

## The Quest for Synchronisation of Social Studies Curriculum Materials for Colleges of Education in Ghana: How Relevant is Teacher Knowledge Factor?

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### ABSTRACT

Contemporary curriculum frameworks and materials require content knowledge are integrated, but teacher knowledge remains a critical resource within the instructional system. This paper weighs teacher educators' knowledge of the Social Studies curriculum materials for Colleges of Education in Ghana. The mixed methods sequential explanatory design was adopted for the study. Thirty-eight (38) Social Studies teacher educators were sampled from 38 public Colleges of Education in Ghana through stratified, simple random and purposive sampling techniques. A five-point Likert-scale questionnaire of Cronbach's alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.77 was used for the survey while semi-structured interview guide was employed for interview. The survey data were analysed using descriptive statistics, whereas the interview data were analysed thematically. The study revealed a high level of teacher knowledge factor with mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) values of  $\geq 2.39$  regarding the following indicators: Social Studies curriculum materials as an amalgam of Social sciences ( $\bar{X}=2.57$ ), Social Studies content courses ( $\bar{X}=2.52$ ), integrated Social Studies ( $\bar{X}=2.47$ ). Teacher knowledge factor was also high in the usage of curriculum materials in History ( $\bar{X}=2.73$ ), Civics and Citizenship ( $\bar{X}=2.71$ ), Anthropology ( $\bar{X}=2.71$ ), methods of teaching and learning Social Studies ( $\bar{X}=2.68$ ), Sociology ( $\bar{X}=2.57$ ), and Integrated Social Studies ( $\bar{X}=2.57$ ). This study concludes that, content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge of Social Studies teachers are critical in the instructional system. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education and the National Council on Tertiary Education of Ghana ought to provide continuous professional development programmes for Social Studies teacher educators in Ghanaian Colleges of Education to develop in them pedagogies that centre on the integrated approach of teaching, learning and assessment.

**Keywords:** Colleges of Education, curriculum integration, curriculum materials, Social Studies Educator, knowledge factor

### INTRODUCTION

Social Studies has been a core discipline in almost all the levels of education in Ghana. It was made a core subject in the Senior Secondary School programme and Junior Secondary School programme in 1987, but syllabuses and textbooks were produced for that purpose in 1991. In 1991, the study of Social Studies was extended to the primary level. The introduction of Social Studies as a core subject at the Primary School Level necessitated the need for Teacher Training Colleges to train pre-service teachers for the basic level. Therefore, Social Studies is one of the subjects taught in the Colleges of Education, and student teachers are prepared to teach it at the basic schools in Ghana. Colleges of Education are educational institutions mandated to train teachers in Ghana. A teacher educator is an instructor at a teacher education institution who guides trainee teachers in both the classroom and at field in building their confidence (Lunenberg, Dengerink & Korthagen, 2014).

By nature, the discipline is a study of the problems of society. It has suffered from identity crisis over the years due to the many definitions given to it. There are as many and varied definitions of Social Studies as far as there are Social Studies teachers and educators (Ayaaba, 2008). This implies that differences in conception will ultimately influence the content and create confusion as to which direction the particular content

has to go. This brings to the fore the different schools of thought about what Social Studies is or ought to be. A definition of Social Studies will hardly make a complete sense if it does not include an account of the relationship between Social Studies and the Social Sciences such as Geography, History, Political Science, Economics, Sociology and Government. To Børhaug (2005), Social Studies is short of a specific didactical canon defining the subject matter's most important purpose, goal, content and teaching methods. This makes the subject matter a vulnerable one, set out to cover topics and themes that the school should be concerned with. However, that does not fit into any of the other established school subjects. Such a school subject becomes a difficult one to teach. Altogether, at least three different perspectives have been identified on what should be the content of Social Studies as a school subject (Børhaug, 2005).

According to the National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS] (2010), Social Studies is the integrated study of the Social Sciences and Humanities to promote civic competence. It is multidisciplinary and takes its sources from many subjects. Within the school programme, Social Studies provides a coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as geography, history, sociology, psychology, economics and civic education, anthropology, archaeology, jurisprudence, philosophy, political science, psychology, and religion, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. This is an indication that Social Studies Curriculum content should draw knowledge from several Social Sciences in an integrated form. The integrated approach is in line with African indigenous education (Mugimu, Nakabugo, & Katunguka, 2013).

Two critical resources within the instructional system are curriculum materials and teacher knowledge. The word "curriculum" comes from a Latin word 'Carrere' which means "a race" or "the course of a race". The term 'curriculum' is widely used and is referred to in some ways by different researchers. They range from a view that curriculum materials are a list of course content and associated teaching aids (Kesidou, & Roseman, 2002) through to views held by other researchers that, a curriculum moves beyond mapping out the topics and materials, it specifies the activities, assignments and assessments to be used in achieving its goal (Wiggins, & McTighe, 2008). Curriculum means the planned interaction of pupils with instructional content, materials, resources, and processes for evaluating the attainment of educational objectives (Indiana Department of Education, 2010). In other words, it is the subject matter, pedagogy, including assessment and resources that are involved in the organisation, delivery and articulation of education programmes. It refers to the entire programme provided by a classroom, school, district, state, or country.

In the views of researchers (Cohen, Raudenbush & Ball, 2003; Hiebert & Grouws, 2007), the construct 'curriculum' is viewed as interactions of teachers and students around content that occur in environments. The curriculum consists of the knowledge and skills in subject matter areas that teachers teach, and students are supposed to learn (NCSS, 2010). Generally, it consists of the scope or breadth of content in a given subject area and a sequence for learning. It typically outlines the goals of learning, and specific means to be used to achieve those goals. A curriculum material comprises curriculum frameworks, curriculum programmes, textbooks (trade books), teacher-created materials, and professional publications. Curriculum material is the critical reference point for teachers, particularly in developing countries, where it is encoded

in the official textbook and teacher guides, often the sole resource used by teachers. Curriculum materials take a variety of forms. It could include curriculum frameworks that generally specify what students should be learning. This comprises curricular programmes, including those that focus either on a full year of tuition or on a shorter period or a single unit; textbooks, including trade books and class sets of books; teacher-created materials; and other resources, such as professional publications that focus on curriculum. Curriculum materials can fall along a continuum, from more prescriptive, specifying precisely what should be taught, to more flexible, offering guidance and ideas about what and how to teach, but leaving many of the necessary decisions up to the individual teacher. This paper is interested in several aspects of the Social Studies curriculum materials.

A critical look at the Social Studies curriculum content, that is syllabus, of the Colleges of Education in Ghana reveals that the subject is intended to be taught and studied in the form of integration of concepts, facts, principles and inquiries from disciplines relating to the study of societal and environmental issues and problems. An integrated approach is the use of integrated course pathways. Typically, it used in countries other than the United States and in curricula materials developed in response to standards-based reform documents (Senk, & Thompson, 2003).

An integrated Social Studies curriculum incorporates content from across Social Science disciplines into a single course. Researchers have proposed several integrated curriculum and instructional models to provide students with learning experiences that can motivate intellectual and emotional understanding (Chrysostomou, 2004; Deasey, 2002; Mansilla, 2005). This is because integration of subject areas has been shown to have powerful effects on learning. Integrated curricula can provide students with a socially relevant democratic education that transcends disciplinary boundaries and engages learners through self-reflection and active inquiry (Parsons, 2004).

Research indicates that using an interdisciplinary or integrated curriculum provides opportunities for more relevant, less fragmented, and more stimulating experiences for learners (Frykholm & Glasson, 2005; Koirala, & Bowman, 2003). Students from integrated curriculum are more likely to obtain partial credit when compared to their subject-specific counterparts who study traditional courses (Chavez, Tarr, Grouws, & Soria, 2013; Grouws et al., 2013; Tarr, Grouws, Chavez & Soria, 2013), and they significantly outperform those studying from a subject-specific curriculum on multiple outcome measures (Grouws et al., 2013). It is likely that using the traditional Social Studies Curriculum material could have damaging effects on students' learning. This is because any new curricula that are often implemented mechanically and without reflection on their relevance or application to current tenets could have damaging effects on student learning. In the views of some researchers (Braund, Scholtz, Sadeck & Koopman, 2013), new curricula that are often implemented mechanically and without reflection on their relevance or application occasionally have damaging effects on student learning. With this said, however, teaching and writing textbooks for integrated Social Studies is not a simple assignment. This is because there is more than one perspective on what the intention and content of the subject should be.

Contemporary curriculum frameworks and materials require content knowledge is integrated. It is observed that more integration is now taking place in teacher education programmes (Berlin & Hyonyong, 2005). For instance, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) of the Ministry of Education (MoE) of Ghana has designed a new curriculum for Ghana's primary schools. This new curriculum,

which is standards-based, has been put into implementation by the Ghana Education Service in September, 2019. Standards-based reforms change concepts and skills taught, thereby restructuring curricula away from requirements of traditional practice towards new expectations for teaching and learning. In this paper, the debate is whether Ghanaian Colleges of Education use an integrated Social Studies Curriculum material or the traditional Social Studies Curriculum material of subject-specific Social Science subjects. The researcher considered what parts of the subject matter the curriculum materials addressed. For example, do materials focus mainly on Geography only or do they evenly include some different subject content areas? The next section discusses teacher knowledge factor of Social Studies curriculum materials.

Teachers' knowledge is the body of knowledge that comprises teachers' beliefs, as well as subject matter knowledge, practical knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and instructional knowledge (Keys, 2006). It encompasses content or subject matter knowledge, concept or procedural knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge. Effective educators must possess a meaningful knowledge base (Christensen, 1996; Holmes Group, 1986; Shulman, 1987), and know subject matter (Buchmann, 1984). For Social Studies teacher educators to be successful, they would have to confront Content Knowledge (CK), and Pedagogical Knowledge (PK) or Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK).

Content Knowledge (CK) is knowledge about the actual subject matter (Social Studies) that is to be learned or taught. Shulman (2000) defines content knowledge as the knowledge about the subject (Shulman, 2000) for example, Social Studies and its structure. This implies that knowledge of Social Studies and knowledge of Social Studies presentations is related to content knowledge. Thus, the perceived knowledge of the subject is termed its subject matter (Shulman, 2000). In Social Studies, for example, its content deals with such distillate knowledge, development of attitudes, values and skills, which are essential in solving the problems of the individual's survival in a given community. This means that what can rightly be called Social Studies would centre on issues, questions and problems of the individual's survival in the society and the development of a positive mind and skills towards their solutions. To be able to achieve this requires the teacher's deep understanding of the subject and his or her right approach to the teaching of the content as prescribed to him or her. Evidently, Social Studies teachers must know and understand the Social Studies subjects that they teach, including knowledge of central facts, concepts, theories, and procedures within a given field. In Ghana, the content to be covered in primary and high school Social Studies is very different from the content to be covered in a higher or tertiary course such as at a College of Education or university. What teachers need to know about the subject matter they teach extends beyond the specific topics of their curriculum. What a teacher perceives the subject to be and the methodology to make known what he or she perceives will bring about a presentation of the subject well so that its philosophy, nature, goal and objectives will be well integrated to produce learners whose civic competencies are well developed. A deep understanding of the subject matter is the foundation for pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) that enables the teacher to teach effectively so that students are well informed to develop their civic competence.

Pedagogical or Procedural Content Knowledge (PCK) involves knowledge of teaching strategies that incorporate appropriate conceptual representations to address learner difficulties and misconceptions and foster meaningful understanding. It is knowledge

of students and how teaching is done. It includes knowledge of what the students bring to the learning situation, the knowledge that might be either facilitative or dysfunctional for the particular learning task. This students' knowledge includes their strategies, prior conceptions, misconceptions that they are likely to have about a particular domain, and potential misapplications of prior knowledge. Krauss et al. (2008) have identified three main components of pedagogical content knowledge: knowledge of tasks, knowledge of students' prior knowledge, and knowledge of instructional methods.

Pedagogical Knowledge (PK) is in-depth knowledge about the processes and practices or methods of teaching and learning. It includes knowledge of the conceptual and procedural knowledge that students bring to learning a topic, the misconceptions about the topic that they may have developed, and the stages of understanding that they are likely to pass through in moving from a state of having little understanding of the topic to the mastery of it. It also includes knowledge of techniques for assessing student's understanding and diagnosing their misconceptions, knowledge of instructional strategies that can be used to enable students to connect what they are learning to the knowledge they already possess, and knowledge of instructional strategies to eliminate the misconceptions they may have developed. It encompasses, among other things, overall educational purposes, values, and aims. This is a generic form of knowledge that is involved in all issues of student learning, classroom management, lesson plan development and implementation. It includes knowledge about techniques or methods to be used in the classroom; the nature of the target audience; and strategies for evaluating student understanding.

Pedagogical content knowledge is the content knowledge that deals with the teaching process, including "the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others" (p. 9) [Shulman, 1986]. It refers to teachers' knowledge of how to organise and represent particular topics or issues to facilitate students' understanding and learning (Ball & Bass, 2000). Therefore, teachers are expected to know how Social Studies concepts are developed and the connections between them, teaching goals for different grade levels, the needs of their students, and their appropriate teaching strategies. It is about the selection of topics, useful forms of presentation, analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations and demonstration. It also includes an understanding of what makes the learning of specific topics easy or difficult, including knowledge about conceptions and misconceptions that students bring to the subject. The assumption is that deep knowledge about the content and structure of a subject matter area is the crucial precondition for teachers' reliance on pedagogical content knowledge in their teaching. A teacher with in-depth pedagogical knowledge understands how students construct knowledge, acquire skills, and develop habits of the mind and positive dispositions toward learning. As such, pedagogical knowledge requires an understanding of cognitive, social, and developmental theories of learning and how they apply to students in their classroom.

The pedagogy of teaching Social Studies must include materials that are conducive to the development of a well-informed, intelligent person (Kizlik, 2012). They ought to be capable of comprehending the current problems properly, keen to accepting responsibilities as a citizen for the welfare of all and develop insights, skills and moral qualities that are so essential and desirable in a democratic society. This is precisely what Shulman states in his pedagogical content knowledge that effective teaching includes "the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it

comprehensible to others ... an understanding of what makes the learning of specific topics easy or difficult (p. 40) [Shulman, 2000].

Teachers' knowledge factor of Social Studies curriculum materials is critical in shaping instruction and assessment across basic, secondary and tertiary levels in Ghana, yet curriculum materials have been primarily treated incidentally. For instance, Social Studies curriculum content of Colleges of Education seemed not to synchronise with contents in basic, second cycle institutions and universities in Ghana. Although integrated Social Studies is an established practice, basic and senior high schools in Ghana still use the traditional approach. For Social Studies teacher educators and students in Colleges of Education an integrated approach remains an alien concept. Curriculum integration has been the focus of more intense public scrutiny, but a lack of integrated Social Studies textbooks and other curriculum materials has been a worrying situation in Colleges of Education. Another worrying factor in this regard is the prescriptive use of textbooks. Personal experience, observation and context validation or analysis indicate that Social Studies curriculum content varies depending on the institution (university) attended by the teacher, thereby leading to a situation where the curriculum of Social Studies in the institutions do not synchronise. This study therefore examines teacher educators' knowledge of the integrated Social Studies Curriculum materials for Colleges of Education in Ghana. The study is therefore guided by the Sensemaking Theory by Coburn and Talbert (Coburn & Talbert, 2006). The theory posits that understanding is developed through the interaction of prior knowledge, the social context of the work, and connection with ideas from the environment Coburn, 2001; Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002).

According to Sensemaking theorists, individuals utilize prior knowledge, or schema, to make sense of new ideas. In concert with individual cognition, Sensemaking theorists argue that meaning is "constituted in the interaction" (p. 412) [Spillane et al., 2002]. Each Social Studies teacher, for instance, has a distinct lens that will determine which aspect of a new idea (integrated Social Studies) he or she notices and takes up in practice (Spillane et al., 2002). The theory focuses on how individuals such as Social Studies teacher educators build new frameworks for existing beliefs to "make meaning of new information or events" (p. 471). Hence, it is useful for explaining how teachers describe ways they process new information with regard to integrated Social Studies curriculum and solve matters they perceive to be problems as regards the traditional approach to Social Studies education Coburn & Woulfin, 2012), and thereby influences decision-making. For instance, a policy or reform message such as curriculum reform is encountered and engaged in a collective process of meaning making in a particular space or moment. This change in curriculum demands a piece of sense making of the message. Collectively, a group of actors, each with their distinct schema, engage in a process through which they notice, construct, and operationalize a message in a particular space or moment (Stein & Coburn, 2008).

The Sensemaking Theory in education focuses on policy implementation. Therefore, the theory is relevant for curriculum reforms considering the role of teachers in this process. For instance, a change in curriculum demands a response to change in curriculum contents, materials, instructional and assessment approaches. A teacher's pre-existing schema is important to both individual curriculum interpretation and implementation (Stein & Coburn, 2008). Hence, the theory applies to teachers as instructional leaders in the implementation of curriculum reform.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The mixed methods sequential explanatory design was adopted for the study. In this design, the quantitative research approach is dominant to the qualitative method.

### **Population and Sample**

The target population for this study was two hundred and fourteen (214) Social Studies tutors in forty-six (46) Colleges of Education in Ghana. The accessible population for this study included all 190 Social Studies teacher educators from the initial 38 public Colleges of Education in Ghana. Teacher educators from the 38 initial public Colleges of Education were included in the accessible population and were chosen due to the huge student teacher population (more than 500) in each of those colleges. On average, each of the 38 initial public Colleges of Education had five teacher educators in the Social Science or Social Studies Department. This population was studied to make generalisations. On the other hand, teacher educators from the eight newly absorbed Colleges of Education were excluded and did not form part of the accessible population. This was because they did not meet the following inclusion criteria at the time of data collection; (a) the population of students in the eight newly absorbed Colleges of Education were low (below 500), and (b) the average number of Social Studies teacher educators in the eight newly absorbed Colleges of Education were below five.

A total of 38 Social Studies teacher educators from 38 initial public Colleges of Education in Ghana were sampled for the study. The choice of 38 study participants represented 17.8% of the target population and 20% of the accessible population of Social Studies teacher educators based on the assertion that between 1% and 10% of a study population gives an adequate sampling fraction (Dornyei, 2007). Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were employed in sampling the respondents for survey, whereas a sub-sample of 8 respondents were selected purposively for interview. Specifically, the maximum variation sampling technique, also called a maximum diversity sampling was used in selecting the interviewees.

### **Instrument and Data Collection**

A five-point Likert-scale questionnaire was used to gather data from the 38 respondents. The researcher relied on the Likert type questionnaire because they are useful in generating frequencies of response amenable to statistical treatment and analysis. Internal consistency was tested on the questionnaire by means of Cronbach alpha reliability analysis via the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 26, and this yielded a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.77. The survey data were described using descriptive statistics (frequency count, percentage and mean), whereas the interview data were analysed thematically. The interview data were presented in themes as narratives or verbatim quotes. Documents such as the Social Studies Curriculum and syllabus for Colleges of Education in Ghana, and Social Studies lesson notes were reviewed.

## ANALYSIS OF DATA

**Table 1:** Teacher educators' knowledge of social studies curriculum materials for colleges of education in Ghana (n = 38)

Statement	Responses			$\bar{X}$
	A	I	D	
* The Social Studies Curriculum of CoEs is an amalgamation of Social sciences	29(76)	2(5)	7(18)	2.57
* I have sufficient knowledge of integrated Social Studies Social Studies tutor in CoEs	28(68)	0(0)	10(26)	2.47
* I have taken enough content courses to be an effective Social Studies tutor in CoEs	29(76)	0(0)	9(24)	2.52
I have sufficient knowledge of possible difficulties or misconceptions that students might have in Social Studies in Colleges of Education	14(37)	4(11)	20(53)	1.84
* I have in-depth knowledge about the processes and practices/ methods of teaching & learning Social Studies	32(84)	0(0)	6(16)	2.68
* Knowledge and competence in the usage of History curriculum materials	29(76)	8(21)	1(3)	2.73
* Knowledge and competence in the usage of Sociology curriculum materials	27(71)	6(16)	5(13)	2.57
* Knowledge and competence in the usage of Civics & Citizenship curriculum materials	30(79)	5(13)	3(8)	2.71
* Knowledge and competence in the usage of Anthropology curriculum materials	29(76)	7(18)	2(5)	2.71
Knowledge and competence in the usage of Geography curriculum materials	8(21)	12(32)	18(47)	1.73
Knowledge and competence in the usage of Economics curriculum materials	9(24)	10(26)	19(50)	1.73
Knowledge and competence in the usage of Government curriculum materials	19(50)	14(37)	5(13)	2.36
* Knowledge and competence in the usage of integrated Social Studies Curriculum materials	23(61)	14(37)	1(3)	2.57
<b>Overall mean</b>				<b>2.39</b>

**Key:** A – Agree; I – Indifferent; D – Disagree; CoE – College of Education;  $\bar{X}$  – mean

**Note:** \*Teacher knowledge factor is high; the figures in parentheses are in percentage.

In Table 1, teacher knowledge factor about the methods of teaching and learning Social Studies was high (n= 32, 84%,  $\bar{X}$ =2.68). Also, knowledge factor of Social Studies curriculum materials as an amalgam of Social sciences was high (n= 29, 76%,  $\bar{X}$ =2.57). Similarly, knowledge factor of Social Studies content courses was high (n= 29, 76%,  $\bar{X}$ =2.52). This is followed by a high knowledge factor of integrated Social Studies (n= 28, 68%,  $\bar{X}$ =2.47). However, teacher knowledge of possible difficulties or misconceptions of students in Social Studies was low (n= 14, 37%,  $\bar{X}$ =1.84).

Teacher knowledge factor on the following variables were high: usage of curriculum materials in History (n= 29, 76%,  $\bar{X}$ =2.73), Sociology (n= 27, 71%,  $\bar{X}$ =2.57), Civics and Citizenship (n= 30, 79%,  $\bar{X}$ =2.71), Anthropology (n=29, 79%,  $\bar{X}$ =2.71), and integrated Social Studies (n= 23, 61%,  $\bar{X}$ =2.57). Conversely, knowledge factor in the usage of curriculum materials in the following subjects was low: Geography (n= 8, 21%,  $\bar{X}$ =1.73), Economics (n= 9, 24%,  $\bar{X}$ =1.73), and Government (n= 19, 50%,  $\bar{X}$ =2.36).



With the cut-off  $\bar{X} \geq 2.39$ , the findings indicate high knowledge factor of teachers on the nature and scope of Social Studies as an amalgam of Social sciences, its content courses and integrated nature as well as methods of teaching and learning it. Also, the study revealed high knowledge factor of teachers on the following indicators: usage of curriculum materials in History, Sociology, Civics and Citizenship, Anthropology, and integrated Social Studies. The interview responses give credence to the findings on teacher educators' knowledge factor of Social Studies curriculum materials for Colleges of education in Ghana. These findings are supported by interview data below.

A 44-year-old male Social Studies teacher educator commented:

*The Social Studies Curriculum material for Ghanaian Colleges of Education has been standardised. It uses a course outline designed by the University of Cape Coast. Social Studies has no approved textbook for the Colleges of Education in Ghana. Nonetheless, we search for information from different sources to teach students. I feel I have adequate knowledge of integrated Social Studies. (Interview respondent # 1)*

A 56-year-old male Social Studies teacher educator expressed:

*The Social Studies Curriculum material for Ghanaian Colleges of Education is very good. Personally, I have a very good knowledge of Social Studies. I have high knowledge and skills in integrated Social Studies. (Interview respondent #2)*

A 40-year-old male Social Studies teacher educator had this to say:

*I have mastery of subject matter. My level of knowledge of integrated Social Studies is very high. My strength is in both Geography and History than the other subject areas like economics. Sadly, the Social Studies Curriculum materials for the Ghanaian Colleges of Education has a little linkage between what students learn in the colleges and what they teach in the basic schools. (Interview respondent #3)*

A 39-year-old male Social Studies teacher educator remarked:

*The delivery of Social Studies Curriculum is not above my level. I have a deeper knowledge of the subject. This helps me in the teaching and learning process. It is the way the subject is handled in universities. I have sufficient knowledge in both integrated Social Studies and individual subject areas. (Interview respondent # 4)*

A 40-year-old female Social Studies teacher educator averred:

*I have a high level of knowledge in Social Studies. I believe I am good in the integrated approach. I mean I have knowledge of Geography, government, History and economics. (Interview respondent # 5)*

A 48-year-old female Social Studies teacher educator mentioned:

*I have sufficient knowledge of Social Studies as an integrated subject. I have mastery and rich experience in teaching the subject. However, my knowledge level in Geography is just average. (Interview respondent # 6)*

A 59-year-old female Social Studies teacher educator explained:

*My level of knowledge of integrated Social Studies is very high. Yes, I do have sufficient knowledge. My strength is in Geography, History and economics. I have a deep knowledge of both content and methodology. However, my weakness is in the overuse of the lecture technique. (Interview respondent # 7)*

A 45-year-old female Social Studies teacher educator stated:

*I have a very good knowledge of the Social Studies Curriculum of the Colleges of Education in Ghana. I have adequate knowledge and competencies in content and methodology as well as the good interpersonal relationship. (Interview respondent # 8)*

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Evidence gathered from the study indicate a high knowledge factor of teachers on the an amalgamated or integrated nature of Social Studies which is rooted in content courses in the Social sciences as well as methods of teaching them. The findings also confirm a high knowledge factor of teachers on the usage History, Sociology, Civics and Citizenship, Anthropology, and integrated Social Studies curriculum materials of Colleges of Education in Ghana. For instance, the majority (76%) of the teacher educators confirmed that Social Studies is an amalgamation of Social Sciences. This result signifies that the Social Studies Curriculum of Colleges of Education in Ghana is a blend of disciplines or subjects such as History, Geography, Economics and Sociology from the Social Sciences. This observation is parallel to the views of Adekeye who conceptualised Social Studies as an interdisciplinary discipline (Anagnostopoulos & Rutledge, 2007).

According to him (Adekeye, 2008), the contents of Social Studies are derived from various sources or disciplines. It is the knowledge, ideas, concepts, generalisations, skills, attitudes, methods, structure, procedures, values and principles that the learner is exposed to and guided to learn. When contents are selected, suitable experiences are designed by their relevance to the content. This finding means or suggests that Social Studies should be taught as an integrated subject since it is a combination of Social Science subjects. This calls for Social Studies curriculum synergy or harmonisation. The question remains as to whether the individual subjects should be taught separately by different teacher educators, or as an integrated subject taught by one or different teacher educators.

Again, it unfolds from the study that Social Studies teacher educators are well-grounded in methods of teaching subject matter or curriculum materials in Colleges of Education in Ghana. This was confirmed by 84% of the respondents. Also, 61% of the teacher educators affirmed that they had good knowledge of the integrated Social Studies Curriculum materials, which are a list of course contents and associated teaching aids (Kesidou & Roseman, 2002). This list comprises curriculum frameworks, curriculum programmes, textbooks (trade books), teacher-created materials, and professional publications. New curricula that are often implemented mechanically and without reflection on their relevance or application occasionally have damaging effects on student learning (Braund et al., 2013). Therefore, limited reference materials and obsolete information in Social Studies textbooks could make the teaching of the subject difficult (Kesidou & Roseman, 2002). However, it unfolds from the results that teacher educators' knowledge and competence in the usage of Geography and Economics curriculum materials were low with a response rate of 26% and 24%, respectively.

The interview results consolidate the findings that most of the teacher educators had an in-depth knowledge of integrated Social Studies. It is also evident from the interview data that the Social Studies Curriculum material for Ghanaian Colleges of Education is interdisciplinary in scope and content. A critical look at the syllabus of Colleges of Education reveals that the subject is intended to be taught and studied in the form of integration of concepts, facts, principles and inquiries from disciplines relating to the study of societal and environmental issues and problems. The integrated approach is in line with African indigenous education (Mugimu et al., 2013).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The study concludes that most of the teacher educators had sufficient knowledge of integrated Social Studies Curriculum materials, but a few were deficient in the usage of Geography and Economics curriculum materials. Generally, there are different schools of thought on what Social Studies is and ought to be, and how it should be taught in tertiary institutions, including Colleges of Education and universities in Ghana. One school of thought is the traditional (separate or specialist) approach where Social Studies curriculum materials are taught in compartments. The second school of thought is the integrated approach which emphasizes on curriculum integration. It is noteworthy that contemporary curriculum initiatives and frameworks should embody interdisciplinary dimensions.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Ministry of Education and the National Council on Tertiary Education in liaison with Ghanaian universities should train and equip post-graduate Social Studies teachers with the integrated (holistic or general) approach to the teaching of the subject.

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