

Pedagogical Approaches in the Social Studies Instructional Process in Western Region Colleges of Education, Ghana

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Abstract

The study focused on the pedagogical approaches of the current Social Studies curriculum of the Colleges of Education in the western Region of Ghana. Descriptive survey was used for the study and a multi-stage sampling technique was used to sample 480 teacher trainees for the study. Self-developed questionnaires were used for data collection. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the data including frequencies and percentages. The results revealed that most of the tutors did not use appropriate pedagogical approaches to affect the teaching and learning of Social Studies. Furthermore, the Social Studies teachers did not exhibit enough pedagogical content knowledge of teaching learning strategies which significantly enhances the Social Studies instructional process in classroom. It is recommended that Social Studies tutors should try as much as possible to integrate the use of different teaching and learning methods in teaching to improve the quality of instruction given in schools.

Keywords: Colleges of Education, Curriculum, Pedagogical Approaches, Social Studies

Introduction

Curriculum experts, directed by national educational philosophy and policy, in addition to societal demands examine and select relevant and appropriate subject, content and pedagogical approaches that will yield the expected outcomes for national development. A classic example of such selected and adopted subjects in Ghana is the study of Social Studies. Social Studies, according to Martorela (1994) has its purpose as the preparation of citizens to be competent, reflective and concerned citizens [1]. It is based on these citizenry factors that have compelled several countries worldwide to adopt Social Studies as one of their developmental subjects.

Social Studies, in essence, has been identified as the subject in the Ghanaian educational curriculum that can serve as the vehicle for equipping students with the requisite skills, knowledge and values as well as dispositions relevant for producing functional and effective citizens (Ministry of Education, 2005), hence the need for the evaluation of its pedagogical approaches to ensure the performance and attainment of its purpose and goals.

The essence of the achievement of curriculum objectives is a func-

tion of its pedagogical approaches in the classroom. Content selection regarding objectives with respect to content organization is critical during the process of pedagogical approaches in the classroom. It is the consensus of most curriculum developers that once a developed curriculum is applied in schools, appropriate pedagogical approaches in the classroom and mechanisms shall be devised to examine the effectiveness of the curriculum in achieving its objectives. 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 students' attitude towards the subject matter [2].

Pedagogical approaches, content, and methods for teaching a subject are very important as it helps to achieve the purpose for which a course of study is undertaken. According to Frede, curricula are influenced by many factors, including society's values, content standards, research findings, community expectations, culture, language and quality of teachers, and pedagogical approaches [3]. Although these factors differ from country to country, high-quality well-implemented Social Studies curricula provide developmentally appropriate support and cognitive challenges that can lead to

positive outcomes. Bertrand argued that there is growing consensus on the importance of an explicit curriculum with clear purpose, goals and approaches for zero-to-school-age children [20].

Social Studies curriculum is based on key concepts such as democracy, justice, rights and responsibilities, identity and diversity. Curriculum experts are yet to agree on what the term, scope of Social Studies, is, as it varies from writer to writer [4]. Teachers use topical, political and social issues to bring the Social Studies content to life. These content areas develop in students' key citizenship skills needed for research, discussion as well as debate sessions [4].

It is argued that the best designed programme in education will fail to have the intended impact and results if it is not properly hinging on the appropriate pedagogical approaches. This means that the degree of pedagogical approaches of a particular programme will determine the successes or otherwise of the programme outcomes, which also depend on evaluation (Ruiz-Primo, 2006). Fullan and Stiegelbauer (2000) are of the view that achieving effective pedagogical approaches is a complex process. According to them, "pedagogical approaches consist of the process of putting into practice an idea, programme, or set of activities and situations new to the people expected to change" (p.65) [5]. They further stated that the existence and persistence of people-related problems and challenges in educational change is the single most essential factor that determines the achievement of desired educational objectives.

It is against this background that this study was carried out to evaluate the on-going Social Studies pedagogical approaches in Colleges of Education in Ghana in terms of its scope of content, pedagogical approaches, and classroom dynamics.

Statement of the Problem

Pedagogical approaches focus on and examine instructional methods and strategies adopted by tutors to impact knowledge, assess students' performance and interaction between tutors and students in class. Pedagogical approaches thus, involves portrayal of the curriculum in the classroom context. Feedback from the extent to which the objectives of the curriculum are being achieved informs stakeholders on decisions to take to reform the pedagogy of the curriculum.

The Pedagogical approaches in Social Studies curriculum for Colleges of Education is supposed to be evaluated periodically to ascertain the alignment of the instructional process to the content of everyday life of the citizenry. However, very little evaluation has been done over the past fifteen years on pedagogical approaches since the introduction of the subject into the Ghanaian educational curriculum. It was only recently that Social Studies curriculum at the colleges of education was re-aligned to adapt to the basic schools' Social Studies content. However, the pedagogical approaches which actually concerns the enactment of the curriculum in the classroom was least emphasised to the detriment of the students.

This study looked at the pedagogical approaches of the current Social Studies curriculum of the Colleges of Education to validate its significance and functionality to contemporary global demands

of society. The objectives of the study examined the tutor pedagogical approaches in the Social Studies instructional process, and also to assess classroom dynamics in the instructional process in terms of tutor and student behaviour. It was guided by the research questions: What are the pedagogical approaches used by tutors in the Social Studies instruction delivery? Which Tutor and student behaviours significantly enhance the Social Studies instructional process in the classroom?

Significance of the Study

The essence of the achievement of curriculum objectives depends on its pedagogical approaches. The outcome of this research will positively impact on Social Studies students and tutors of colleges of education and the nation as a whole since the classroom dynamics would yield the expected outcomes for national development.

It will help to improve the planning and implementation of action processes of subsequent curricula. Tutors taken through the pedagogical approach invariably will have their performance enhanced, and inform policy makers, agents of educational reforms and parents in education about what really transpires in the classrooms so that alternative decisions are made to modify the pedagogical approaches.

The study examined the extent the pedagogical approaches used by tutors in instruction delivery in Social Studies curriculum of the Colleges of Education in Ghana. Most similar studies have not given much attention to the pedagogical approaches in Social Studies curriculum, and this study intends to fill that gap by examining the Social Studies pedagogical approaches in four Colleges of Education.

Literature Review

The current pressure on schooling arises from twin drivers. The first is to ensure and demonstrate better attainment across all students and schools, and narrow the gap between the highest- and lowest-achieving students. The second pressure is to respond to the ever-growing range of need and demand, expressed as social and cultural diversity; greater student mobility; changing student, family and employer expectations; growing economic inequality; and geographical polarization hence, the need for pedagogical approaches of the Social Studies curriculum of Colleges of Education. The pedagogy is teacher-centered and structured, and it relies heavily on a lecture format (often referred to by trainees as "talking heads") [6].

The term 'curriculum' has been a confusing term for many years now. Throughout the history of education, specialists in curriculum have failed to strike a balance on what should be the best definition of the term "curriculum". Literature shows that curriculum has been variably defined by authors depending on contexts. Different people, educational institutions, parts of educational institutions as well as authors perceive the term "curriculum: differently. There is no single definition of the term "curriculum".

Much scholarly work has been done in the area of curricula, from conceptual frameworks, empirical, theoretical to actual practice in the classroom. It means that issues related to curriculum are not new. For a very long time, researchers and educators have

dwelled on many aspects of curriculum. The most debated aspect arguably remains that of the definition of a curriculum. Currently, there is still no widely accepted or unanimously agreed-on definition for the term “curriculum,” and its concepts vary depending on the context of the discussion [7]. According to Marsh and Willis, curriculum is an interrelated set of plans and experiences which a student completes under the guidance of school [8]. Under the school-based curriculum development policy, the importance of teachers to the implementation of integrated programmes like Social Studies in schools is even more obvious.

Inside the classroom, several elements interplay. These include teachers, students, classroom environment and knowledge. These are constantly interacting with each other [9]. Huitt (2003), explains that the aspect of teacher behaviour consists of all the actions a teacher would make in the classroom and includes these additional subcategories planning, management and instruction [9]. Pedagogical approaches aim at monitoring, documentation and assessment of programme activities. The study thus focused on the classroom process component of curriculum evaluation.

Ezeocha (1990) described the classroom as the power house in which the success of the learning process is generated [10]. The Social Studies teacher ensures that the learning setting is peaceful, by engaging the students in meaningful teaching-learning rewarding activities, which are inspiring, interest focused, to enhance reflective thinking and prompt learners’ contributions to the teaching-learning process. Ideally, a Social Studies classroom is expected to be teacher-learner centred (a two-way affair). This symbiotic teaching relationship provides quality feedback for improving Social Studies instruction.

Social Studies classroom management encapsulates the arrangement of contents, determination of set objectives, organizing learners’ activities and materials, evaluating and providing satisfactory learning experiences to stimulating learning and teaching processes for the realization of desirable changes in learner’s behaviour [11]. The teacher arranges and manages classroom environment so that persons in the environment can learn [11]. Mezieobi, Bozimo and Amadi, described the Social Studies classroom pervasive communication practice as cyclic which is an inter process of mutual interaction informally designated [12]. Social Studies classroom between teacher and learners and among learners who exchange and share meanings, thought and experiences on a given content, is supposed to be understood for the functional benefit of the learner as learning in the dyadic Social Studies communicative process is not however the preserve of the student. The teacher may also enhance knowledge of what he already knows or he may in the communicative exchange with the students acquire new knowledge thus the classroom dyadic communication cannot be complete without feedback. The Social Studies classroom is expected to be highly interactive in nature; this is because students learn effectively through active participation in instruction. It assists the Social Studies teacher in determining how to provide materials, methods and the entire management of the classroom. The effective classroom has to be maintained through co-ordinated managed instruction.

In the teaching and learning process of Social Studies, our under-

standing of the content and the pedagogical approaches used in the process within a larger structural framework can help teacher educators prepare prospective teachers with the knowledge and skills they need to achieve pedagogical balance in their practice. Primarily, there are four components in curriculum development. These include context, content, process, and product. Together, these components provide a solid structural foundation for developing units or lessons in Social Studies as well as other subjects. Context refers to who the students are, where they are developmentally, what they already know, consideration for learning styles, and connections students might make to content [13]. Content, according to Erickson (2007), on the other hand, includes the topic, facts, skills, and concepts, as well as generalizations and principles of the subject matter that is taught [14]. Also, process is more intangible than the other components and is often considered in terms of teaching methodologies. For example, large or small group discussion, cooperative or individual learning, role-play or individual presentations are structural processes teachers use in the classroom.

However, process also refers to the specific thinking and socio-emotional processes that motivate and empower students, as well as make content memorable. When teachers grasp these largely invisible processes of learning they can consciously plan questions and learning activities that help students develop their thinking and emotional processes as they are learning content (Folsom, 2005). Similarly, product is a component of assessment. Product is that which the student creates, writes, or speaks that shows his or her understanding of the content that has been taught. Criteria for evaluation are another component of assessment through which the success of a product is evaluated. Understanding these components can help teachers acquire pedagogical balance between content and process.

Academically, Social Studies provides opportunities for learning content through project work where students can express their creativity while at the same time, develop the critical thinking skills of decision making, planning, and self-evaluation. Yet, too often, Social Studies is taught in a way that is anything but the passionate, memorable subject it could be. Russell (2010), states that too many students hear the uninspiring words, “Read the chapter and complete the worksheet” (p. 65), instead of having the opportunity to engage in learning experiences more suited to the live-action, self-regulated, participatory drama favored by the curious generation (Pogrow, 2010).

Research Methodology

Kumekpor (2002) as cited in (Mensah, 2018) asserted that the end results of scientific investigation are useful only to the extent that the most efficient techniques and procedures are adopted in the planning and execution of field operations as well as the data collected [15]. According to Walliman (2004), a mixed method research strategy is sometimes appropriate in collecting data in descriptive studies. On the strength of this, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in carrying out the study. The study adopted descriptive research design because it helped the researcher to obtain information concerning the status of the phenomena and describe “what exists” with respect to variables or conditions being investigated [16]

Polit and Hungler (1996), defined a population as the entire aggregation of cases that meet a designated set of criteria. The study was limited to four Colleges of Education in western and western north regions of Ghana, namely Enchi, Holy Child, Wiawso, and Bia Lamplighter. The target population for the study comprised all Social Studies teacher trainees in the Colleges of Education in these colleges of education. However, the accessible population for the study was Social Studies teacher trainees in the four selected Colleges of Education in Ghana in the study.

For fair representation of both the colleges and sex groups, stratified sampling was seen as the main sampling technique for the Social Studies teacher trainees. They were put into strata (groups) as colleges and into further consideration as males and females. A proportionate stratified sample of fifty per cent (50%) was employed for each college and 50% for each sex in each college. Simple random sampling was then applied to select respondents from each stratum (group) for the actual number of Social Studies teacher trainees for the study.

In all, a sample size of four hundred and eighty (480) Social Studies teacher trainees was chosen for the study, representing 50%

of the target population of 961 Social Studies teacher trainees in the four selected colleges of education that were involved as the sample for the study.

The questionnaire was pre-tested to ensure their validity and reliability where necessary, effect early modification, if possible, as suggested by Cooper and Schindler [17]. The researcher did pre-testing of the instruments by using five Social Studies tutors and 60 Social Studies teacher trainees from Mampong College of Education. Mampong College of education was purposively selected for the pre-test because the College has similar characteristic as the other Colleges selected for the main study. The reliability of the instruments was confirmed by examining the individual test items with the Crombach's alpha with an alpha value of 0.83 was accepted and used for the study [18].

The descriptive statistics was used to analyze the research data. According to Glass and Hopkins, descriptive statistics involves tabulating, depicting, and describing collections of data [19]. In this regard, the researcher used Statistical Product for Service Solution (SPSS version 21) and the results were presented in frequency and percentages to analyze the data for the research questions.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Table 1: Pedagogical approaches used by tutors in the Social Studies instruction delivery

STATEMENT	RESPONSES		
	ALWAYS %	SOMETIMES %	NEVER %
1. Teachers use large and small group discussions in teaching	25.0	33.3	41.7
2. Use of cooperative and individual learning	25.8	29.2	45.0
3. Use of role-play and individual presentations	27.5	33.3	39.2
4. Teachers give project work to students	75.0	20.8	4.2
5. Use of fieldtrip approach	25.0	25.0	50.0
6. Activity and student-centred approach	14.5	33.3	52.2

Students N=480 Field data, 2020

The statistics from Table 1 revealed that, the majority of the respondents 75.0% agreed that tutors always give project work to students, 20.8% said sometimes and 4.2% said they never used it. On the use of activity and student-centred approach in teaching Social Studies, 52.5% of the respondents said the tutors never used it, 33.3% said sometimes and 14.5% said the tutors always used it. Also, 41.7% of the respondents said their tutors never used large and small group discussions in teaching, 33.3% said the tu-

tors sometimes used it and 25.0% said teachers always used the approach. Similarly, 45.8% of the respondents said tutors never used cooperative and individual learning in Social Studies lesson delivery, 29.2% said sometimes and 25.0% tutors always used cooperative and individual learning in Social Studies lesson delivery. Concerning the use of field trip in teaching, 50% of the students said their tutors never used it and 25.0% responded that they used it always, and sometimes.

Table 2: Tutor and student behaviours which significantly enhance the Social Studies instructional process in the classroom

STATEMENT	RESPONSES			
	SA %	A %	D %	SD %
7. The pedagogical content knowledge of Social Studies teachers	10.0	20.0	50.0	20.0
8. Background knowledge of Social Studies teachers	10.0	19.6	50.4	20.0
9. Mode of assessing students by tutors	45.8	20.8	18.8	14.6
10. Poor attitudes of learners to learning	18.8	20.8	45.8	14.6
11. Bad study habits of students	18.8	20.8	35.8	24.6
12. Uncommitted attitudes of teacher to teaching	25.0	10.0	65.0	0.0
13. Teachers' attitudes towards Social Studies education	50.0	39.6	10.4	0.0
14. Teachers teaching-learning strategies	50.0	40.0	10.0	0.0

Field data, 2020 Students N=480

The study further revealed from Table 2 that 70% of the respondents disagreed to the fact that Social Studies teachers had the pedagogical content knowledge of teaching-learning strategies significantly to enhanced the Social Studies instructional process in the classroom. Also, 70.4% of the respondents disagreed teachers had background knowledge of Social Studies, which significantly affect the Social Studies instructional process in the classroom.

Findings

The study revealed that most of the tutors never used appropriate pedagogical approaches to improve effective teaching and learning of Social Studies. Most of the tutors in the colleges in Western region did not used constructive methods in their pedagogical approach in their daily activities and teaching the curriculum. Majority of the respondents disagreed that the pedagogical content knowledge of Social Studies teachers strategies significantly enhanced the Social Studies instructional process in the classroom.

Conclusions

From the findings of this study, the following conclusions were made. It was revealed that most of the tutors never used appropriate pedagogical approaches to improve effective teaching and learning of Social Studies in the four of the Colleges of Education in Western region. Some of the teacher trainees were unable to transfer from what is learned in coursework to the classroom. It was therefore concluded that the inability of teacher trainees to transfer what is learned in coursework to the classroom posed a problem in the pedagogical approaches of curriculum in the colleges of education. Also, 41.7% of the respondents said their tutors never used large and small group discussions in teaching. The study concluded that the use of appropriate pedagogical approaches in teaching played important roles in the teaching and learning process.

Finally, the study revealed that majority of the respondents disagreed that Social Studies teachers had the pedagogical content knowledge of teaching-learning strategies which significantly enhances the Social Studies instructional process in the classroom. It concluded that pedagogical content knowledge of Social Studies teachers in Western region was not enough to help to achieve the pedagogical processes needed in the social studies teaching.

Recommendations

It is widely accepted that the quality of any school cannot be higher than the quality of teachers in the school and that the quality of teachers in the schools is also dependent upon high quality teacher education and professional development opportunities in every country. Thus, teachers who are well-prepared in traditional teacher education training programmes and continuous in-service education help ensure increase levels of student achievement which is one of the indicators of a successful curriculum implementation in every country. Effective teachers should therefore have high level of knowledge, skills, abilities, competencies, and commitments necessary for teaching and implementation of any educational programme. Such teachers should know the subjects they teach and have the necessary professional and pedagogical knowledge and skills in teaching and learning process. Effective teachers therefore must master pedagogical knowledge used to convey Social Studies to students.

Based on the findings of the study and the conclusions that have been drawn, much training, pre-service and in-service-training on pedagogical approaches should be given to teachers by the Ghana Education Service on the pedagogy of Social Studies. This would help to solve the problem of inadequacy of skills and knowledge in Social Studies to enable teacher trainees to transfer from what is learned in coursework to the classroom. Teacher training institutions, and teacher education division in Ghana should give appropriate training to teachers in their subject areas to improve upon their pedagogical skills and knowledge. From the findings of the study, Social Studies teachers should try as much as possible to integrate the use of different teaching and learning methods in teaching to improve the quality of instruction given in schools and also ensure the use of standard student-centered approach method of teaching as against teacher-centered.

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