

Social studies teachers' content knowledge impact on students in the senior high schools in Ghana

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Abstract

The main objective of the study was to find out how Social Studies teachers at the Senior High Schools (SHSs) impact their content knowledge into students in the classroom. To achieve this objective, interview guide and questionnaire were used to elicit the views of respondents. In all, 54 Social Studies teachers were involved in the study. The simple random, cluster and convenient sampling techniques were used to select the respondents for the study. Frequency counts and percentages were used as statistical tools for analyzing the questionnaire data collected, and the data from the interview guide was transcribed, categorized, analyzed and discussed on themes and subthemes that emerged. The findings revealed that majority of the teachers used content knowledge of Social Studies they have acquired to impact in their teaching to develop attitude, skills, values and knowledge in students. Based upon the findings, it was recommended that, there should be courses on Social Studies content so as to develop teachers' knowledge about the subject to enhance effective teaching.

Keywords

Social Studies, Content Knowledge, Teachers Content Knowledge, Content Knowledge Impact, Senior High Schools

1. Introduction

The overall goal of the Ministry of Education is to provide relevant and quality education for all Ghanaians, including the disadvantaged, to enable them acquire skills which will make them functionally literate and productive to facilitate poverty alleviation and promote the rapid socio-economic growth of the country (CRDD, 2012). Preparing students for the 21st century cannot be accomplished without a strong and sustaining emphasis on Social Studies (Ministry of Education 2012). Social Studies provides cornerstone skills that are the key to opening doors for a more diverse, competitive workforce and responsible citizenry. Students use critical thinking, self-assessment, reasoning, problem-solving, collaboration, research, and investigation to make

connections in new and innovative ways as they progress through Social Studies education. These standards outline the knowledge and skills needed 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 (NCSS, 2008).

Ghana's education has gone through many reforms dating back to colonial times to date. All these reforms aim at bringing constant improvements in its availability and relevance of education to the citizenry. In achieving this, the Ministry of Education in Ghana has since the early 1950's modified their entry requirements for admissions into the Colleges of Education. Time was when applicants entered Colleges of Education from standard seven, but this changed to entry after Senior high School. Again, the duration of training was also changed from one year to two years and to

three years. These changes in duration spent at the Colleges of Education help to ensure higher content knowledge before and during training.

It is traditionally accepted that for any effective teaching, the teacher should have both the content knowledge and the pedagogy. Teachers' knowledge about the subject matter to be learned or taught and that of content to be covered in the syllabus are very important and when applied well will promote effective teaching and learning. 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. As such, pedagogical knowledge requires an understanding of cognitive, social, and developmental theories of learning and how they apply to students in the classroom. A thorough grounding in college-level subject matter and professional competence in professional practice are necessary for good teaching. This will equip the teacher with assessment tool in other to bridge the gap between assessment and teaching as it is an essential way of creating independent, reflective learners who can plan and assess their own progress (Bordoh, Eshun & Bassaw, 2013)

In Ghana, Social Studies seems to occupy a high profile in the Senior High School curriculum and it is one of the core subjects to be studied at that level. Because of its importance, the government of Ghana is committed to ensuring the provision of high quality Social Studies teachers in our educational system through the Universities in the country. Besides, Social Studies is compulsory at the Junior and Senior High Schools. Personal experience and unverified information seem to point to the fact that most of our graduates from the Senior High Schools display their inability in the needed behavioural change which Social Studies seeks to address. Consistently, negative citizenry behaviours of all sorts are on the increase in the country and one begins to ask if the subject Social Studies is actually achieving its purpose and goals. Social Studies was introduced into Senior High Schools in Ghana and made compulsory in September 1996. It is expected that the nation would have by this time realized some positive behavioural traits among the products of the Senior High School. The question is why is it that the subject is not achieving its intended goals and purpose. Do the teachers have any gap in content?

On the contrary, it is sad to note that despite the goals and purposes of Social Studies, the expected outcomes in its learners after their contact with it in Senior High schools appear unachieved. Many people are putting up behaviours contrary to the goals and objectives of the subject. In the researchers' opinion, Ghanaians are becoming intolerant to national issues, people are becoming more self-centred than thinking about their neighbours, and people are showing apathy to national development. There is poor attitude to work and above all people are more tribally centred neglecting the idea of Ghana as a nation. The Ghanaian attitude to voting and elections in general are matters of concern. These seem to suggest that Social Studies is not

being well taught in our schools. It is this identified gap that has compelled the to find out the content knowledge base of the teachers' in Social Studies in our Senior High Schools and its impact on students learning. The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' content knowledge of Social Studies and its impacts on the students learning. This research is meant to answer the question: How do the contents of Social Studies taught, impact on the students learning?

2. Literature Review on Teachers Content Knowledge Impact on Students

In recent years, teachers' knowledge of the subject matter they teach has attracted increasing attention from policymakers. Programmes such as Social Studies workshops for SHSs Social Studies teachers, are all aimed at providing content-focused professional development intended to improve teachers' content knowledge .Kankam, Bekoe, Ayaaba, Bordoh and Eshun (2014) there are varied conceptions about the scope of content of Social Studies in the Colleges of Education in Ghana. Final year teacher-trainees conceptualized the content of Social Studies to cover: subject-centred; acquisition of problem solving skills; solving issues that threaten human survival; separated into individual subject areas rather than organised as integrated discipline; development of positive attitudes of students; critical examination of controversial issues; on the critical thinking about important social and political issues; and the key social and cultural situations in the community. The focus on subject-matter knowledge is evidence suggesting that teachers have not made the necessary impact on their teaching and that they lack the essential knowledge for teaching their field of area (Ma, 1999).

Despite this widespread interest and concern, what counts as "subject matter knowledge for teaching" and how it relates to student achievement has remained inadequately specified in past research. A literature read for example, reveals that working in this tradition have typically measured teachers' knowledge using proxy variables, such as courses taken, degrees attained, or results of basic skills tests. This stands in sharp contrast to another group of education scholars who have begun to conceptualize teachers' knowledge for teaching differently, arguing that teacher effects on student achievement are driven by teachers' ability to understand and use subject-matter knowledge to carry out the tasks of teaching (Shulman, 1987).

The National Council for Social Studies (2008) said that, teaching Social Studies powerfully and authentically begins with a deep knowledge and understanding of the subject and its unique goals. Social Studies programs prepare students to identify, understand, and work to solve the challenges facing our diverse nation in an increasingly interdependent world. Education for citizenship should help students acquire and learn to use the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will

prepare them to be competent and responsible citizens throughout their lives. Competent and responsible citizens are informed and thoughtful, participate in their communities, are involved politically, and exhibit moral and civic virtues (NCSS, 2008).

Teacher education, competence, and practice is an important topic, but still there has, at least in the Ghanaian context, been limited research on teachers' competence as well as performance when it comes to Social Studies as a school subject. Several studies have been directed toward the content and evolution of the national curriculum of Social Studies. Others have been concerned with Social Studies textbooks, while yet others have done research on students attitudes toward and practicing of democratic values in the school setting. To the best of our knowledge, there has been an empirical research exploring the priorities, perspectives, and teaching methods of Social Studies teachers. The conclusion from these different studies is, of course, more nuanced than we are able to express in a few lines, but a general tendency appears to be that Social Studies, in line with other school subjects, has been subject to changing content and intentions based on general trends in school policy. To Clausen, text books, on the other hand, are still limited in their ability to express social and political themes from a non-traditional perspective (Clausen 2007), and teachers are largely unable to depart from text-books and traditional teaching methods.

As expressed by Christophersen, Jonas Ketil and Kjetil (2003) a stronger emphasis on Social Science methods in national curricula, has not changed the teaching practice of Social Science teachers. They are still teaching Social Studies in a classical manner, applying traditional teaching methods. When this is said, however, teaching and writing textbooks for Social Studies is not a simple assignment, because there is more than one perspective on what the intention and content of the subject should be.

According 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, but that do not fit into any of the other established school subjects. Such a school subject becomes a difficult one to teach. Altogether, Børhaug (2005) identifies at least three different perspectives on what should be the content of Social Studies as a school subject.

Firstly, an important purpose is to legitimize the current structure of the society by transferring democratic values, and teaching students about the established social and political institutions. From a political science perspective this is, of course, important to maintain established structures, such as for example democracy and free speech (March & Johan 1995). There are several ways to teach Social Studies to secure such intentions. For example, one can render democracy as identical with our own political institutions, one can avoid critical discussion of established institutions, or one can express social and political institutions as solely subject to a national dimension (Børhaug 2005). Clausen

(2007) said that, for those studying Social Studies text-books, this is exactly what they find. The socialization into certain values is strong, and some topics are not at all treated in a critical manner. Empirical studies do, indeed, indicate that the legitimizing/socialization purpose of Social Studies is heavily represented in textbooks as well as in the daily teaching of Social Studies. There are, nevertheless, reasons to be skeptical to this trend.

Also, Tønnesson (2003) expressed that, if something is expressed in one perspective, without presenting the alternatives, this is highly unethical and contrary to scientific ethics. The second perspective on Social Studies, introduced by Børhaug (2005) is to treat Social Studies as a subject that should teach students important skills that may be useful in their everyday life. This would involve for example how to vote and what welfare rights you have, as well as critical thinking skills and methodological competence. In the most recent national curriculum, this has become an important perspective, suggesting that students should learn the appropriate skills to manage socially and politically. However, there are many themes in Social Studies that do not fit into this perspective, such as immigration, socialization, and international relations. In addition, many of those studying trends in the national curriculum are skeptical towards the tendency to focus on skills rather than knowledge (Skarpenes, 2007). It appears plausible that applying skills and methods becomes difficult without some background knowledge of the society in which new knowledge is to be constructed.

The third perspective suggested by Børhaug (2005) is a more critical approach where the goal of Social Studies teaching is that the students should become reflective upon their own action, and the social and political system. Students should learn to understand that political behaviour and institutions are not given, but subject to evaluation and change. This requires knowledge of the social and political system, as well as the student's position within it. But it also requires political skills and the ability to cooperate with other, as well as the methodological skills to independently evaluate information.

According to Englund (2009), studies indicate that text-books have tendencies to be moralistic and one-sided, and teachers appear unable to teach Social Studies in critical manner. Teachers should be able to introduce topics and themes from the national curriculum in various perspectives, even if these various perspectives are not fully represented in the textbook. Central in this regard is the idea of the deliberative democracy. This implies that a Social Studies text book does not make a teacher a good teacher, also, it does not make the subject easier to be taught by any teacher of other discipline as it is going on in some schools, again, the text book will not make a teacher teach effectively to achieve the intended goals, purpose and objectives it seeks to achieve. Englund (2009) also said that, students develop citizenship literacy as they have the opportunity to expand their competence to understand and to deliberate upon plural ideas and arguments: a communication which is about sharing as well as contesting different ways of apprehending

the world.

According to Ljunggren and Öst (2010), the teacher should, therefore, not only introduce students to the various perspectives, but should open up for discussing these various perspectives, and possible political controversies, in class. This involves going beyond the dominant pattern of in-class communication where the teacher teaches and the students listen. Meaning, Social Studies teachers should be better at making the Social Studies school subject less abstract by introducing the students to Social Studies research projects. This makes the student to be part of the lesson. Social and political behaviour and structures are highly present in the students' everyday life. To make this possible is to engage students in social science research projects related to their own environment. Student can, for example be asked to explore and discuss the practicing of democracy in their own environment or in the local community; making Social Studies a practical as well as theoretical subject. This does, however, require that the teachers themselves are familiar with Social Studies research methods and strategies and can guide students in their research projects. Content matters because skills are not enough. Skills are necessary but they are only the beginning of learning. Without skills, one cannot acquire knowledge. Knowledge builds on knowledge. The Senior High Schools syllabi were examined based on the rationale for teaching; general aims; and the scope of content of social studies that will prepare the individual by equipping him or her with knowledge about the culture and ways of life of their society, its problems, its values and its hopes for the future (Bekoe & Eshun, 2013).

To teach all students according to today's standards, teachers need to understand subject matter deeply and flexibly so they can help students create useful cognitive maps, relate one idea to another, and address misconceptions. Teachers need to see how ideas connect across fields and to everyday life. This kind of understanding provides a foundation for pedagogical content knowledge that enables teachers to make ideas accessible to others (Shulman, 1987).

Shulman (1986) introduced the phrase *pedagogical content knowledge* and sparked a whole new wave of scholarly articles on teachers' knowledge of their subject matter and the importance of this knowledge for successful teaching. Especially important is content knowledge that deals with the teaching process, including the most useful forms of representing and communicating content and how students' best learn the specific concepts and topics of a subject. "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)" (Ornstein, Thomas, & Lasley, 2000: 508). The NSTA Standards authors define a model of pedagogy familiar to teachers and teacher educators. This model includes: actions and strategies of teaching, organization of classroom experiences, providing for diverse learner needs, evaluation and implementation of learner's prior notions, and transformation of ideas into understandable pieces (National Science Teachers Association, (NSTA) 1999). These familiar

notions were clearly described in Borko and Putnam's (2000) review of literature on learning to teach. The treatment in NSTA Standards look exclusively at literature related to science teaching. The outcome of these standards is reflective of teaching standards found in The National Science Education Standards (NSES) (1996). The NSTA Standards (1999) suggested that teachers of science should be able to provide all students the opportunity to learn from science instruction, to make sense out of science and to want to do more science. This is in the spirit of the NSES, but no simple task. This statement involves multiple pedagogical tasks including: addressing all students' needs; planning activities that allow and encourage students to learn and reason about problems; trying to make sense of the world; and instilling in students the desire to learn more science (National Research Council, 1996).

Looking back at Shulman's (1992) Content and Pedagogy knowledge, there were some important themes that overlapped in that document. The Content section expected that teachers would be able to make connections and see relationships between concepts. While the Pedagogy section sought to help students learn about societal problems. Making connections requires an understanding of the problems faced man for his/her survival. The Content section expects Social Studies teachers to learn and teach about the process of developing attitudes, values, skills and knowledge, while the Pedagogy section expects teachers to plan experiences for their students to be reflective, concerned, responsible and participatory citizens. This presents the intersection in the learning how to teach Social Studies using different approaches. Making similar connections relies on a facile understanding of both the content students are learning and how students learn.

Lee Shulman (1987) developed the construct of "pedagogical content knowledge" (PCK) in response to some of the problems of teaching and teacher education. Ironically, it is only mentioned to explain that the content standard would be looking at the content specific aspect of the subject. There is a connection between content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge in Social Studies teaching, which is implicit in many research made. Careful reading reveals connections in the two domains that cannot be neglected. For example the pedagogy standard suggests that teachers know about organization of classroom experiences. However to design such organization requires a deep understanding of content. This was what Shulman (1987) was talking about when stating, "The key to distinguishing the knowledge base of teaching lies at the intersection of content and pedagogy". Based on Shulman's (1987) notion of pedagogical content knowledge, effective teachers can possess an in-depth knowledge of how to represent the subject matter to learners (Parker & Heywood, 2000). Shulman (1987) also stated that pedagogical content knowledge must include the knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts, knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values, and their philosophical and historical bases. Additionally, pedagogical content knowledge refers to

the ability of the teacher to transform content into forms that are pedagogically powerful and yet adaptive to the variations in ability and background presented by the students (An, Kulm and Wu, 2004). Social Studies is short of a specific didactical *canon* defining the subject matter's most important purpose, goal, content and teaching methods.

Learning the basic skills necessary for you to become an effective educator can be especially difficult for a first year teacher. Becoming an effective teacher takes practice and time and special guidance from mentors. Effective teaching does not involve presenting your exciting lessons or activities to the class, it is a craft learned over time. Effective teaching is a teaching philosophy that can distinctly change given the situation. For example, a classroom with five students is a much different situation than addressing a class of forty students. Having the skills and abilities necessary to become an effective teacher will allow you to craft your lessons and teaching style to accommodate any size of class.

According to Foros (2006) the characteristics of effective teaching include; positive expectations, enthusiasm, effective classroom manager / organization, ability to design lessons and activities, and rapport with students. Effective teachers should have high expectations for their entire class. Whether a student constantly makes hundreds on tests or a fifty, each student should be given positive reinforcement in class. Effective teachers should exhibit positive expectations to ensure each student believes he can excel. Transmitting positive reinforcement by telling each student that they have high abilities and are a capable learner will allow students to excel to their highest abilities. In addition, setting positive expectations in the classroom will help students who do not have proper motivation and support at home.

Effective teachers should always exhibit enthusiasm in the classroom. Enthusiasm will allow your students to be interested in class discussions and classroom activities. Effective teachers should speak in expressive ways, not a monotone style. In addition, gestures with arms and constantly moving around the classroom will allow your students to be interested in the classroom discussion. Effective teacher should also maintain eye contact with their students at all times. Educators need to have proper classroom management skills in order to be effective teachers. Classroom management is not about disciplining your class; it deals with how to effectively manage the classroom. Classroom management deals with how to take roll, keep an effective grade book and how to discipline students. One of the most important skills for an effective teacher to master is how to design and implement lessons in the classroom. Designing lessons involves how to cater for the needed curriculum content into discussions, activities and assignments. In addition, an effective teacher should also be able to evaluate whether or not their students mastered the lesson. An effective teacher should always establish rapport with their students. Establishing interpersonal relationships with students is crucial to form a trusting bond with each student. Effective teachers should be available outside of class to answer questions and provide additional help to

students. In addition, an effective teacher should show tolerance to differing points of view during class. Eshun, Bordoh, Bassaw and Mensah (2014) asserted that lesson delivery is seen to be a two way affair only if teachers' share achievable success criteria with student in lesson presentation; using relevant activities from the beginning of the lesson to the end make lessons delivery unique.

There are not many who, when given an option, would choose to have a poor classroom teacher rather than a good one. But just how important is the teacher to student achievement and learning? Are finding that the effect of good teaching is substantial and lasting. Perhaps the most well known research on this question was performed by William L. Sanders and June C. Rivers at the University of Tennessee. In one study, they found that "groups of students with comparable abilities and initial achievement levels may have vastly different academic outcomes as a result of the sequence of teachers to which they are assigned" Sanders (1994). Three years of highly effective teachers can boost student achievement by as much as 50 percentile points, compared to having relatively ineffective teachers for three years. Sanders' (1994) research examines "the *improvement* of students from the beginning of the school year to the end" based on test scores, what is called the "value added" by teachers.

In fact, classroom teachers contribute more to student achievement than any other factor. Specifically, Sanders' (1994) value-added research found that teacher effectiveness has a greater impact than "race, poverty, [or] parent's education". In addition, Darling-Hammond (2000a), from Stanford University, notes in a research review that differences in teacher effectiveness are more important than "differences in class size". Darling-Hammond's (2000a), own analysis of data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress found "that the effects of well-prepared teachers on student achievement can be stronger than the influences of student background factors, such as poverty, language background, and minority status". Finally, John Schacter from the Milken Family Foundation and Yeow Meng Thum from UCLA found in a review of relevant studies that "When compared to virtually every other school reform effort to date (e.g. class size reduction, charter schools, vouchers, direct instruction, technology, etc.), students who have effective teachers achieve the most" (2004). The quality of the teacher, then, is the most important school-related factor and can be more powerful than many out-of-school factors.

Characteristics of Effective Teachers: What the studies cited so far do not tell us, however, is what makes teachers effective. More recent research has attempted to answer this question by pairing value-added research methods with studies of teacher characteristics (Foros, 2006). Not surprisingly, there is no universal agreement among about which teacher qualities matter the most. However, several research reviews have identified teacher qualities that seem to make a difference:

- *Verbal ability*: There is near universal agreement that the verbal skills of teachers matter. In fact, Kate Walsh

and Christopher Tracy of The National Council on Teacher Quality assert that "two recent reviews of the research found that a teacher's level of literacy as measured by vocabulary and other standardized tests affects student achievement *more than any other measurable teacher attribute*."

- *Content knowledge*: It is also commonly acknowledged that a secondary teacher with a degree in math or science will "routinely get higher student performance than teachers" that do not have a degree in those fields (Haycock, 1998). However, some research notes that, while it is important for teachers to know the material to be taught, the importance of knowing the subject will "grow smaller beyond some minimal essential level" (Darling-Hammond, 2000).
- *Certification*: The research on the importance of teacher certification to student achievement is less clear. Linda Darling-Hammond's (2000) study found that "teacher quality characteristics such as certification status and degree in the field to be taught are very significantly and positively correlated with student outcomes".
- *Experience*: Most agree that a teacher with some experience is usually more effective than someone new on the job. But most studies have found that teachers become more effective during the first five years of their careers and then level off until close to the end of their careers. Interestingly, however, Darling-Hammond (2000), reports that "veteran teachers in settings that emphasize continual learning and collaboration continue to improve their performance". While Sanders (1994) agree that "*some* experience does have an impact on student achievement" they also maintain that "experience has less of an impact on student achievement than other measurable teacher attributes."

The four attributes discussed above are the most commonly studied because they are the easiest to measure. Other teacher qualities may be as or more important, but are difficult to measure on a large scale. For example, Sanders (1994) suggests that the qualities that Teachers for America has found to be common among their most successful teachers (academically successful in school and college, responsible, able to think critically, motivated, respectful, and sharing the organization's goals) may be important contributors to teacher effectiveness. Similarly, Linda Darling-Hammond (2000) identifies a "positive relationship between student learning and teachers' 'flexibility', 'creativity', or 'adaptability' ...Successful teachers tend to be those who are able to use a range of teaching strategies and who use a range of interaction styles, rather than a single rigid approach". Such "soft" attributes are undoubtedly important, but they are difficult to ascertain without observing or interviewing teachers directly.

The research on teacher characteristics and their effect on student achievement have been useful in recent discussions about how to construct policies to encourage high quality teachers to enter and remain in the profession. However, it is most likely that the positive effects on student achievement

attributed to good teachers are as much a result of quality teaching as of teacher qualities. In other words, it is how teachers teach that makes the most difference in student achievement. Like the personality traits mentioned above, however, how teachers teach is more difficult to measure than how many years someone has been a teacher. In fact, NCSS (2008) notes that "there are no comprehensive reviews that neatly synthesize research on teaching practices". Rather than relying on research reviews, then, this section summarizes a few studies that attempt to identify effective teaching practices as measured by effects on student achievement.

The Teacher's Curriculum Institute (TCI) (2004), sought to determine "whether high-quality teaching was related to better outcomes for all children" using data from more than 7,000 students and almost 400 teachers. To determine teacher quality, they relied on classroom observations by a teacher's principal or assistant principal, using a set of standards for teachers. The standards in the study dealt with teachers' content knowledge, use of a variety of instructional methods, lesson planning, use of assessment data, adaptively to student needs, persistence, and engaging "students cognitively in activities and assignments ...congruent to instructional objectives." They examined student performance data in grades 4-6 in math and reading. After accounting for other factors, such as "teacher experience and student pretest score, minority status, and free-lunch status," TCI (2004) found that "better teaching appears to be related to better learning outcomes." In other words, teachers who were rated highly according to the standards produced better results for kids.

Schacter and Thum (2004) used a similar approach to measuring teacher practice and its effect on student achievement in a study of more than 50 teachers at five Arizona elementary schools. Schacter and Thum (2004) developed "12 teaching performance standards and rubrics to assess teaching quality." Their standards were drawn from a comprehensive review of research on "teacher behaviours, teaching models, teaching strategies and teacher qualifications." The standards included such practices as:

- Communicating learning objectives
- Connecting learning to student experiences
- Presenting new information important to a lesson logically
- Efficient use of instructional time
- Planning activities to support learning and student interaction
- Asking a variety of types of questions
- Communicating learning expectations clearly
- Providing students regular feedback on their performance

Participants were evaluated on their use of those 12 practices during eight observations. The results of their findings are clear: "teachers who implement effective teaching as measured by our 12 teaching standards and performance rubrics produce students who make considerable achievement gains."

As demonstrated by the two studies discussed above,

measuring the effect of teacher quality through an observation of classroom practice is a labour intensive process. One way that has dealt with this is by studying teachers who are already identified as excellent through some other method.

The Teacher's Curriculum Institute (2004) seeks to "advance the quality of teaching and learning by developing professional standards for accomplished teaching, creating a voluntary system to certify teachers who meet those standards and integrating certified teachers into educational reform efforts". Teachers achieve board- certification based on portfolios of student work and videos of the applicants teaching and also on their score on a test of their subject-matter knowledge. They are evaluated on:

- Their commitment to students and their learning, including their use of different approaches for different students that are consistent with principles of cognitive development
- Their knowledge of the subjects they teach and how best to teach them
- Their ability to manage student learning by establishing an appropriate environment and using regular student assessments
- Their ability to think about their teaching and to use what they learn to improve
- Their ability to create learning communities that engage parents and others

So, are nationally board certified teachers the most effective? Teacher's Curriculum Institute (2004) set out to answer this question in 2004 by comparing the effectiveness of board-certified teachers against teachers who had tried to become certified but did not make it. They found that "teachers who are successful in their attempts to attain certification are more effective than those who are unsuccessful applicants, providing evidence that TCI (2004) is, in fact, identifying the more effective teachers of those they actually evaluate." In addition, those who are or eventually become board-certified are more effective than those who do not meet the selection criteria or who do not apply. They concluded that students in the classrooms taught by board-certified teachers' outperformed students in classrooms with non-board certified teachers 100% of the time. Thus, the qualities of effective teaching identified by the National Board appear to be teaching practices that have a positive impact on student achievement.

Finally, the authors of the TCI (2004) research review on effective teaching offer five "key themes ...that reflect key findings from the research" on teaching practices. The five themes are:

- Building on students' prior knowledge
- Linking goals, assessment, and instruction
- Teaching content and critical thinking
- Developing language skills
- Creating a culture of learning

Interestingly, each of these themes finds some support in one or more of the studies summarized above. In other words, all of these teaching practices have been demonstrated, to one

degree or another, to have a positive effect on student achievement as measured by student performance on standardized tests.

3. Methodology

The design for study was descriptive survey. Data collected was analyzed in the form of tables and words. Triangulation was used to test the consistency of findings obtained through different instrument.

The population for this study comprised all Social Studies teachers in the Senior High Schools (SHS) in the Western Region of Ghana. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), a targeted population is a group of respondents from whom the researchers are interested in collecting information and drawing conclusions. In this present study, the target population comprised all Social Studies teachers teaching the subject in Senior High Schools at Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana.

The sample size for the study was fifty-four (54) Social Studies teachers teaching the subject. Sampling method such as random, cluster and convenient sampling techniques were employed by the researchers to select the sample of district, schools and respondents for the study. The table: 1 below shows the number of schools and respondents (teachers) selected for the study.

Table 1. Name of Schools and respondents

School	Number of Teacher Respondents	Percentage
TADISCO	9	16.7
SECKO	5	9.3
BOMPEH	10	18.5
ST JOHN'S	6	11.1
FIJAI	11	20.4
GSTS	7	13.0
ADIEMBRA	6	11.1
APSS	0	0
Total	54	100.0

The Table 1 above shows the number of schools and respondents (Social Studies teachers) used for the study. Fifty four teachers were selected from the eight Senior High Schools in Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana.

4. Teachers Content Knowledge Impact on Students Learning

Table 2. Questionnaire responses to the research question

Statements	A	U	D
1. Problem stated in the Social Studies syllabus for SHS helps in the selection of the right content to be taught in the subject	42	8	4
2. The Social Studies teacher makes deliberate efforts to develop certain positive attitudes and values in students when teaching	49	2	3

These questions sought to find out the contents of Social Studies as taught in the class and how they impact on the

students.

The data in table 1 indicate that, 42 (77.7%) respondents agreed that the problem stated in the Social Studies syllabus for SHS help in the selection of the right content to be taught in the subject, 8 (14.8%) were undecided and 4 (7.4%) disagreed; 49 (90.7%) respondents agreed to the statement the Social Studies teacher makes deliberate efforts to develop certain positive attitudes and values in students when teaching, 2 (3.7%) were undecided and 3 (5.5%) disagreed.

The data in Table 2 indicate that, 2 (25%) of the Social

Studies teachers moderately made the attempt to teach to develop students' attitudes, 4 (50%) averagely made the attempt to deliberately teach to develop students' attitudes and 2 (25%) did not attempt to teach to develop students' attitudes. It was also revealed that 2 (25%) of the Social Studies teachers were able to develop students skills to a great extent, 1 (12.5%) moderately did that, 3 (37.5%) averagely made the attempt, while 2 (25%) did not attempt to teach to develop teachers skills.

Table 3. Evaluation on how Social Studies content are taught

To what extent are the following true of the Social Studies teaching.	Very great extent	Great extent	Moderately true	Averagely untrue	Not true
Students' attitudes are being developed by the teacher.	-	-	2	4	2
Students' values are being developed.	-	-	2	4	2
Students' skills are being developed.	-	2	1	3	2
Teacher makes repeated efforts in encouraging in the needed attitudes for students.	-	-	2	-	6

The responses from the interview conducted revealed the following: When this question was posed *in what ways will your knowledge in Social Studies help you in your teaching?* Most of the respondents said *"Yes, once you have knowledge in Social Studies, it will help you to learn certain skills, knowledge and other things. It also entails an aspect of values because a curriculum or syllabus aspect of Social Studies helps the teacher to teach the students certain skills and capabilities. For example, topics like self identity and self consciousness. Although the teacher is naïve in the area of knowledge of the subject, will she/he not be able to build the capabilities of students"*. Another teacher said *"once Social Studies entails a broad spectrum, being a teacher, if I am able to get the needed skills and knowledge, I think I will be able to teach because there are some areas you have to do a lot of research and if you are very naïve and a novice, I think it will be a great challenge, but if you have a broad spectrum in terms of knowledge, it will help you in other social issues. It will help you to teach the subject very well"*. The teacher further lamented that *"knowledge I have acquired in Social Studies helps me to relate all the issues related to real life situations, in the sense that it makes you to relate the topic to situations to the understanding of the children"*. A respondent had this to say: *I did not do Social Studies nor did social science but my profession as a Rev. Minister relating to the people from all walks of life and then the liberal studies that I did at the University also helps me to deal with problems in the society. My knowledge and experiences as a minister and liberal studies helps me to teach Social Studies. With experience I share what I have experienced with the students.*

When this question was also posed to the respondents *in teaching Social Studies, do you consciously develop attitude, values, knowledge and skills in the students?* Most of teachers said *exactly, because students have already conceived certain things in mind whether good or bad, we*

will take advantage to educate them and that calls for attitudinal change. One of the teachers said" it is something that I keep hammering on or at times I use role play. I spend time to argue sometimes and even ask them to vote. Sometimes the majority might be wrong because of their preconceived ideas sometimes; I use that to change their mind from that attitude." Another teacher also said *"I think yes, because in teaching, it garnishes that line, but then changing of attitudes in students is difficult because of even how the student see the subject, so it is an aspect of my teaching to change the behavioural aspects of the student"*. Another teacher indicated that *"I give them so many research works and upon their findings I indicate what is relevant to the individual students and the impact to the society"*. Another respondent had this to say:

- *Through the topics we teach the students because one of the topics works on their social values and at times in the course of teaching, students might misbehave so, I have to teach them the right thing like attitude, skills and value*
- *"I consciously inculcate in student the right attitude, skills and values."*

What is your view about this? When teaching a Social Studies topic 'Science and Technology' the teacher will be concerned with

- a) The meaning of Science and Technology
- b) What constitutes Science and Technology?
- c) How the study of Science can be applied in Technology?
- d) The advantages of Science and Technology.

All the teachers said *"How can the study of science be applied in technology?"* *"They further said social studies is not having any bearing with science and technology"*. Another teacher said *social studies curriculum should contain topics that can change the mind set of the learners and can right wrong in the society.*

This question was also put before the teachers by the

researchers. When teaching Social Studies topic ‘institution of marriage’ at SHS the teacher will be concerned with

- a) How to help people to solve the problem of selecting a future partner?
- b) What constitutes the preparation that ought to be made before getting married?
- c) Meaning of marriage
- d) The types of marriages we have in Ghana.

All the respondents said “*what constitutes the preparation that ought to be made before getting married*”? They further lamented as *problem solving subject it was an ideal to have this topic in Social Studies curriculum. It will help the learners to have insight into what constitutes the preparation that ought to be made before getting married. And also to have right attitudes and values towards marriage*

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings it can be concluded that many teachers in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis used content knowledge in Social Studies to impact into students’ acceptable attitudes, values and skills during teaching and learning. Again, achieving good West African Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) results give teachers some fame and reward and so teachers are poised to achieve these rewards rather than developing the learners’ attitudes, values, skills and giving them knowledge which will benefit the society and the nation at large. Since content knowledge is vital to good teaching, there should be courses on Social Studies content so as to develop teachers’ knowledge about the subject to enhance effective teaching. Questions in Social Studies should emphasize on how to address the problems of human survival. West African Examination Certificate (WAEC) style of setting questions should be such that students will apply what they have acquired in class rather than reproducing what is in the textbooks.

There should be periodic seminars for Social Studies teachers to refresh the minds of those who have been outside the University for a long time so that they will be abreast with new information about the subject. Colleges of Education should restructure their programmes to suit content methodology of Social Studies for effective teaching and learning. Social Studies Association should organise in-service training for newly trained graduates from the Universities and Colleges on the content of Social Studies to enhance effective teaching.

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