

## Factors Affecting Students' Attitude towards the Learning of Social Studies in the Accra Metropolis of Ghana: A Mixed Method Analysis

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### Abstract

*This study sought to examine students' attitude towards learning of Social Studies in the Accra Metropolis of Ghana. It investigated the factors that affect students' attitude towards Social Studies and assessed how students' attitude towards Social Studies could be improved. A sample of 72 teachers was used. Methodologically, the study adopted the simple random sampling technique and purposive sampling technique. Questionnaire was used as the main data collection instrument. The quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0. whereas the qualitative data was transcribed appropriately. It was found out that factors found to affect students' attitude towards Social Studies include; teachers not showing interest in teaching controversial issues, teachers' inability to give needed assistance to students, teachers' inability to use different teaching methods in teaching Social Studies classes, inadequate teaching and learning materials and inability of Social Studies teachers to employ resource persons in times of difficulty. It is therefore recommended that Ghana Education Service should recruit professional teachers to teach Social Studies in Senior High schools. This will help the students to improve more with the right knowledge in Social Studies.*

**Keywords:** Students' attitude, Learning, Marginalization, Citizenship education, Affective

### Introduction

Among the many agencies available for Social Studies education are the family, peer group, mass media, the church and the school [1]. Of all these, the school appears to be the most potent force in the Ghanaian society driving the course of Social Studies. For instance, because of the democratic dispensation in the Ghanaian system, one cannot guarantee that the various family units can efficiently inset the ideas of our form of democracy in the youth. Similarly, one cannot dispute the fact that most of the youth do not have access to the mass media. The same may apply to the church. On the contrary, almost every youth is expected by law to acquire at least basic education [2]. It is for this reason why Cleary suggests that schools (senior high schools) are powerful weapon used to ensure that majority of the youth have a taste of Social Studies education in Ghana [1].

The past 50 years have witnessed a number of studies that have attempted to understand why students either like or dislike social studies. These studies have tried to identify and measure student's attitude about social studies and predict what influence their performance related to this area of the school curriculum [3-7]. Through the years, ongoing changes in curriculum design, teaching methodology, and administrative practices may have helped to improve students' performance in Social Studies [8]. However, most students still perceive Social Studies classes as dull, boring,

and irrelevant to their lives which seems to affect their performance all the time. If the Social Studies curriculum is to continue to have support from school administrators, politicians, and the general public, it is desirable to have positive student attitudes towards the subject matter. This is important because it is quite possible that negative attitudes toward social studies could ultimately result in a sharp decline in the allocation of resources for this subject area. Unfortunately, previous research indicates that young students are not positive about social studies and find it irrelevant for future careers. Historically, when elementary and high school students were surveyed, the most dominant negative perception was that Social Studies was boring and had little relevance to their lives. Fernandez, Massey and Dombush conducted one of the earliest surveys regarding student attitudes towards Social Studies in the San Francisco Public Schools [9]. They found that students in grades 9 through 12 ranked Social Studies last in importance when compared to other core subjects such as English and mathematics. The participants described social studies as confusing and having little relationship to their future.

From the above description of Social Studies education in both Ghana and the world at large, one could attest to the fact that, an exploration into students' attitudes towards the learning of Social Studies will be of great relevance to the development of active citizens. It is against this background that this study sought to examine the factors affecting students' attitude towards the learning of Social Studies in the Accra Metropolis.

## Problem Statement

The marginalization of Social Studies education in schools has been documented repeatedly. For instance, in the United States, Lawson surveyed hundred tenth grade students and hundred twelfth grade students in order to determine their attitudes towards the various subject areas. In the study, English, mathematics and reading were ranked ahead of Social Studies [10]. Participants described social studies as boring and far from anything they could relate to in their life. This situation may result in the poor performance of students in Social Studies. The researchers suspect that this apparent drift may be the result of ineffective learning of Social Studies content. This study therefore investigates the factors affecting students' attitude towards the learning of Social Studies in senior high schools.

## Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to:

1. Investigate the factors that affect students' attitude towards Social Studies
2. Explore how students' attitude towards Social Studies can be improved

## Significance of the Study

The findings of the study are expected to be particularly relevant to educational policy and decision makers responsible for the development and improvement of the teaching of Social Studies in Senior High schools. This is because the result of the study will reveal the kind of academic and professional competencies teachers' exhibit in the classroom and this will help the Ghana Education Service (GES) to have a greater insight into the strengths and weaknesses of particular educational policies affecting the teaching and learning of Social Studies in the Accra Metropolitan Assembly in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. It would also help identify the students' attitude towards the subject and its effect on their performance.

## Brief Historical Overview of Social Studies

In Africa, ideas on how to modernize the teaching of Social Studies in the school curriculum were expressed as early as 1961 at the Endicott Summer House Study in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), U.S.A. where prominent African, British and American educationalists addressed themselves to the issues of educational problems facing post-war Africa, especially the newly independent nations and how to find solutions to their educational problems in the humanities and Social Sciences, Language, Mathematics, Science and Teacher Education. At the summit various sub-committees were set up, one of which was charged to prepare a syllabus for the social sciences. The sub-committee on Social Studies decided among other things that:

*The teaching of Geography, History and Civics as separate disciplines in the primary schools in Africa introduces an artificial division in the social sciences which should be discouraged in the early years of schooling. The child should be introduced to the social sciences as an integrated field of study and should be made to appreciate right from the beginning of his education the close relationship between the disciplines which later emerge as distinct fields of learning [11].*

This, in the view of the group was to make the child aware that he and the community were geographically, historically, socially and economically one. For want of a suitable name, the sub-committee

suggested that such an integrated area of study should be known as 'Social Studies'.

In 1967, a meeting was held at Queens College, Oxford where participants decided on the need to give attention to the development of Social Studies in primary schools. This meeting was sponsored by the Education Development Centre (EDC) and Centre for Research and Educational Development Overseas (CREDO). In 1968 another conference was held in Mombassa, Kenya. According to Tamakloe the Mombassa Conference marked the turning point in the development of Social Studies in Africa. This conference gave birth to the African Social Studies Programme (ASSP) whose primary purpose was to assist African countries by:

1. Collecting and disseminating information of Social Studies projects in Africa and elsewhere through reports, newsletters and original documents.
2. Assisting member countries to organize workshops, courses, seminars, and conferences for the exchange of ideas and for in-service training of teachers to enable them adapt to the new approach to the teaching of Social Studies.
3. Encouraging the initiation of research in Social Studies teaching in the development of materials for primary and secondary schools in Africa and involve professional and university people [12].

It is important to note that the major objective of the African Social Studies Programme now African Social and Environmental Studies Programme (ASESP) is that Social Studies should be taught as an integrated discipline. In Ghana, Bruce reports, that there had been attempts at 'integration of a sort' in the social sciences [13]. According to him, between 1950 and 1954, some form of integration appeared in the syllabuses of teacher training colleges, notably, Wesley College, Government Training College (Winneba), and Presbyterian Training College-Akropong Akwapim. However, by 1955 the programme had collapsed due to lack of personnel to teach the integrated subject. Tamakloe also points out that before 1968, there existed an area of study termed 'centres of interest' in the primary school curriculum which appeared to be an integration of subjects like history, geography and civics which was only undertaken at the lower primary level (primary one to three) [14]. He further observed that this programme "consisted of just topics which had been jumbled up in the name of integration; the topics [however] lacked cohesion".

The development of the Social Studies programme in Ghana began in 1967 with the setting up of the Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD). Between August and September 1968, a conference was held at the Advanced Teacher Training College, Winneba under the auspices of the British Council. From there a pilot programme on Social Studies teaching was started in four selected centres namely Saltpond and Assin Fosu in the Central Region, and Ho and Hohoe in the Volta Region. According to Tamakloe "there was a great controversy on the choice of name for the new programme being developed [14]. While one group felt it should be called Social Studies one contended it should be called environmental studies". The programme in its fourth year of pilot testing saw the inauguration of the National Association of Curriculum and Courses (NACC). All primary syllabuses were reviewed and improved with the sub-committee on Social Studies agreeing that the new programme should be officially called

environmental studies.

With the advent of the Education Reforms in 1987 the term ‘Social Studies’ was once again officially used for the subject in all levels of the school system. In 1988, the CRDD published new textbooks ‘Ghana Social Studies Series’ to replace the environmental studies programme in all schools. In 1996, when the Free Compulsory and Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) was introduced, the term ‘Social Studies’ was still used for the subject at both the primary and the then junior secondary but in the syllabus that was introduced in the primary schools in 1988, the term ‘environmental studies’ was once again used at the primary school level. Presently, the subject is referred to as ‘environmental studies’ at the primary school while at the junior and senior secondary schools the term Social Studies is used. At the Teacher Training Colleges and the Universities, the term ‘Environmental and Social Studies’ is used for the programme.

It is necessary to trace the development of the integrated Social Studies programme from both international and local scenes in order to appreciate the “chequered” history of Social Studies with regard to its name and scope and to find out how prudently the programme is being regulated in second cycle schools, and the Senior High Schools in the Accra Metropolitan, in particular.

### **Perspectives on the Nature of the Social Studies Curriculum Meaning of Social Studies**

Over the years there has not been consensus among Social Studies scholars as to what the term Social Studies means. Many writers have therefore sought to define Social Studies based on their own cultural background. According to Longstreet and Shane “the question of definition has plagued the field of Social Studies since its inception in 1916” [15].

If this is the situation then one would agree with Tabachnik that in trying to find out what Social Studies is, “one should examine general definitions for Social Studies offered by educators whose special interest is in Social Studies education which will serve as guidelines and statement of purpose for Social Studies” [16].

However, a professional usage demonstrates convincingly that the term Social Studies is properly regarded as a plural verb [17]. This notwithstanding, the term Social Studies must be used in a generic sense which takes the singular verb “is”.

Tamakloe looks at Social Studies as a subject that deals with man and his relationship to his environment [18]. This goes to explain the fact that teaching of Social Studies should aim at exposing learners to the way of life of the society and the realization that humans, plants and all the other animals are dependent upon each other. Linguist defines Social Studies as “an integration of knowledge, skill and processes and goes on to say that “the subject provides powerful learning in the humanities and social science for the purposes of helping children learn to be good problem solvers and wise decision makers” [19]. To Martorella “Social Studies are selected information and modes of investigation from the social sciences, selected information from any area that relates directly to an understanding of individuals, groups and societies, and application of the selected information to citizenship education” [20]. To these writers, Social Studies is taught to promote citizenship by using social science concepts.

From Linguist and Martorella’s definitions, one thing clearly

emerges; this is the role of the social sciences which provide the base for Social Studies teaching, that is, the content or subject matter of Social Studies [19]. To a large extent, the framework of Social Studies promotes history, geography and economics [20]. These are the three major disciplines of Social Studies since they directly promote the development of temporal and spatial competencies and sustainable living. History gathers and evaluates relevant traces of past event and provides Social Studies with the key concepts of chronology, cause and effects and historical records. The key concepts of Geography in Social Studies curriculum include land form, migration, climate, ecosystem and sustainable economic development. Economics is the study of how we use resources to satisfy wants and needs and this is given prominence in the Social Studies syllabus. Other fields of study, such as political science, anthropology, sociology and social psychology contribute essential understanding and competencies to Social Studies. The social sciences are therefore constructs developed to aid in the scholarly pursuit of knowledge with the content and findings from the social sciences furnishing the raw materials on which the Social Studies programme is built [21]. To some extent it may be true that the social sciences provide the foundational concept–matrix for Social Studies. However, it appears Social Studies is broader a field than that covered by the social sciences.

The other side of the definition is citizenship education which is the main purpose of Social Studies education. Citizenship education implies the acquisition of the necessary knowledge and skills needed for the promotion of democracy [22]. Some writers define Social Studies in the form of integration. Bar and Shermis state that, “the Social Studies is an integration of experience concerning human relations for the purpose of citizenship education” [23]. Similarly, the African Social and Environmental Studies Programme sees Social Studies as “the integration of purpose of promoting and practicing effective problem solving, promoting citizenship skills in social, political and economic issues and problems” [24]. On its part the Ghana Education Service, defines Social Studies as “an integrated body of knowledge, skills and attitudes that will help the pupils develop a broader perspective of Ghana and the world” [25]. The official definition of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) contains a strong inter-disciplinary focus with the aim of solving social problems. It states that Social Studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence within the school programme. To the NCSS, because civic issues such as health care and crime are multi-disciplinary in nature, understanding these issues require multi-disciplinary education.

It is evident from these definitions that one main characteristic that makes Social Studies more distinct is that it incorporates many fields of endeavour. The integrative nature of Social Studies therefore calls for critical thinking about social issues leading to the development of thoughtfulness in students. Through integration, pupils acquire a variety of skills including those of inquiry, investigation and discovery as they are actively involved in the teaching and learning process.

Banks appears to have given an in-depth description of Social Studies in relation to its nature when he states; “the Social Studies is that part of the elementary and secondary school curriculum which has the primary responsibility of helping students to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to participate in the civic life of

their local communities, the nation and the world” [26]. To Banks, learners need knowledge of the contemporary world in which they live and its historical antecedent to fully develop as mature citizens. Banks’ definition calls for the concentric approach to teaching Social Studies based on Hanna’s expanding environment concept in which schools centre their activities on the home, neighbourhood and the community [27]. Following this theory, the Ghana Education Service (GES) has adopted it as a model for studying at the basic school. Notwithstanding its popularity, it appears not all adhere to this theory. Zarrilo contends that “expanding environment provides children with too little a view” [28]. Similarly, Frazee and Aryers also remarked that “the expanding environment is ineffective because they focus on how Social Studies should be taught in elementary classrooms rather than on content knowledge that should be the enterprise for teaching and learning” [29]. Despite its vocal dissenters the expanding approach remains the overwhelming teaching model for most schools due to its overriding advantages. It must be emphasized that, in spite of the fluidity of its definitions, the Social Studies programme is a distinct field which deals with humankind and current global issues.

### Goals and Objectives of Social Studies

Most writers in an attempt to define what the term Social Studies is also try to explain its goals and objectives. The term goal which is being used interchangeably with the word purpose refer to the long-term expectations of Social Studies as distinct from objectives which are more specific and with short term expectation. Like its scope, there has been contentious debates’ regarding the goals of Social Studies. Ross and Marker remarked that, “the very lack of agreement regarding the purpose of the field, perhaps more than any other characteristics has become the hallmark of Social Studies” [30]. They continue, “Social Studies educators have always pitched a big tent, with plenty of room for diverse perspectives, and the response to conflicts over goals has most often been to look for how we could all just get along”. This view is given credence by Ravitch when she echoes that “over the time, the leaders of the field Social Studies have frequently wrestled with their goals and purposes [31]. She continues “the Social Studies field has readily redefined its aims to meet what so ever the socio-political demands of the age were”.

The issues raised seem to suggest to a great extent the kind of disagreement and factionalism among those who advocate the various “tradition” of Social Studies education. While it appears, there is no agreement among Social Studies educators over what the goals of Social Studies is, it is generally agreed that the primary pedagogical goal of Social Studies is to support students as they come to understand their world and have urgency as citizens [32]. The main goal of Social Studies therefore is to promote citizenship education [33].

Several authors however, have questioned the status of citizenship education as the main purpose of Social Studies. They argue that the term citizenship has not been clearly defined as goals of Social Studies [34,35]. Clearly, the Social Studies ‘contrarians’ position points to the key problem in determining purposes of Social Studies [15]. However, it must be borne in mind that there is no “scientifically objective” answer to the question of the purposes of citizenship education because those purposes are not things that can be discovered [30].

In reaction to the above reasoning by the Social Studies contrarians,

Banks writes that citizenship education is the primary focus of Social Studies in the school curriculum which promotes desirable participatory citizenship [26]. According to Banks, “while the other curriculum areas also help students to attain some of the skills needed to participate in a democratic society, Social Studies is the only curriculum area which has the development of civic competencies and skills as its main goals”. Subscribing to this view Tamakloe says that the main goal of Social Studies is to help students to be able to make informed decisions for the purpose of resolving personal problems and influencing public policy [18]. To him these are important for the realization of the aims of citizenship. Ross and Marker states that “the purpose of Social Studies is citizenship education aimed at providing students opportunities for an examination, critique and revision of past traditions, existing social practices and model of problem solving” [30].

Homana, Barber and Torney-Purta define citizenship education as the opportunities provided by schools to engage students in meaningful learning experience and other teaching strategies to facilitate their development as socially and politically responsible individuals [36]. This is supported by the National Council for the Social Studies [37]. According to the NCSS the primary goal of education is to prepare students to be effective citizens and that through the curriculum students should have the opportunity to apply their civic knowledge to solve problems in schools. Martorella sums it up by saying;...*the basic purpose of Social Studies curriculum across the grade is to develop reflective, competent and concerned citizens* [20]. *Reflective individual are critical thinkers who make decisions and solve problems. Competent citizens possess a repertoire of skills to aid them in decision making and problem solving. Concerned citizens investigate their social world, identify issues as significant, exercise their responsibility as members of a social community. Social Studies should be seen as the head, the hand and the heart. The head represents reflection; the hand denotes competencies and the heart symbolizes concern* (p. 29).

From the foregoing, it means that Social Studies teachers have the sole responsibility of training students not only to develop their knowledge and skills but also the affective aspect of the individual, these are reflections of good citizens which Martorella refer to as “effective citizen.” Martorella argues that the general purpose of the Social Studies should be citizenship education; the objective is to produce reflective, competent and concerned citizens who are critical and have inquiry mind [20]. By thinking reflectively, students are able to apply the best course of action among alternatives. Reflective thinking therefore disrupts prejudices and deliberates on issues that are “fair to everyone concerned” [38]. Since citizenship is the central purpose of Social Studies as well as the bed rock upon which school teachers should provide reflective classrooms to help close the chapter on problematic areas of our society [39]. This will require effective method of reflection that should be applied to the school curriculum and organization [40].

### Objectives of Social Studies

In order to achieve Social Studies goals, specific objectives need to be stated. Like its goals, different writers state specific objectives for the realization of the general aims. However, despite different words used, the general consensus is to achieve the goal of citizenship. Barth writes: “teachers should help students gain knowledge, process information, develop skills to examine values and, finally to apply

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knowledge through an active civic participation” [41]. He adds, “if students practice these four objectives then Social Studies is taught as citizenship education”. According to Barth, Social Studies builds around four capacities and this is given credence by Banks, Parker & Jaromelik, Martorella & NCSS [20,26,37,42].

These four capacities are; acquisition of knowledge, acquisition of skills, development of desirable attitudes and values and civic participation. Each capacity uniquely leads to responsible citizenship as they mirror the essential ingredient that characterizes sound Social Studies education. If students are to be effective citizens then they must possess the knowledge, skills and values which will prepare them to take appropriate civic action as individual or as members of groups devoted to civic improvement. Gaining knowledge is an integral part of citizenship skills which allows for reflective decision making. Galston agrees by positing seven important links between knowledge and citizenship [43].

1. Civic knowledge helps citizens understand their interest as individuals and members of groups. The more knowledge we have, the better we can understand the impact of public policies.
2. Civic knowledge increases the ideological consistency of views across issues and time.
3. Unless citizens possess a basic level of civic knowledge, it is difficult to understand political events or integrate new information into an existing framework.
4. General knowledge can alter our view on specific public issues.
5. The more knowledge of civic affairs, the likely they are to experience a generalized mistrust of, or alienation from civic life.
6. Civic knowledge promotes support for democratic values.
7. Civic knowledge promotes political participation

It is discernible that if students are to make reflective decisions and participate fully in their civic communities, they must build knowledge in order to understand how things work within the society in which they find themselves. It is therefore clear that a rich store of knowledge is an essential base to citizenship. In addition to knowledge, skill goals are essential to Social Studies teaching; they identify in particular what students will be able to do.

Thinking skills include the ability to gather and analyze information before deciding. According to Banks thinking skills include the ability to conceptualize, interpret, analyze, generalize, apply knowledge and evaluate knowledge [26]. Thus, through thinking skills students are able to act constructively by evaluating evidence through rational conclusions.

**Inquiry Skills:** These skills include the ability to formulate scientific questions and hypothesis to collect data and to use the data to test hypothesis to derive generalization. Inquiry raises the curiosity of students and prompts them in seeking further explanation to questionable situations.

**Study Skills:** Studying is the way people learn new ideas. In Social Studies these include the ability to locate, organize and acquire information through listening and observing, communicate orally and in writing, read and interpret maps. Through study skills students make sense of new ideas for meaningful understanding of issues.

**Group Skills:** These include the ability to perform effectively both as a leader and as a follower in solving group problems, to

use power efficiently, and fairly in group situation, to make useful contributions to group progress, to communicate effectively in a group and to resolve controversy in groups [26].

**Attitudes and Values:** An important area of human development is attitude and values which are mainly concerned with the affective domain. Attitudes in particular affect how people evaluate situations. Positive attitudes allow people to view human conditions from a variety of perspectives. Values on the other hand, underlie all that humans do and they constitute essentials of human relations. Human values like patriotism, respect of dignity, hard work and right of others provide an area of reflective development.

Since values are so central to decision making it behooves on schools to teach students to think critically about issues affecting society by analyzing event both past and present to bring harmony within society. It is in this light that Maclaughlin suggests that schools should provide opportunity for the youth to engage in a way that leads to confidence in the value of participatory problem solving [44]. While desirable attitudes and values are central to what humans do, the central focus and purpose of civic participation is to foster the development of citizens who will participate actively in and outside the school. It must be emphasized that knowledge, skills, attitudes and values gained, provide gateway for active community participation. Social Studies teachers should therefore provide active teaching strategies to facilitate the development of students as responsible individuals. In sum, when teachers help students to gain knowledge, process information, develop the skill to examine values, and finally apply knowledge through an active civic participation, then Social Studies is taught as citizenship education.

#### **Development of Attitude Towards Social Studies**

The attitudes of students towards the concept of teaching and learning are related to the kind of environment in which they find themselves. Several studies support the view that the factor most likely to affect positively students’ attitudes towards the teaching and learning of concepts is an open classroom climate - an environment whose signifying features are teacher respect for students’ ideas and teacher use of democratic leadership behaviours [45,46]. The beneficial effects of an open classroom climate are cited by virtually every researcher and reviewer who looked at the relationship between educational practices and student results [47,49].

Clearly then, the nature of the learning environment has a direct impact on the attitude of students towards the teaching and learning of concepts. As revealed in Harwood’s view of a research that investigated the relationship between climate measures in Social Studies classrooms and students’ attitudes towards political concepts, open classroom environments featuring student participation and free expression have a positive impact on students’ attitudes towards the learning of concepts [50]. This is also confirmed by Blankenship’s that, there was a positive relationship between open classroom climates and several civic concepts and attitude measures [51]. The teacher’s role in creating such an open and democratic classroom environment cannot be over-emphasized. Hepburns writes that “the teacher’s role is crucial because the teacher’s way of managing the class sets the climate of self-direction, free exchange of views, egalitarian treatment of peers and at the same time, maintains order and direction in the group” [52].

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## Materials and Methods

### Research Design

Descriptive survey is the research design for this study. This is because the work involves the collection of data to answer research questions concerning the issue. Descriptive survey also involves observation, description and documentation of the situation as it naturally occurs.

### Study Population

The target population for the study comprised all Social Studies teachers in the Accra Metropolis. The study covered the public Senior High Schools in the Metropolitan. The total population of all the Social Studies teachers in the metropolis is eighty-nine (89) [53]. By using Krejcie and Morgan on the total population of all Social Studies teachers in the metropolis, our sample size was derived [54].

### Sample and Sampling Techniques

According to the Education Monitoring Information System of the Accra metropolitan education office, the region has eighty-nine (89) Social Studies teachers in the second cycle schools [53]. The researcher therefore adopted Krejcie and Morgan in determining the sample size [54]. According to Krejcie and Morgan a population of 89 is appropriate for a sample size of 72 [54].

The researcher adopted the simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the nine (9) schools out of the thirteen (13) public schools in the Accra Metropolis by using the lottery method. On the other hand, teachers were purposively selected because they clearly define the characteristics of the research and clearly fit in the objectives of the study. The schools selected are; Accra Academy, Kaneshie Secondary Technical, St. Mary's, Accra High School, Accra Girls, Ebenezer Senior High, Wesley Grammar, Accra Wesley Girls' and Achimota School.

### Instrumentation

A survey questionnaire was developed based on the literature and the objectives of the study. The questionnaires were purposefully designed for Senior High School teachers who teach social studies in order to elicit responses on the perceived factors that affects students' attitude towards the learning of social studies and ways to improve students' attitude towards the subject. Questionnaires comprised of both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The questionnaires were pilot tested using 40 Senior High School students. After the pilot testing, Cronbach's alpha as used to estimate the reliability of teachers' questionnaires which stood at 0.71. Cronbach's alpha was

used because the items on the questionnaires were measured on a four-point Likert scale of 1=Strongly Disagreed (SD), 2=Disagreed (D), 3=Agreed (A), 4= Strongly Agreed (SA). According to Pallant, a reliability coefficient (alpha) of 0.70 or higher is considered appropriate for that matter acceptable [55]. Before the administration of the instruments respondents were assured of utmost confidentiality and anonymity. The research instruments were administered to seventy-two (72) teachers from the selected schools.

### Validity and Reliability of Instruments

Validity and reliability play an important role in determining the quality of an instrument designed for a research or study. According to Taale and Ngman-Wara, validity refers to the appropriateness of the evaluation instrument for a given group of individuals and not to the instrument itself [56]. In other words, validity refers to the degree to which a research instrument measures what it is proposed for and to measure. Reliability on the other hand as defined by Taale and Ngman-Wara is the consistency with which a test measures whatever it measures from one measurement to another, over and over again, over times [56]. The questions in the questionnaires have undergone through validity and reliability.

### Data Processing and Analysis

The responses from the data were analyzed. The data collected were coded, statistically analyzed, described and interpreted. The main statistical techniques for the interpretation were frequencies and percentages which were then presented in the form of tables. This was done using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0.

## Results and Discussion

### Research Question One:

What are the factors affecting students' attitude towards Social Studies?

Research question one sought to examine the factors that affect students' attitude towards Social Studies. To answer this question, social studies teachers were measured on a four-point Likert scale 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-agree, 4-strongly agree. With this Likert scale 1 indicates the least disagreement to the statements and 4 indicating strongest agreement to the statements. Teachers were asked some questions pertaining to the factors affecting students' attitude towards social studies. This is because teachers are always with these students and can give us the correct factors necessitating to the attitude of students when it comes to social studies. Results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Factors That Affect Students' Attitude towards Social Studies**

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Well-trained teachers	2	2.8	3	4.2	37	51.3	30	41.7
Lack of teachers' ability to explain concepts in Social Studies to students	4	5.6	33	45.8	19	26.4	16	22.2
Teachers' inability to train students in critical thinking	0	0.0	29	40.3	33	45.8	10	13.9
Most Social Studies teachers in the metropolis are not interested in teaching controversial issues	12	16.7	37	51.3	19	26.4	4	5.6
Teachers' inability to give needed assistance to students	6	8.3	37	51.4	25	34.7	4	5.6
Teachers' inability to use different teaching methods in Social Studies classes	4	5.6	27	37.5	35	48.6	6	8.3
Inadequate teaching and learning materials	0	0.0	19	26.4	35	48.6	18	25.0
Inability of Social Studies teachers to employ resources persons	0	0.0	16	22.2	42	58.4	14	19.4

**Source:** Field Survey (2020), F-Frequency

Results from Table 1 show the responses of the teachers on the factors that affect students' attitude towards Social Studies. 67 (93.0%) agreed that well trained teachers affect that attitudes of students towards Social Studies and 5 (7.0%) disagreed. It was discovered that 35 (48.6%) of the teachers agreed that lack of teachers' ability to explain concepts in Social Studies to students affected students' attitude towards Social Studies whilst 37 (51.4%) disagreed. For responses of the teachers on the fact that teachers' inability to train students in critical thinking affected their attitude towards Social Studies, it was revealed that 43 (59.7%) agreed and 29 (40.3%) disagreed. Relating to the statement on the fact that most Social Studies teacher in the metropolis are not interested in teaching controversial issues it was found out that 23 (32.0%) agreed and 49 (68.0%) disagreed. In addition, majority 29 (40.3%) agreed that teachers' inability to give needed assistance to students affected their attitude towards Social Studies whilst 43 (59.7%) disagreed. Moreover, 41 (56.9%) agreed that teachers' inability to use different teaching methods in Social Studies classes affected their attitude towards Social Studies whilst 31 (43.1%) disagreed.

Furthermore, the issue of inadequate teaching and learning materials cannot be left out in this discussion. On the basis of that it was indicated that as 53 (73.6%) agreed, 19 (26.4%) disagreed. Finally, 56 (77.8%) agreed that the inability of Social Studies teachers to employ resource persons affected students' attitude towards Social Studies whilst 16 (22.2%) disagreed. In line with these findings is that of Tamakloe (1988) who emphasized the need for well trained teachers to teach Social Studies. Aggarwal who made it abundantly clear that Social Studies more than any other subject requires well trained teachers [57]. Newman argues that bona fide discussion is usually suppressed by some teachers with the belief that the purpose of teaching is to transmit fixed knowledge to students [58]. Levitt and Longstreet who stated that most Social Studies teachers are unwilling to take up in the classroom the controversies that arise in society that must be addressed in Social Studies lessons [15].

The teachers were asked that what other factors affect students' attitude towards Social Studies in the metropolitan. Some teachers said that lack of adequate classrooms, lack of better perspective of the subject, lack of dedicated tutors, lack of exposure to the real world, lack of teaching and learning materials in teaching Social Studies, constant teachers absenteeism, inadequate instructional time on the school time table for teaching Social Studies, the large size of students in class, the time allocated to the period (last period of the day), students inability to read Social Studies notes and understand it, students perceptions about the subject as they considered it cheap, teachers inability to embark on field trips to help learners in the learning process, teachers inability to mark exercises for prompt feedback and teachers personal disposition towards students all influences students attitude towards the subject "Social Studies".

One teacher added that the subject is normally learnt when examination is due. Also, concept as explained in abstract form, inadequate TLMs, students' perception about Social Studies and inadequate professional teachers in Social Studies also affect students.

**One of the Teachers Said:**

*The inability to take students for excursion for them to get firsthand information on some issues affects them.*

**Some Said:**

*Most students underestimate the subject and therefore exhibit lackadaisical attitude towards its learning. Students become complacent, thinking that they would automatically pass Social Studies even if they do not give it the needed attention. Students have the mentality that the subject is easy to pass hence refuses to put in extra efforts in the subject.*

**Research Question Two**

How can students' attitude towards Social Studies be improved?

Research question two concentrated on how students' attitude towards Social Studies can be improved. To answer this question, social studies teachers were asked to respond to some items which were measured on a measured on a four-point Likert scale 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-agree, 4-strongly agree. With this Likert scale 1 indicates the least disagreement to the statements and 4 indicating strongest agreement to the statements. Teachers were asked some questions pertaining to how students' attitude towards Social Studies can be improved. This is because teachers can give adequate information on how students' attitude towards Social Studies can be improved.

**Table 2: Improving Students' Attitude towards Social Studies**

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Provision of competent teachers for the subject	0	0.0	7	9.7	31	43.1	34	47.2
Teachers should be able to explain concepts in Social Studies very well to the comprehension of students	0	0.0	1	1.4	43	59.7	28	38.9
Social Studies teachers should be interested in teaching controversial issues	0	0.0	9	12.5	37	51.4	26	36.1
The students should be trained to think critically	0	0.0	4	5.6	40	55.6	28	38.8
Social Studies teachers should use different teaching methods	0	0.0	2	2.8	40	55.5	30	41.7
Teachers should be readily available to give students the needed assistance in Social Studies	0	0.0	1	1.4	43	59.7	28	38.9
There should be the provision of adequate teaching and learning materials	0	0.0	1	26.4	33	45.8	38	52.8
Social Studies teachers should engage resource persons in areas where they find difficulties	0	0.0	3	4.2	25	34.7	44	61.1

**Source:** Field Survey (2020), F-Frequency

Table 2 presents the results on how students' attitude towards Social Studies can be improved. It was displayed that 65 (90.3%) of the teachers agreed that there should be the provision of competent teachers for the subject whilst 7 (9.7%) disagreed. Also, 71 (98.6%) agreed that teachers should be able to explain concepts in Social Studies very well to the comprehension of students whilst 1 (1.4%) disagreed. Again, 63 (87.5%) of the teachers agreed that Social Studies teachers should be interested in teaching controversial issues and 9 (12.5%) disagreed. On training students to think critically, it was revealed that 68 (94.4%) agreed and 4 (5.6%) disagreed. Regarding the use of different methodologies by teachers, it was revealed that 70 (97.2%) agreed and 2 (2.8%) disagreed. In addition, 71 (98.6%) agreed that teachers should be readily available to give students the needed assistance in Social Studies whilst 1 (1.4%) disagreed. Furthermore, the results displayed that with 71 (98.6%) agreeing that there should be the provision of adequate teaching and learning materials 1 (1.4%) disagreed. Finally, 69 (95.8%) agreed that Social Studies teachers should engage resource persons in areas where they find difficulties and 3 (4.2%) disagreed.

Here, the teachers were asked how the attitude of students towards Social Studies can be improved in the metropolitan. One of the teachers said that the attitude of students towards Social Studies can be improved by employing experienced teachers who are not only interested in teaching but have the excellence of students at heart. Another teacher added that the teachers have to educate the students on the importance of studying the subject. Field trips for real life

experience with what has been taught have to be organized. Adequate teaching and learning materials and also engaging of resource person must be emphasized. Teachers are also obliged to make the subject interesting and attractive. There should be regular organization of seminars on Social Studies for both teachers and students. Student should be educated on the fact that, a good grade at WASSCE can give them good courses or programme at the university. Students must be given assignments in group. They should also be encouraged to think critically during lessons.

**One Teacher Said:**

*Social Studies should be interactive by bringing in examples that student can easily relate with.*

Again, it can be improved by making use of different methods of teaching. Students must be educated on the benefit of the subject to their personal lives and the country at large. They must be helped to do presentations on controversial issues. They should be encouraged to develop positive mindset about Social Studies. Teachers must assist students towards the study of Social Studies. They must be willing to tackle social issues irrespective of the topic at hand. They must embark on field trips. They must be punctual, use of right teaching and learning materials and give students research assignments to help broaden their scope of the subject. All these good measures will help shape students' attitude towards the subject. They should engage students practically in the lesson. They should relate what they teach to the social environment. They should use the role-play method to allow students participation in the teaching



and learning of the subject. According to Clark role playing is “an attempt to make a situation clear or to solve a problem by unrehearsed dramatization” [59]. Shaftel & Shaftel described role playing as “a group problem solving method that enables young people to explore human problems in a spontaneous enactment followed by guided discussion” [60].

**One Teacher Said:**

*The attitude of students towards Social Studies will be improved in the metropolis by teachers using different teaching methods.*

**Another Also Added:**

*The Government or Ghana Education Service should provide more than one reading material in Social Studies.*

**One Said:**

*They should not only think it is a subject that can easily be passed at WASSCE but they should make a conscious effort to study it well to get better grades.*

**One Also Said that:**

*The teaching of Social Studies should be made more practical. There could also be exchange programmes between teachers. There should be exposure of students, students should be motivated enough to think outside the box. Students should be thought to change their perception on the subject as cheap.*

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

The study makes a conclusion that factors that affect students’ attitude towards Social Studies include; teachers not showing interest in teaching controversial issues, teachers’ inability to give needed assistance to students, teachers’ inability to use different teaching methods in Social Studies classes, inadequate teaching and learning materials and inability of Social Studies teachers to employ resource persons in times of difficulty [61,63]. Lastly, students’ attitude towards Social Studies can be improved by providing competent teachers for the subject, teachers being interested in teaching controversial issues, teachers employing different teaching methodologies, teachers being readily available to give students the needed assistance in Social Studies, adequate provision of teaching and learning materials and teachers engaging the services of resource persons in areas of difficulty.

**Recommendations**

1. The Ghana Education Service should recruit professional teachers to teach Social Studies in Senior High schools. This will help in giving them knowledge to become excellent students’ in Social Studies.
2. Teachers of Social Studies should make the class lively to solve the problem of period boredomness on the part of the learners in the teaching and learning process.
3. There is the need for a tripartite collaboration among the Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service and other Non-governmental educational organizations to provide the needed teaching and learning materials for the teaching and learning of Social Studies.
4. Teachers of Social Studies should employ different methodologies in in teaching the subject.

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