of establishing clear and usable targets, or objectives, for learning" [24]. "Several studies indicate that goal setting affects performance and enhances achievement" [13, 25]. Moeller et al went on to posit that "appropriate goal setting, along with timely and specific feedback, can lead to higher achievement, better performance, a high level of self-efficacy, and self-regulation" [24]. The arrow from the red-shaded portion pointing to the yellow portion indicates that the content must be selected based on the goal.

The yellow-shaded portion represents the content of the Social Studies curriculum which is drawn or selected based on the general objectives of teaching the subject and in the Social Studies syllabus the content has been categorized into three sections namely: The Environment, Governance, Politics and Stability, Social and Economic Development. The arrow from the yellow-shaded portion pointing to the goal indicates that the content selected must produce the goal of the subject. This is collaborated by Kochhar when he asserts that "determination of aims and objectives is essential. We have to decide "as to what the children should be able to know, to do and to become through a subject" [26]. He went further to explain that we must make sure of the intent and be clear in our minds as to what a subject deals with, and what exactly is the purpose we wish to pursue, and achieve in teaching and studying it [27]. The above clearly shows that every subject in a school curriculum has the goal(s) or aims and the content selected must be geared towards the realization of the set goal(s) [21].

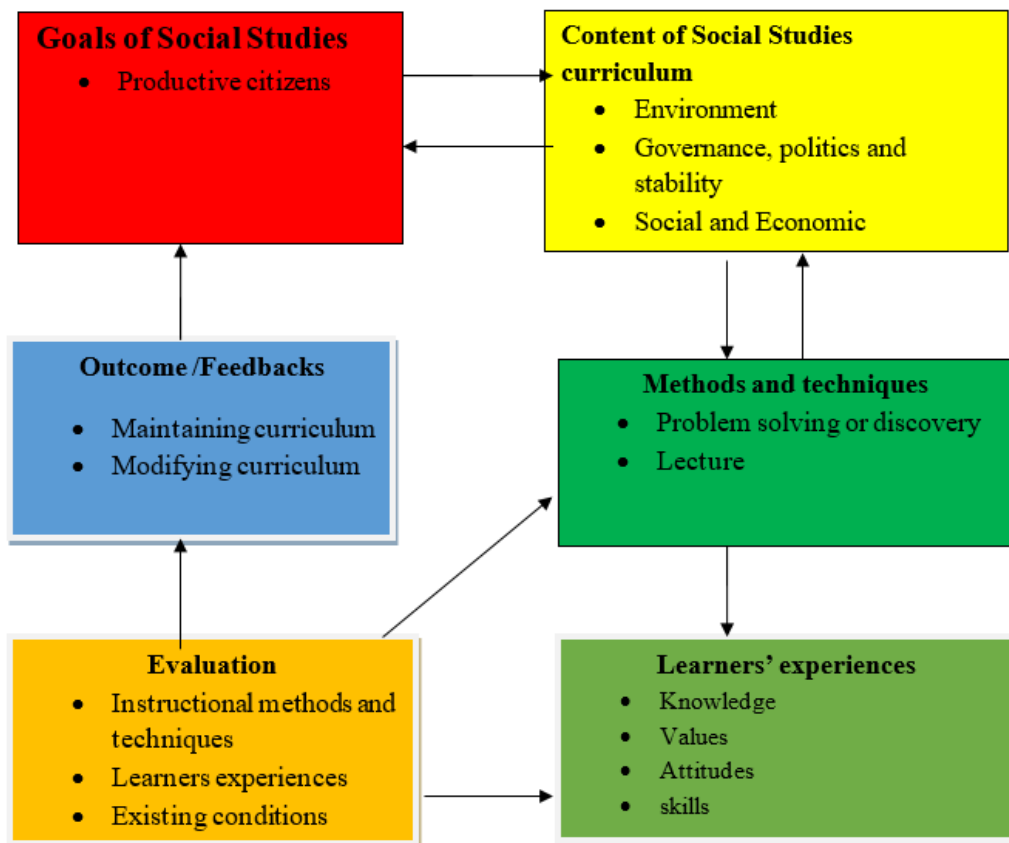


Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework from the Goal Setting Theory

The green-shaded portion represents the methods, techniques and strategies teachers should take their students through during Social Studies instruction to achieve the goal of the subject. The arrow from the yellow-shaded portion pointing to the green-shaded portion (methods and techniques) indicates that the method(s) selected must take into account the content to be studied whilst the arrow from the green-shaded portion pointing to the yellow-shaded indicates that whatever method and techniques selected should be geared towards the effective delivery of the content to ensure the attainment of the goal(s). Researchers are of the view that these are influenced by teachers' behaviours and intentions which will in turn influence learners' behaviour and intentions towards the subject [27, 28]. Thus, learners will feel motivated when their interests are developed and sustained during Social Studies lessons. This implies that Social Studies teachers should use methods, techniques and strategies that will make the subject attain its goals. Shaughnessy and Haladyna concluded that "it is the teacher who is key to what Social Studies will be for the student" (p. 694) [29]. The implication here is that there are varieties of methods and, techniques at the disposal of the Social Studies teacher however the selection of appropriate and suitable methods and techniques to enable the subject to realise its goal or purpose rests in the bosom of the teacher [30, 31].

The portion with an orange background portrays the learning experiences learners are expected to acquire from Social Studies which include relevant knowledge, positive attitudes, values and skills necessary for national development. The arrow from the green shaded portion (methods and techniques) pointing to the orange shaded area indicates that whichever method(s) and technique(s) used or adopted by the teacher should help learners acquire the relevant knowledge, skills as well as inculcating in them the positive attitudes and values needed for national development. The main goal of the Social Studies subject is to prepare young individuals with the relevant knowledge, skills and positive attitude to enable them to participate actively in society as they solve their individual and societal problems [32]. Ofofu-Kusi supported this assertion by arguing that Social Studies is about positive attitudinal formation so that individual potential and behaviour can be harnessed for development [33].

The portion shaded violet represents the evaluation of the Social Studies curriculum which

the researchers adopted in this study to find out whether the goal or the general objectives of Social Studies have been met or not for a decision to be taken. Curriculum evaluation monitors and reports on the quality of education [34]. The researchers further opine that the goal of evaluation must be to answer questions of selection, adoption, support and worth of educational materials and activities. This helps in identifying the necessary improvements to be made in content, teaching methods, learning experiences, educational facilities, staff selection and development of educational objectives. The two arrows from the violet-shaded portion toward the green-shaded and orange-shaded portions indicate that the evaluation should be done based on learners' experiences, methods and techniques.

The area shaded blue represents the outcome of feedback concerning the goal and the general objectives of Social Studies. The arrow from the violet-shaded portion (Evaluation) towards the blue-shaded portion (Outcome) indicates that the outcome is from the evaluation. The outcome of every evaluation leads to a decision taking. There are three types of decisions for which evaluation is used. Namely: "Course improvement which decides on what instructional material and methods are satisfactory and where changes are needed; Decisions about individuals which identify the needs of the pupil for the sole of planning of instruction and grouping, acquainting the pupil with his own deficiencies and administrative *regulations* which judges how good the school system is, and how well individual teachers are. It also serves the needs of the policymakers, administrators and other members of the society for information about the educational system" [34]. Finally, the arrow pointing to the red (Goal) shaded portion from the blue shaded portion (outcome) shows that the decision taken should depend on whether the goal has been achieved or not.

### 2.3 The Social Studies Curriculum and its Implementation

Kelly defines "curriculum as all the learning which is planned and guided by the school, whether it is carried out in groups or individually, inside or outside the school" [35]. Hence the meaning of the term curriculum has also been changed to meet the needs of education of different courses of studies. On his part, Blenkin defined "curriculum as a body of knowledge contents and or subjects." Thus, "curriculum is the process by

which knowledge and skills are transmitted or delivered to learners by the most effective methods that can be devised” [36]. Finally, Tanner and Tanner gave a comprehensive definition of a curriculum when they “define curriculum as the planned guided learning experience and intended learning outcomes formulated through a systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experiences under the auspices of the school for the learner’s continuous and wilful growth in academic, personal and social competence” [37]. The researchers therefore opine that these planned experiences will only yield fruition after the curriculum has been implemented successfully.

The achievement of objectives of any level of education depends largely on the effective implementation of its planned programme. This is because the problem of most programmes arises at the implementation stage. In their opinion, Babalola and Mkpá remarked that “it is at the implementation stage that many excellent curriculum plans and other educational policies are marred without any trace” [38, 39]. This is supported by Marsh when he echoed that “curriculum is a plan in the first place. The curriculum turns into reality only when teachers implement it for students and the class in the real world” (pp. 65-75) [40]. As Marsh points out, “a set of curricula, however, close to perfect if it is planned must be implemented if it is to bring outcomes to the benefit of learners” [40].

Miller and Seller “defined the concept of implementation with three approaches, namely: a) implementation is defined as an activity; b) implementation means an effort made to enhance the process of interaction between the teacher developers and the teachers themselves; and c) implementation is an entity separated from curriculum components” [41]. Marsh emphasises the “term implementation refers to the “actual use” of curriculum/syllabus or anything in practice” [40]. Obanya defined the implementation of curriculum as day-to-day activities which school management and classroom teachers undertake in the pursuit of the objective of any given curriculum [42]. Obanya again contends that an effective curriculum reflects what “the learner” eventually takes away from an educational experience. “The process involves helping the learner acquire knowledge or experience. It is important to note that curriculum implementation cannot take place without the learner. The learner is therefore the central figure in the curriculum implementation

process. Implementation takes place as the learner acquires the planned or intended experiences, knowledge, skills, ideas and attitudes that are aimed at enabling the same learner to function effectively in a society” [44].

“Curriculum implementation is viewed as the process of putting the curriculum to work for the achievement of the goals for which the curriculum is designed” [43]. The researchers therefore believe that the goal of Social Studies education cannot be achieved if the planned curriculum is not well implemented. Again, Onyeachu asserted that “No matter how well a curriculum of any subject is planned, designed and documented, implementation is important because it is during the implementation stage that shortfalls of a programme arose” (p. 1) [43]. The researcher believes that, the Social Studies curriculum has been put into practice for a long time and that an evaluation needs to be conducted to see if the actual outcome which is the goal of the subject has been achieved or not.

“Social Studies is at the centre of a good school curriculum because it is where students learn to see the world, its people, places, cultures, systems, and problems; its dreams and calamities now and long ago. Social Studies needs to be set deeply within the school curriculum from the earliest grades” [44]. Hence, the researchers believe that if this goal is achieved then the Social Studies classroom must be lively and interesting. According to the NCSS, the Social Studies classroom is a place where all students can be successful in practising the democratic process, participating in role-plays and classroom discourse, demonstrating special skills and unique talents, and developing their identities through learning about the experiences of others” [45].

This was supported by Ananga and Ayaaba who asserted that “the Social Studies classroom is a theatre for examining issues of personal and social significance” [46]. This means that the Social Studies classroom is a place where both personal and societal problems are dissected, debated, discussed and illuminated for solutions and this can be done successfully if the medical officer in the theatre who is the Social Studies teacher possesses the requisite knowledge and skills in problem-solving. However, putting a curriculum into operation requires an implementing agent. Stenhouse identifies the “teacher as the agent in the curriculum implementation process” (p. 4) [47]. She argues



that "implementation is how the teacher selects and mixes the various aspects of knowledge contained in a curriculum document or syllabus. Undoubtedly, the agent in the Social Studies classroom is the teacher, the success or otherwise of the implementation of the Social Studies curriculum lies mainly on the shoulders of the Social Studies teacher. With curriculum implementation, the teacher is supposed to build relationships with the students and promote individual learning. These relationships and beliefs will inspire students to innovate, and help students confidently take risks in learning whereby failure is regarded as progress."

A research study by Bordoh, Eshun, Brew, and Kofie concluded that "teachers' conception of a subject or a curriculum would shape their perceived curriculum and therefore their implemented curriculum" [48]. The implication is that the way and manner a teacher conceptualized a curriculum depicts how it would be implemented. The researchers believe that the quality of Social Studies teachers and the quality of their teaching are certainly indispensable in making the subject achieve its ultimate goal. The teacher's opinions are very pivotal and salient to determine the efficiency level and to reach the aims of Social Studies lessons. Successful implementation of curriculum as coined by Ornstein and Hunkins is "influenced by three factors, namely people, programmes, and processes" [49]. The researchers believe that of all the three factors, the people factor is supreme, the basis for this argument is that, teachers are positioned at a strategic point of departure in developing and implementing the curriculum at schools hence, the attainment of the goals as stated in the programme depends on the teachers' performances including their professional experiences, motivation, abilities, and dedication.

"The attainment of curriculum goals and general aims of Social Studies are inextricably linked to the national goals and aspirations of education and rely on the quality of teaching that goes on in the classroom. Effective learning is thus dependent on the quality of teaching that is carried out by various teachers during instructions. According to King, a teacher with deep pedagogical knowledge understands how students construct knowledge and acquire skills and how they develop habits of mind and positive dispositions toward learning" [50]. Therefore, for successful implementation of the Social Studies Curriculum, the role of the teacher cannot be

underestimated. Paige therefore, opined that "the teacher is the real soldier of democracy, others can defend it, but only he can make it work" [51]. The implication here is that, if Social Studies can inculcate in learners the ideal democratic values, then the teachers' role cannot be downplayed as teachers' characteristics, conception and understanding as well as their instructional designs are central to the success or otherwise of a curriculum.

"Studies indicate that there is a substantial variation in the quality of teaching within schools" [52]. Shaughnessy and Haladyna concluded that it is the teacher who is key to what Social Studies will be for the student [29]. "The researchers share in this assertion and opine that what teachers teach and how they teach will determine whether the goal of Social Studies will be attained or not. In furtherance, NCSS echoed that, Social Studies can open up a world of possibilities and excitement for learning by all students but as Social Studies teachers, we must continue to consider "what" we teach and "how" we teach to ensure we are authentically engaging our students in meaningful learning" [45]. By providing opportunities for students to grapple with issues of fairness and difference, we can foster a greater appreciation for the social world and each student's place in it.

There is the view that the difference between creative and uninspired teaching is determined by the techniques used in presenting lesson content, skills and values to students. Ayaaba and Odumah assert that "the effective teaching of Social Studies calls for the use of a variety of skills by the teacher" [53]. In support, Eshun and Mensah believe that "Social Studies teachers should stress teaching skills more than the factual content and that, the main role of the Social Studies teacher is to emphasize the development of relevant knowledge, positive attitudes, values and problem-solving skills of students" [54]. To make the teaching of Social Studies focused and more relevant to the achievement of its goal, teachers must understand the goal and general objectives of the subject to serve as a guide to direct their teaching.

Quashigah, Eshun and Mensah also assert that "the pedagogical content knowledge of Social Studies teachers does influence the way they assess their lessons" [55]. This assertion is supported by Bekoe and Eshun 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 used)" (p.111) [56]. Hence teachers who are implementers of the Social Studies curriculum need to be abreast with how the subject is taught and assessed. It is argued that teachers view their role in curriculum implementation as an autonomous one. They select and decide what to teach from the prescribed syllabus or curriculum [7]. Therefore, each teacher must gain ownership of the curriculum, develop an in-depth knowledge of the appropriate teaching methodologies and approaches and become familiar with the specific content objectives for each subject area [57]. This calls for effective teaching and assessment. It is on this wavelength that "Teachers should ensure that they assess the students on all their domains and levels of learning. The profile dimensions should serve as a guide in their assessment" (p. 8) [58]. This cannot be done well without the implementation of the Social Studies curriculum. According to Cobbold, Kofie, Bordoh, and Eshun "effective curriculum supervision thrives on both supervisors and supervisees keeping records of all formal, as well as informal supervision sessions and providing immediate feedback" (p. 26) [59]. Also, Eshun, Bordoh, and Kofie "concluded that approaches to curriculum supervision should follow stipulated rules. Besides, the selective curriculum supervision process should be applied to the individual teacher's needs/challenges" (p. 151) [60]. This process will help to effect positive change in the educational set-up.

According to Fullan, educational change involves changing "teachers' beliefs and understanding as a prerequisite to improving teaching practices. Research indicates that teachers require a thorough understanding of the meaning of educational change before there is an acceptance and adoption of new programmes and approaches" [61]. The researchers are in total support and argue that teachers' command and understanding of the curriculum enable them to translate curriculum intentions into reality. Teachers' conception represents part of teachers' mental contents or schemas that influence approaches and practice of teaching. In support Shulman argued that "teachers need to master two types of knowledge: (a) content, also known as "deep" knowledge of the subject itself, and (b) knowledge of the curricular development" [62]. "If beginning teachers are to be successful,

they must wrestle simultaneously with issues of pedagogical content or knowledge as well as general pedagogy or generic teaching principles" (p. 508) [63]. In conclusion, the relevance of Social Studies in Ghana therefore demands that teachers of the subject should as matters of necessity understand the aims, purposes and goals of the subject to teach toward the realization of the intended goal.

The task of curriculum implementation is complex: "It requires in-school management teams, principals and boards of management to lead the implementation of change in the school as an organization. Curriculum change takes place in the classroom and it involves teachers translating curriculum documents into practice, embracing new teaching programmes and methodologies, and providing a broader range of learning experiences for their pupils" [57].

Unfortunately, in too many schools, students will be routinely pulled out of Social Studies class to attend some other class. These students may return in the middle of the Social Studies lesson. It is confusing whenever we walk into the middle of an ongoing event. We ask ourselves, "Where do I fit in? What have I missed? What's going on? I do not understand!" Under such conditions, it is not surprising that some students become "backbenchers" and disconnect from Social Studies content. In addition, "popping students in and out of a lesson communicates (to students, their parents, and other teachers) that Social Studies classes are not important" [45]. Social Studies was regarded not only as relatively unimportant but also as uninteresting to the students, so students got less time spent on Social Studies, compared with other subjects. "Not only do students perceive Social Studies to be dull, but they also fail to see the relevance of Social Studies to their everyday lives" [29]. Kizlik made a similar claim saying that "much too often, Social Studies courses are regarded as relatively unimportant subject matter, whether in elementary school, middle school, or high school" [64]. This is a perception used by many practitioners and it leads to diminished attention being paid to Social Studies as a serious subject area, yet in the overall development of the intellect of students, no other subject matter content holds as much promise. The researchers believe the same can be said of Ghana since there is a misconception that Social Studies is not considered a requirement for tertiary education especially in nursing training colleges, also of all the core subjects in Ghana, Social

Studies has the least periods in a week which presupposes the less important amongst the core subjects.

Research conducted by Bekoe and Eshun 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" (p. 44) [65]. The implication here is that teachers may come to conceptualize the subject differently which may affect the attainment of the Social Studies goal. Again, Bekoe and Eshun assert that "different modes of delivering Social Studies may tend to influence students as to what the meaning of Social Studies is, its contents and why it is worth studying" (p. 44) [65]. They further argue that there are "confusing arrays of conceptual perspectives concerning the aims, nature and content of Social Studies and that cultivation of a clearer conception of the subject in Ghana has become very necessary." This implies that until this impasse is settled it is going to be difficult for Social Studies to achieve its goal hence an evaluation of the implementation of the Social Studies curriculum in the district will bring to light the impact of this on the attainment of the subject goal.

Over the years, Social Studies has come to be viewed by many teachers, parents and students as a subject for "weaker" or non-academically good students. Many students regard Social Studies as an easy-to-pass subject and therefore do not pay much attention to it whilst many headmasters/mistresses think every teacher at all can teach Social Studies. This has led to some teachers who are not trained in Social Studies, teaching Social Studies in some Senior High Schools in the country. Teachers of Social Studies are supposed to be knowledgeable about the general aims of the subject as stipulated in the Social Studies syllabus to act as a measure of the teaching of the subject. Social Studies teachers should be adequately informed about what to teach, how to teach, and attitudes, values, and skills expected to be injected into the learner for the realization of the Social Studies goal. As a result, Quashigah et al argue that "teachers need to be reminded of their primary function which is to facilitate learning and if this will be possible, they have to be familiar with the major objectives in their subject areas and to practice formulating objectives in all the domains of learning for specific topics following the

different classifications by Bloom in 1956, Krathwohl in 1956 and Taba in 1962 (pp. 84-85)" [57]. The researchers further argue that if teachers who handle the subject in our Senior High Schools do not know the goal of Social Studies how then will they teach the students towards the attainment of the Social Studies goal? This can only be ascertained after an evaluation of the implementation of the Social Studies curriculum has been carried out.

One other challenge to the effective implementation of the Social Studies curriculum is the approach to its teaching. Siler explained that "teachers tend to use only one teaching style day after day, which denies students the opportunity of a variety of teaching techniques" [66]. It is stated that "teachers often rely solely on text, lecturing, worksheets and traditional tests as methods of learning. However, research concludes that students have more interest in a topic when a variety of teaching methods are implemented" [67].

According to Amoah, "in Ghana, Social Studies teaching is largely textbook-based" [68]. It is reported that "Social Studies teachers are yet to involve learners adequately in active learning engagement and condemned the expository method which is responsible for the poor implementation of the Social Studies curriculum and consequent poor appreciation by learners of knowledge, values, attitudes, and skills in Social Studies curriculum" [69].

Social Studies is an issue-centred subject. The examination of social issues according to Martorella frequently generates controversy in an open society [2]. This reminds us that controversy is a dimension of democracy and since Social Studies aims at inculcating in learners very good democratic principles, controversial issues become an indispensable tool towards the realization of this goal [2]. "Social Studies teachers have consistently noted that having students discuss controversial issues, particularly controversial social justice topics such as ethnicity, class, gender, and ethics, can be one of the more intimidating and challenging undertakings for their students" [70]. Research reveals that "teachers frequently shy away from asking their students to discuss or consider controversial issues out of concern that the students, their parents, or administrators may object to the inclusion of the issue in the classroom" [70].

Literature shows that “There is a consistent theme within the canon of Social Studies scholarship which argues that engaging students in discussion and learning about controversial issues can be an avenue to developing deliberation, discussion, and critical thinking skills” [70]. However, teachers (both qualified and unqualified) teach to test instead of teaching to affect, thus, teachers coach their students to write and pass exams at the expense of equipping and inculcating in them the needed skills, attitudes, and values to solve societal problems. Bekoe, Eshun and Bordoh stressed that “due to the hasty nature in formulating formative assessment and scoring, tutors emphasize cognitive domain to the neglect of affective and psychomotor domains which are also of paramount importance” (p. 28) [71].

Correspondingly, Ivowi noted that to “ensure that the curriculum is effectively implemented, infrastructural facilities, equipment, tools and materials must be provided in adequate quantities” [72]. Overbaugh in her study on “the relationship of the physical environment to teachers’ professionalism revealed that physical environment or facilities affect teachers in their performance” [73]. She mentioned further that “the most important environmental features which affect teachers’ performance are classrooms, furniture and class equipment.” However, there seems to be inadequate instructional materials in our Senior High Schools for effective implementation of the Social Studies curriculum. Osifila “found a significant relationship between the adequacy of physical plants, teachers’ effectiveness and students’ academic performance” [74]. Other studies “indicate that the availability of resources is an important variable in student learning” [75, 76]. The picture makes it succinctly clear that the goal of Social Studies could be attained if relevant, appropriate materials and resources are provided.

In support, Asimeng-Boahene asserts that “teaching materials are critical components in helping to maintain positive teacher attitudes. Having good resources, especially texts and good libraries to augment teaching, has a positive influence on teacher practice. The recurring scarcity of educational materials for Ghanaian Social Studies teachers is proverbial. Teachers are limited by the minutes available each day for instruction” [77]. From the foregoing discourse, the researchers believe the picture is very gloomy for Social Studies to realize its goal. With this notwithstanding, an evaluation needs to

be carried out to see how this affects the smooth implementation of the Social Studies curriculum.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The mixed method approach was employed for this study. The concurrent triangulation design was adopted for the study. Hence, the study was situated within the pragmatic research paradigm. Pragmatists believe that “knowledge claims arise out of actions, situations, and consequences rather than antecedent conditions and are concerned with applications-“what works” - and solutions to problems” [78]. The researchers adopted the mixed method approach as evaluative research lends itself to this methodology since evaluation according to Ornstein and Hunkins “is a process or cluster of processes that people perform to gather data that will enable them to decide whether to accept, change, or eliminate something- the curriculum in general or an educational textbook in particular” (p. 320) [49]. Hence, the adoption of this method allows the researchers to get a complete understanding of the research problem as well as to authenticate the data collected to generate authentic findings. Thus, the concurrent triangulation approach is selected as the model when research uses two different methods in an attempt to confirm, cross-validate, or corroborate findings within a single study.

**Table 1. Names of Senior High Schools and number of Social Studies teachers selected for the study**

Name of School	Number of Social Studies Teachers
Agogo State College	7
Collins SHS	6
Owerriman SHTS	6
Wesley High School	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

The study was conducted in the Asante Akim North District of the Ashanti Region. The district capital is located at Agogo. The Asante Akim North District has three public Senior High schools, one College of Education, one Nursing Training and a University. Two of the senior high schools namely Agogo State College and Collins Senior High are located in the capital while the other one, Owerriman Senior High is located at Domeabra, two kilometres from the capital Agogo. However, all the Tertiary Institutions namely, the Presbyterian College of Education, Presbyterian Nursing Training and the

Presbyterian University College are located in the district capital Agogo. Due to the small number of Senior High Schools in the District, the researcher included Wesley Senior High School which is closer to the district but located in Asante Akim Central in the research.

The population encompassed all SHS Social Studies Teachers and SHS final-year students in the selected Senior High schools in the Asante Akim District of the Ashanti Region. The breakdown of the schools that formed the study's population is as follows:

The sample for the study was made up of one hundred and twenty (120) participants composed of one hundred (100) students and twenty (20) Teachers from the Asante Akim North District. The 100 students were composed of 54 females and 46 males. These students were selected from four major programmes offered in the three SHS namely, General Arts, Home Economics, Visual Arts and General Science. The multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for the study. The convenience sampling technique was used

to select the district. Convenience or Accidental sampling involves choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents and continuing that process until the required sample has been obtained and accessible at the time [79]. This was to give the researchers easy access to required information and also to make the researchers' work relatively easy and faster.

The purposive sampling technique was used to select both teachers and students for the study. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique where the researcher handpicks the cases to be included in the sample based on their judgment of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought [79]. This was to enable the researcher to obtain the correct and accurate information for the studies. The stratified sampling technique was used to select the sample for the study after which the simple random technique was used to select the sample for each stratum before the questionnaires were administered. This was also done to ensure good representativeness of data collected for proper and justified generalization.

**Table 2. Number of Senior High School students in the selected schools**

Name of School	Number of Students	Number of Final Year Students
Agogo State College	2600	720
Collins SHS	3,030	886
Owerriman SHTS	1,032	417,
Wesley High School	756	295
<b>Total</b>	<b>7418</b>	<b>2318</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

**Table 3. Showing the distributions of the students sampled from the schools**

Name of school	Number of students	Females	Males
Agogo State College	26	16	10
Collins Senior High	26	16	10
Owerriman Senior high	24	10	14
Wesley Senior High	24	12	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>46</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

**Table 4. Showing the distribution of the teachers sampled from the schools**

Name of school	Number of teachers	Male(s)	Female(s)
Agogo State College	6	5	1
Collins Senior High School	6	4	1
Owerriman Senior High School	6	5	1
Wesley Senior High School	2	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>4</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

**Table 5. Showing the distribution of students sampled from the various programmes**

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>
General Arts	30	18	12
Home Economics	30	20	10
Visual Arts	20	8	12
General Science	20	8	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>46</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

The main instruments used for the study were questionnaires, interviews (focus group and semi-structured interview) guide, observation checklist and documentary analysis. The four instruments were used to enable the researchers to triangulate the information to test the consistency of the findings obtained from each of the instruments used. Eshun supported this view when he stated “Triangulation in research is to test for consistency of findings obtained through different instruments” [80]. It was therefore necessary that different instruments were used to validate the information gathered.

Questionnaires were used to reach all Social Studies teachers and students in the district. Interviews were also used to enable the researcher to probe into some information provided on the questionnaire. Focus group discussion was used to bring eleven students from the four schools to interact and discuss in detail their understanding of the subject of Social Studies, their experiences as Social Studies Students and their perceptions of the worth or otherwise of the Social Studies curriculum. An observation checklist was prepared to cross-check the questions asked in the questionnaire on teachers’ competencies in the subject. The checklist was based on the instructional introduction, instructional core and instructional conclusions prescribed by the curriculum and experts of Social Studies toward the attainment of the subject goals. To get a comprehensive impression of how the Social Studies curriculum should operate (Antecedents), the researchers reviewed the 2010 Social Studies teaching syllabus to find out what students are expected to learn, the characteristics students should possess before they go through the curriculum, what learners are expected to acquire after going through the curriculum, what Social Studies teachers are required to do to ensure effective implementation of the Social Studies curriculum and the time allotted to the teaching of the subject about the realization of the subject goals.

With the quantitative data analysis, the completed questionnaires were numbered and

coded. All the data gathered from the questionnaires were then fed into Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS). With the help of this statistical package, descriptive statistics, especially, percentages, frequencies, means and standard deviations that were indicators of the perception of the Social Studies teachers and students about the antecedents of the Social Studies curriculum emerged. Words were used to interpret the tables and percentages for easy understanding. The qualitative data responses were described and explained in the form of themes based on the research questions. Sometimes responses were quoted verbatim to authenticate claims made. This was important for a particular reason. Koull on this issue expresses the view that “responses from participants in the form of direct quotations reveal the level of emotions of respondents, how they have organized their world, their thoughts and experiences about certain happenings, and their perceptions [81].

The study was subject to certain ethical issues. First, all participants reported their acceptance regarding their participation in the study through a signed consent form. At the same time, participants were asked to sign a debriefing and withdrawal letter. Both letters aimed to reassure participants that their participation in the research was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from it anytime they deemed fit. In addition, participants were fully informed about the objectives of the study and again were reassured that their answers would be treated as confidential and used only for academic purposes and only for this particular research

#### **4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This section deals with the presentation of findings, resulting from the analyses of data collected for the study and the discussion of the findings within the context of the literature. Data analysed has been presented in the form of tables and interpretations given. Some of the issues discussed are the socio-demographic

characteristics of the respondents and the congruence between the intended antecedents of the Social Studies curriculum and the actual outcomes based on the findings of the study.

#### 4.1 Background Characteristics of the Respondents

This section deals mainly with the distribution of the respondents by sex, and age. The data on the background characteristics of the respondents were analysed using frequency and percentage distributions. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 reveals the demographic characteristics of students. In Table 6, the statistics show that out of 100 students, 54 (54%) of the students were females while 46 (46%) of them were males. This implies that the majority of the respondents selected for the study were female students. Also, as depicted in Table 6, the majority 86 (86%) of the students selected for the study were between the ages of 15 to 19 years. Again, Table 6 revealed that 13 (13%) of the students were within 20 to 24 years whilst, 1 (1%) student was below 15 years. In addition, all the students 100 (100%) reported that they are in Form 3. This connotes that all the students sampled for the study were final-year students.

#### 4.2 Congruence between Intended and Observed Antecedents in the Implementation of the Social Studies Curriculum in SHSs in the Asante Akim North District

This section is dedicated to the presentation of findings in respect of this research question: *What are the antecedents of the Social Studies curriculum as provided for in the syllabus by implementers of the Social Studies curriculum in*

#### *Senior High Schools in the Asante Akim North District?*

This question sought to find out about the existing conditions before the implementation of the curriculum as envisaged by curriculum developers. To investigate and find out the antecedents needed for effective implementation of the Social Studies Curriculum the researchers analysed literature including the Social Studies Teaching Syllabus to find out what the curriculum developers and experts say about the antecedents of the curriculum. From the analysis, it was revealed that, for effective implementation of the Social Studies curriculum learners should possess pre-requisite skills for effective study of Social Studies at the Senior High School level. These are knowledge and understanding of Citizenship Education at the Primary School Level, completion of Social Studies at the Junior High School level, observational skills and a critical mind to life as well as good reading, writing and numeracy skills [81].

Also, teachers are required to be trained in Social Studies before they can teach the subject at the SHS level. They should possess enough knowledge of the content and requisite skills for effective implementation of the Social Studies curriculum as posited by Akinlaye that the competence in teaching Social Studies depends largely on a sound understanding of its philosophy and how the subject is perceived also plays an important role in the determination of its goal and objectives. Finally, there should be a conducive learning environment where all the needed resources and materials are available [82].

To find out whether these antecedents exist or not the researcher collected data through questionnaires, focus group discussions and observations. First, a questionnaire was designed to find out the qualification(s) of teachers handling Social Studies at the SHS

**Table 6. Demographic information of the students' respondents**

Class	Variables	Options	Frequency	Percent
Form 3	Gender	Male	46	46.0
		Female	54	54.0
<b>Total</b>			<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Age		Less than 15 years	1	1.0
		15 – 19 years	86	86.0
		20 – 24 years	13	13.0
<b>Total</b>			<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

level in the district and their knowledge about the subject they teach. Also to find out whether learners have done citizenship education and Social Studies at basic school levels and whether learners possess the prerequisite skills as envisaged by the curriculum developers an eleven-item differential scale was presented to learners to find out their knowledge of and attitudes toward the subject.

To find out whether these antecedents exist or not, the researchers collected data through questionnaires, focus group discussions and observations. First, a questionnaire was designed to find out the qualification(s) of teachers handling Social Studies at the SHS level in the district and their knowledge about the subject they teach. Also to find out whether learners have done citizenship education and Social Studies at basic school levels and whether learners possess the prerequisite skills as envisaged by the curriculum developers an eleven-item differential scale was presented to

learners to find out their knowledge of and attitudes toward the subject.

Table 7 shows the demographic distribution of teachers. The findings indicate that 16 (80%) of the teachers are males while 4 (20%) of them are females. This implies that the majority of teachers selected for the study were males. In addition, the findings show that 9 (45%) of the teachers selected for the study were between the ages of 32 to 42 years. Also, Table 7 shows that 17 (85%) of the teachers hold a graduate 1st degree while 3 (15%) hold a master's degree.

Concerning the area of specialization, 14 (70%) of the teachers out of 20 are Social Studies trained, while 6 (30%) are not Social Studies trained. This indicates that not all the teachers are Social Studies trained and suggests that, out-of-field teachers are handling the subject in the Asante Akim North District which is against the curriculum developers' and experts' assertion as to who qualifies to teach the subject at the SHS level.

**Table 7. Demographic and qualification information of the teachers**

Variables	Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	16	80.0
	Female	4	20.0
Age	21-31	7	35.0
	32-42	9	45.0
	43-53	4	20.0
Educational background	Master	3	15.0
	1 <sup>st</sup> Degree	17	85.0
Teaching experience	1-5 years	6	30.0
	6-10 years	10	50.0
	Above 10 years	4	20.0
Area of specialization	Economics	2	10.0
	History	1	5.0
	Geography	1	5.0
	Political Science	1	5.0
	Social Studies	14	70.0
	Others	1	5.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

**Table 8. Teachers' responses to antecedents in the Social Studies Curriculum**

Knowledge of Social Studies curriculum antecedents	YES	NO	%
Are you aware of the main goal of teaching Social Studies?	20	0	100
Do you plan your lessons towards the attainment of this goal?	20	0	100
Are you aware of the general objectives of Social Studies as stated in the syllabus?	20	0	100
Is the curriculum content related to the attainment of these objectives?	20	0	100
Are you aware of the Profile Dimension stated in the syllabus?	20	0	100
Do you assess your students to cover all three Domains of learning?	8	12	40

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.



Knowledge of Social Studies curriculum antecedents is presented in Table 8 about item 1, which was to find out teachers' awareness of the purpose of teaching Social Studies, all 20 (100%) said Yes, indicating that all the teachers (respondents) were aware of the purpose of Social Studies education. Concerning item 2 which sought to find out whether teachers planned their lessons toward the attainment of this purpose, all 20 (100%) responded Yes. Concerning item 3 which sought to find out teacher's awareness of the general objectives of the subject all 20 (100%) respondents responded Yes.

Also, concerning item 4 which required soliciting respondents' views as to whether the curriculum content is related to the attainment of these objectives and the purpose all the respondents representing 100% responded yes. In addition, all the respondents representing 100% said yes when asked whether they were aware of the profile dimension stated in the Social Studies Teaching Syllabus. However, concerning the last item which sought to find out whether teachers assess their students to cover all the domains, 12 of them representing 60 % responded NO while the remaining 8 representing 40 % responded Yes which indicates that, the majority of the respondents were not assessing their students to cover the three domains.

To prove or disprove the above findings, the researcher interviewed four teachers. The following question was asked: *Can you please share with me some of the objectives of teaching Social Studies?*

Concerning the above question which sought to find out teachers' awareness of the general objectives of Social Studies, 3 (75%) were aware of the objectives. Surprisingly, they were able to share with the researcher only two of the objectives. One of them said: *"One of the objectives of Social Studies is to get students acquainted with civic consciousness.* Another had this to say: *'Social Studies is to help students contribute their quota to the development of the country'.* The third and last had this to say *"Social Studies is to help students solve personal and societal problems"* However, 1 (25%) respondent was not aware of the purpose yet responded yes to the questionnaire which means that the respondent lied. When asked to share with the researcher the purpose of Social Studies this was his response: *"Eii sir, mmmm, if am right I think it's to make student*

*practice what we teach them"* Not satisfied with the response the researchers probed further and asked: *Can you tell me one of the general objectives of Social Studies?* This was the response: *"Eii sir, hmm is a long-time I completed school oo. I don't remember."* this confirms what Quashigah et al found out in their research that if teachers who handle Social Studies in our Senior High Schools do not know the goal of Social Studies. This will make it difficult to teach the students towards the attainment of the Social Studies goal.

The researchers asked again: *do you know the objectives are stated in the syllabus?* The respondent said NO and that he did not have a copy of the syllabus. This clearly shows that the teacher in question is naive about the subject he is teaching and there is no way this teacher can help make the subject realise its goals even though he is Social Studies trained Akinlaye asserts that the competence in teaching Social Studies depends largely on sound understanding of its philosophy" and that how the subject is perceived to play an important role in the determination of its goal and objectives [82]. This implies that the teacher of Social Studies must overly understand the goal and the general objectives of the subject to be able to teach to realize the ultimate goal of the subject which is positive attitudes and problem-solving. The teacher's inability to remember the goal and the general objectives of Social Studies is worrisome. This is because it will affect the attainment of the subject goal.

Table 9 affirms that among the adjectives used to reflect the extent to which the adjectives describe student's attitudes towards Social Studies, the total average response indicates that, students have a positive attitude toward the subject as the mean of mean (Mm = 1.83) shows. Thus, students perceived the subject as productive (M = 2.43), satisfying (M = 3.35), fruitful (M = 2.17) and M = important (M = 1.44). A look at the various adjectives indicates that most students perceived Social Studies to be useful, relevant, important and good. There is no doubt that each student at the Basic Schools and Senior High Schools has been exposed to citizenship education and Social Studies due to their impact on society as posited by Ayaaba that "Social Studies is indeed, a subject worth studying in Ghanaian schools. Its goals and purposes are inextricably linked to the national goals of education" (p. 9) [83]. Parker corroborated this when he said that Social Studies need to be set

**Table 9. Presents the average response of the SHS students' perception of Social Studies**

Perceptions of Students of Social Studies	Mean
Productive	2.43
Satisfying	2.35
Fruitful	2.17
Worthy	2.01
Like	1.77
Enjoyable	1.72
Continued	1.61
Useful	1.60
Relevant	1.56
Important	1.44
Good	1.44
Mean	1.83

**KEY:** Average response of 1.0 – 3.4 means learners have positive attitudes and 3.5 – 6.0 means learners have negative attitudes toward Social Studies.

**Source:** Fieldwork, 2023

deeply within the school curriculum from the earliest grades [44].

To authenticate these findings, the researcher had a focus group discussion with twelve (12) students. From the discussions, it was revealed that all the twelve (12) students have done citizenship education and Social Studies at the basic levels, as all of them were unanimous about the purpose of Social Studies and had positive attitudes towards the subject which confirms the results from the questionnaire. When asked for their opinions about the subject, they all said the subject is very good and interesting.

One (W2) of them said: *“Very interesting and practical.”* another participant (S4) also said: *“Social Studies is very interesting, is about our social lives and impacting wisdom in us.”*

One (C1) concluded by saying *“We should do it more; Social Studies is very practical, it deals with social, and things that happen in our social environment and it helps us to solve problems”* The above findings indicate that students have a positive attitude towards Social Studies which is in sharp contrast with the arguments raised by a previous study that “some students in high schools go as far as to say that Social Studies is ‘irrelevant’ ‘push over’ and a ‘dull’ subject and for that matter there is no need paying regular attention to it” [29]. This prompted the researcher to probe further by asking this question: Why do you like Social Studies? They all responded “The subject will help us to become useful citizens in future. For instance, one of them (O3) said: *“Social Studies is learnt to change our lives for*

*us to be useful”*. Another had this to say: *“Social Studies is studied to change our bad deeds into good deeds.”* Again, a participant (O1) said, *“Social Studies will help us to fit into our society”?* The assertions are in line with Quartey when he said that Social Studies seeks to inculcate in the learner tools necessary for solving personal and societal problems [84]. He further indicates that “the subject prepares students with certain competencies that will enable them students solve personal and societal problems of human survival” [84]. The researchers believe that in this modern-day Ghana where a lot of social problems are emanating, it is prudent that students are equipped with the necessary tools to solve these threatening problems for man’s survival through the learning of citizenship education and Social Studies [85, 86].

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Most of the teachers handling Social Studies in Senior High Schools in the Asante Akim North District are Social Studies trained hence possess the requisite knowledge and skills to handle the subject, which is a step in the right direction. However, the existence of out-of-field teachers handling Social Studies is an issue of concern. Again, it was realized that most of the teachers have forgotten the general objectives of the subject as stated in the 2010 Social Studies syllabus even though they are aware of the purpose or goal of the subject which is citizenship education. This situation is worrisome as the objectives stated under each unit or topic are geared towards the achievement of the

ultimate goal of the subject which is stated in the syllabus. The final revelation from the study is that SHS students in the Asante Akim North District have positive attitudes toward Social Studies which is a positive development toward the realization of the subject goal. However, most of the teachers who are the curriculum implementers have forgotten the subject's general objectives. Therefore, they teach the subject without any cognizance of the attainment of these objectives. Again, the absence of the needed teaching and learning resources for effective teaching and learning is another cause.

Concerning the findings of the study, the following recommendations have been made: Workshops, in-service training and seminars should be held at least once a year in the district for Social Studies teachers to acquire the relevant knowledge and the pre-requisite skills needed for effective implementation of the Social Studies curriculum in the Asante Akim North District. The cost should be jointly borne by the schools and the teachers.

### ETHICAL APPROVAL

As per international and institutional standards, written ethical approval has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

### CONSENT

As per international standards or institutional standards, participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the authors.

### COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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