

# Understanding the Goal of Social Studies: A Step to the Effective Teaching of the Subject

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## ABSTRACT

The attainment of curriculum goals and general aims of Social Studies, which are inextricably linked to the national goals and aspirations of education, rely on the quality of teaching that goes on in the classroom. Effective learning is thus dependent on the quality of teaching that is carried out by various teachers during instructions. This work examines senior high Social Studies teachers' understanding of the goal of the social studies and how it informs their teaching of the subject. The targeted population for the study encompassed teachers teaching Social Studies in the senior high schools in Cape Coast Metropolis. This was a qualitative study that adopted the use of interviews in gathering the data necessary for the work. Purposive and convenience sampling techniques were used to select the sample for the study. The study showed that most of the Social Studies teachers teach the subject without knowing the general aims of the subject as stipulated in the Social Studies syllabus which serve as teachers' guide to the teaching of the subject. Besides, some of them could not also tell holistically the goal of Social Studies.

**Keywords:** Social Studies, goals, in-field, out-of-field

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## Introduction

Education for citizenship (Social Studies) has emerged as a significant area of primary, secondary and the early education curriculum all over the world (Arhtah, 2008). It is the bedrock for the development of knowledge, skills, values, and understanding required to become an informed, active and responsible citizens who are needed to shape the future health and welfare of the local, national and global community (Banks, 1990, Martorella, 1994, Ross, 1997, Parker, 2001, and Learning and Teaching Scotland [LTS], 2002 cited in Akhtah, 2008). Considering the importance attached to Social Studies in view of its mission and goal, thus to produce "reflective, competent, and concerned citizens" (Martorella, 1994:9), it is imperative that much seriousness be given to its teaching in order to realise the accomplishment of the intended outcome.

However, it seems that the teachers of Social Studies in Ghana are made up of professionals in the subject and out-of-field teachers. Critics (Ingersoll, 1999; Jerald, 2002 cited in Dee & Cohodes, 2008:8) have argued that the prevalence of out-of-field teaching is "unacceptably high" in many educational institutions. One may be cynical as to whether these out-of-field teachers are aware of the goal and focus of the subject and whether they use the Social Studies classroom as a theatre for addressing the current persistent issues of human survival as expected by Social Studies teachers (Ananga & Ayaaba, 2004). This research was therefore meant to involve some senior high schools in the Central Region and to examine the Senior High Social Studies teachers' understanding of the goal of the subject and how that affects their teaching.

## Statement of the problem

The goals of Social Studies form the basis of effective instruction of the subject. The quality of teachers of Social Studies and the teaching of the subject are undoubtedly among the most important factors shaping the learning and growth of students. To make the teaching of Social Studies focused and more relevant to the achievement of its goal, teachers must understand the goal and general objectives of the subject to serve as a guide to direct their teaching. They need to relate issues taught in the classroom to real issues in the country and guide students to

find practical and reasonable solutions to them. The teaching of the subject will become obsolete if it does not address the contemporary persistent issues of human survival in the nation which is the main focus of the subject. To realise the relevance of Social Studies in Ghana therefore demands that teachers of the subject should as a matter of necessity understand the aims, purposes and the goal of the subject in order to teach toward the realization of the intended goal for which the subject was introduced into the school curriculum.

However, it appears that those who teach the subject in the senior high schools encompass both in-field and out-of-field teachers. One can hardly tell whether all those who teach the subject really understand the aims, goal and the purposes of the subject. Since the researcher believes that teachers' understanding of the goal of the subject will inform what and how to teach the subject, he saw it imperative investigating into senior high school Social Studies teachers' understanding of the goal of the subject. This study therefore, sought to present empirical evidence on Social Studies teachers' understanding of the goal and general aims of the subject and how it informs their teaching of the subject.

## **Review of relevant literature**

### **Introduction**

#### **Goals and Objectives of Social Studies Curriculum**

Social Studies as a subject has been defined differently by different authorities and authors (Savage & Armstrong, 2000; Ananga & Ayaaba, 2004). In spite of the varied definitions, Barr, Barth and Shermis (1970) have classified them into three broad categories, thus: social studies seen as an approach to the teaching of the social sciences, the amalgamation of the social sciences, and citizenship education. Since varied definitions seem to offer different goals, objectives and content of a subject, the author of this work sees the subject as citizenship education and as such, the mention of Social Studies is synonymous to citizenship education. Citizenship education has been viewed historically as one of the principal obligations of public schooling (Sears & Hughes, 1996). Undeniably, Conley (1989:134) admits that public education's mandate "is to train citizens, in the widest sense of the term". This wide view of citizenship has classically been concerned with the development of a sense of identity, "a feeling of being one-people different from all other people" (McLeod, 1989:6). It has also involved knowledge of rights and obligations as well as a commitment to the ideals of democracy (Hughes, 1994).

In addition, Dynneson and Gross (1999) posit that the overall instructional goals of Social Studies are often related to the following concerns: the first of which is to prepare students for a changing world. Due to the fast growing population of the world with its emerging issues, it is very imperative to prepare citizens to adapt to such changes with relative ease. The second concern is to broaden students' perspectives and understanding of the community, state, nation, and the world. The researcher believes that Social Studies as a problem-solving subject can partly achieve that when students are equipped with the relevant information about the society in which they live and what happens in the world around them. In addition, the subject is to provide students with the knowledge, skills and abilities they need in both their personal and public lives. These are very germane in solving personal and societal issues which is one of the cardinal aims of the subject. Dynneson and Gross (1999) add that the subject is to help students relate to and understand the subject matter content of history and the social sciences, including knowledge, skills and values that are characteristics of social studies subject matter. With regards to this concern, the researcher does not agree with Dynneson and Gross since Social Studies is not concerned with helping students relate to and understand the subject matter content of history and the social sciences. This aspect is not a priority of Social Studies but the latter however holds. It must however be emphasized that relevant knowledge from history and the social sciences as well as any other discipline that is germane to solving contemporary persistent issues of human survival in society is paramount to the subject.

Other concerns regarding the goal of Social Studies that were raised by Dynneson and Gross (1999) are that the subject contributes to students' understanding of what it means to live in a complex and pluralistic society, provides students with the understanding of means and processes of a representative form of government, encourages students to participate in the affairs of society and work toward establishing a "good" society and promotes important social goals associated with democratic living. These issues raised by Dynneson and Gross (1999) are pertinent concerns of the subject especially, in Ghana and many other African Countries that have attained independence few decades ago with multiplicity of tribes and ethnic groups and the new forms of government, thus democracy. The subject is therefore aimed at uniting these varied tribes and ethnic groups which is very vital for nation-building. As a young democratic nation, the subject also aims at promoting the ideals of democracy which is central to national development and tranquility.

Saxe (1991) cited in Dynneson and Gross (1999) asserts that the core of Social Studies curriculum from its inception has been mainly concerned with socialization and citizenship education. Dynneson and Gross (1999) maintain that social studies has been assigned the task of socializing students for their future responsibilities as citizens. The researcher feels that the core of Social Studies today is not just about socialization. Even though, there is an element of socialization in the subject since it inculcates into learners knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to fit into the society. It must clear that the subject does not just pass on what is cherished in society to the younger generation but critically examines them to see how useful they are to society today. The core of Social Studies to the researcher is problem-solving since the subject equips the learner with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to help solve personal and societal related problems. The subject does not impart societal values into the learner as in the case of Socialisation but inculcates positive attitudes, knowledge, skills and values that are relevant to society today. Fenton (1967) as cited in Ananga and Ayaaba (2004) admits that the purposes of Social Studies are to prepare children to be good citizens, to teach children how to think and to pass on the cultural heritage to the younger generation. Though, Fenton was right, it must be understood that Social Studies does not just pass on the cultural heritage to the next generations but decipher and inculcate the relevant aspect of culture to the younger generations.

The National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) cited in Parker (2001) states that the primary purpose of Social Studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world. Martorella (1994) stipulates that the enduring goal of Social Studies is to produce reflective, competent, concerned and participatory citizens who are both willing and capable of contributing positively toward the progress of a democratic life of their societies. This is in line with Banks (1990) as he points out that the major goal of Social Studies is to prepare citizens who can make reflective decisions and participate successfully in the civic life of their communities and the nation. The Social Studies teaching syllabus for senior high school (2007) in Ghana identified the following as the general aims of Social Studies:

1. To develop the ability to adapt to the developing and ever-changing Ghanaian society.
2. To develop positive attitudes and values towards individual and societal issues.
3. To develop critical and analytical skills in assessing issues for objective decision-making.
4. To develop national consciousness and unity.
5. To develop enquiry and problem-solving skills for solving personal and societal problems.
6. To become responsible citizens capable and willing to contribute to societal advancement.

DuBey and Barth (1980) outlined that Social Studies in the primary level must develop Children's self confidence and initiative, based on an understanding of their own accomplishments and potentialities, and their own worth, their power of imagination and resourcefulness, their desire for knowledge and continued learning, their appreciation for the dignity of man and of liberty, their sense of compassion for the less fortunate, their sense of respect for and tolerance of the opinion of others even in disagreement, and their willingness to accept necessary changes with a system of law and order deriving from the will of the people. These virtues outlined by DuBey and Barth (1980) are very necessary in solving our day to day interpersonal issues that sometimes result into national problems.

They add that attitudes which are favourable to social, physical, cultural and economic development and will enable the children to participate in the life of the community, and when they leave school, to become innovators and doers of good in society are the primary responsibility of Social Studies. They therefore assert that values such as co-operation, participation, interdependence on others, open mindedness, honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, diligence, obedience, a spirit of national consciousness and patriotism through interest and involvement in our local, national and world heritage and the creation of their social awareness and critical judgment, as well as constructive, effective thinking are the responsibilities of Social Studies.

DuBey and Barth (1980) outlined the following as objectives of Social Studies at the post primary educational level: one, the subject is to make students aware of their country and of the world in general, and to appreciate the interdependence between peoples. In addition, the subject seeks to create an awareness and understanding of the evolving social and physical environment, its natural, man-made, cultural and spiritual resources together with the rational use and conservation of these resources for development. The subject is to also develop in the students a positive attitude to citizenship and a desire in them to make a positive personal contribution to the creation of a united nation. Social Studies also helps to develop a capacity to learn and to acquire skills essential to the formation of a satisfactory professional life and lastly, the subject assists to develop in the student an appreciation of his/her cultural heritage, and a desire to preserve it. It can be inferred from the above that the

subject seeks to produce conscious and concerned citizens who are responsible in the society.

Banks (2001:6) asserts that:

citizens in this century need the knowledge, attitudes and skills required to function in their ethnic and cultural communities and beyond their cultural borders and to participate in the construction of a national civic culture that is a moral and just community that embodies democratic ideals and values, such as those embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Students also need to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to become effective citizens in the global community.

He maintains that citizenship education aims at helping students acquire higher levels of knowledge, understand the relationship between knowledge and action, develop a commitment to act to improve the world, and acquire the skills needed to participate in civic action. Thus, it should assist the students to learn to change the world. Seeing the world as a global village in which the problems in one country have direct or indirect effects on other countries, the solutions to problems in one country also affects the rest of the world. Even though, it is believed that the geographical scope of Social Studies is country bound, finding solution to the problems in Ghana is partly solution to the problems of the world which is in consonance with what Banks' proposed to be the aim of Social Studies.

In trying to answer the question "why citizenship education?", Parker (2001) states that education for democratic citizenship is a worthwhile educational goal of which most school districts in the United States include in their mission statements. He however, bemoans the fact that citizenship education is often overlooked amid the tremendous pressure to increase students' math and reading scores and often assumed that the knowledge and skills students need for democratic living are by-products of the study of other school subjects. Notwithstanding, he argues that democracy is a system for living together fairly and freely and for solving the problems that inevitably arise. Nonetheless, the knowledge, character, values and skills citizens need for democratic living do not emerge without education. To buttress his point, he cited a writer and social critic James Baldwin who:

Warned that if children are not educated to live democratically, then they may well become apathetic or worse: They could become the next generation of people to sponsor a Holocaust such as the one in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. Baldwin argued that the perpetrators of these crimes against humanity were very well educated and knew a great deal about reading, writing, literature, math, and science, but in spite of their education, they could not live democratically. They used their knowledge and skills to build not only great works of art and architecture, but concentration camps and a human nightmare. They swore allegiance to a tyrant and committed unimaginable atrocities against humanity (Parker, 2001:60-61).

These underscore the importance of citizenship education that promotes democracy which demands that learners are educated on the ideals of democracy that require citizens of great character and civility. To live democratically, learners require the ability to reason in principled ways, for instance, to possess a deep appreciation for democratic values such as liberty, the common good, justice, and equality; to think critically and to resolve disputes in nonviolent ways; to insist on other people's rights; to cooperate with persons with whom one may not want to cooperate; to tolerate religious and political views different from one's own; and to insist on the free expression of those views (Parker, 2001).

From the above, it could be agreed that the subject seems not to have "universal goals" (Ayaaba, Odumah & Ngaaso, 2010:20). Nevertheless, some scholars like Gross and Zeleny (1985) and Blege (2001) both cited in Ayaaba, Odumah & Ngaaso, (2010) suggest that in a democratic society, the subject should reflect a combination of needs and problems of the individual and those of the society.

### **Methodology**

In this study, the researcher adopted plans and procedures that span from broad assumption to specific methods of data collection and analysis as stipulated by Creswell (2009). In this case, therefore, the researcher adopted a qualitative research design. This design is associated with the constructivist or interpretivist approaches. They believe reality to be socially constructed and only knowable from multiple and subjective points of view where the knower and the known are seen as inseparable (Rocco, Bliss, Gallagher & Pérez-Prado, 2003). The choice of this design was to enable the researcher make an in-depth study of phenomena through interviews in order to address the issues of curriculum and instruction in social studies education in the classroom. The population for the study encompassed all teachers teaching Social Studies in senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis in the Central Region. The sample for the study was twenty-two teachers teaching Social Studies in five senior high schools in Cape Coast Metropolis. The researcher made attempts to include all senior high school teachers

teaching Social Studies in the Metropolis. But those willing and able were teachers from these five schools used for the study. The selection strategy was therefore nothing more than “cases on the basis of convenience” (Glesne, 1999:29; Quashigah, 2000:47). Data was gathered with the aid of interview guide and analysed through “thick description” of events as generated from the research questions.

The researcher used trustworthiness to ensure the authenticity of the findings. Trustworthiness in this study was used to establish that the research findings are worth paying attention to (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The issue of trustworthiness of the study was done in line with the criteria suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) thus, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. This is because Wolcott (1990) cited in Kusi, (2012) asserts that the use of reliability and validity in qualitative research is unjustified on axiomatic grounds. This is due to the differences that exist between the axioms of interpretivism and positivism and therefore, “accommodation between and among paradigms on axiomatic grounds is simply not possible” (Lincoln, 1992:81 cited in Kusi, 2012).

Credibility is an evaluation of whether or not the research findings represent a credible conceptual interpretation of the data drawn from the participants’ original data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was established mainly through member checking and individual debriefing. Member checking was used in two ways at the various stages of data collection and data analysis: (i) at the pilot stage the interviewer (researcher) discussed the interview questions with participants at the end of each interview; (ii) during formal interviews, the interviewer posed ideas back to participants to refine, rephrase, and interpret. Besides, to ensure the credibility of the research findings, recorded tapes of individual interviews were played back to participants and written transcriptions of the interviews were given back to the interviewees to check whether what was transcribed were true reflection of their responses. They were allowed to offer comments on whether or not they feel the data was interpreted in a manner congruent with their own experiences. Gaining feedback on results from the participants increased credibility of the findings.

Transferability is the degree to which the results of a research study or experiment can be generalised to other groups, settings or situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The transferability of this study was ensured by rich description and reporting of the research process. The researcher used thick descriptions to substantiate and illustrate assertions made by individual participants to illuminate the context. Participants’ statements during interviews were quoted verbatim in order to convey their true emotions and opinions. During the interviews, participants were probed further when the need arose for clearer explanations and deep understanding.

Dependability of qualitative research findings corresponds to reliability of findings in quantitative research (Merriam & Associates, 2002 cited in Kusi, 2012:103). Quality control measures were instituted for data collection from participants. The researcher had personal interaction with the interviewees from whom the data was collected through clear and unambiguous questions. In addition, an independent audit of the research methods and data analysis was carried out by a senior lecturer at the Department of Social Science Education in the University of Education, Winneba who has much interest in qualitative studies and based on established precedent in qualitative research, dependability was established.

In terms of confirmability, the general methods and procedures of this study have been explicitly described in detail and can be corroborated by others. The researcher was also aware of personal assumptions, biases and subjectivity that could easily affect the outcome of the study. As a result, the researcher placed himself on an emphatically neutral ground, seeing his respondents as autonomous beings in order to obtain an accurate data void of biases.

## **Data Presentation and Analyses**

### **Social Studies Teachers’ Understanding of the Goal of the Subject**

With regards to teachers’ understanding of the goal of the subject, the various responses were categorized under six broad headings as seen in the table below.

**Table 4:** Social Studies teachers in SHS in Cape Coast Metropolis understanding of the goal of the subject

Number of teachers	Category of their response
Five out of 19 in-field	Social Studies seeks to address issues of human concern
Four in-field	The purpose of the subject is citizenship education
Four in-field and one out-of-field	The subject prepares individuals to fit in society To give individuals the general knowledge of the whole curriculum
One in-field (intern)	Create awareness of rights and responsibilities
One in-field	Help students acquire relevant knowledge, desirable attitudes, values and skills
One in-field	
Four in-field and one out-of-field	They have forgotten the goal of the subject

*Source:* field data, 2011

From the table above, it can be observed that, five of the in-field Social Studies teachers see the ultimate goal of social studies as a subject that seeks to address issues of human concern. For instance, one of the respondents said “The purpose of the subject is solving societal problems that confront individuals.” Another said:

The ultimate purpose of the subject now for me is problem-solving; to solve problems of society because unlike you know I happened to be an examiner for institute of education, UCC, for Training Colleges, when you look at the nature of their syllabus and other things, geography seems to dominate there. But with the ones from Winneba, basic and second cycle ones if you look at them everything is about problem approach to teaching so that whatever you teach, at the end of the day it will translate into children becoming problem-solvers for society [sic].

So I asked, “Seeing the subject as a problem-solving one, and being an expert in the subject, which of the syllabi do you think is appropriate, the Winneba ones or Cape Coast?” He replied,

For me, I have always argued that the Winneba paradigm is the best. Even we worked on an article somebody is even still working on it that is about the UCC paradigm of Social Studies and Winneba paradigm. I have always gone for the Winneba [approach] considering our current status as a developing country now. I think the Winneba version is better than what Cape Coast is doing [sic].

He further explained that Winneba paradigm was better because it deals with practical issues in our society. To him, there are pertinent issues such as negative attitudes of people towards work and public property, tribalism, nepotism, corruption, HIV/AIDS among others which need to be attended to and that, the Winneba paradigm focuses on such issues. He however, bemoans that “the Cape Coast paradigm is a mere combination of topics from the social sciences of which geography dominates.” He concluded that the attitudes of many Ghanaians are negative and therefore forms part of the issues Social Studies which the discipline seeks to address. He sees the subject as issue-centred and as a result, the curriculum should focus on pertinent issues that confront the survival of citizens of the country.

One of them also said, the goal of the subject is to “Imbibe in students enquiry skills, critical thinking, reflective thinking, being able to solve societal problems and their personal ones.” Then I asked, “How do you teach to attain critical thinking in students?” and he replied,

Well, I vary my teaching a lot. Sometimes not necessarily lecturing, lecturing will not even help, but I put them into groups to enable them do research on their own and come back and present their information to the class for us to discuss. That is one way of achieving that. Sometimes I also give them the research work to find issues that are of societal concern. So this is what I do to build upon their critical thinking because they need to be able to solve things for themselves.

This respondent added other concepts such as critical thinking, inquiry skills and reflective thinking as goals of Social Studies which make it slightly different from those who see the subject as solely solving issues of human survival. To him, it is the development of inquiry skills, critical thinking skills and reflective thinking skills that enable the learner to solve issues that confront him/her and that of society at large. His use of the word “imbibe”

suggests that teachers of the subject indoctrinate the students what they deem necessary for them and the students are only to conform. However, in Social Studies, teachers help to inculcate the desired change in the students. His views were nonetheless, added to this category because he sees the subject as one that equips learners to solve personal issues and those that confront society.

The assertions above is in line with Quarthey (1990), when he said, the subject seeks to inculcate in the learner tools necessary for solving personal and societal problems. Kissock (1981) expressed a similar view as he said Social Studies is a programme of study which the society uses to instill in students the knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions it considers important concerning the relationships human beings have with each other, their world and themselves. To Quarthey and Kissock, the subject prepares the students with certain competencies that will enable them solve personal and societal problems of human survival. Tracing the origin of the subject, it could be realized that the uprising of issues of human concern that were at variance with societal norms and values were the previous circumstances that prompted the introduction of the subject to help solve such issues. To buttress this, Blege (2001) asserts that violence and social disharmony in the 1960s in America were part of the antecedents for the introduction of Social Studies and that American youth were becoming increasingly wayward while group violence and child delinquency were rampant. This prompted the stakeholders of education in America to advocate for the introduction of a subject in the school curriculum to address these issues and to produce good and responsible citizens. From the above statements, it could be inferred that the subject from its inception was to deal with issues that were arising in society that could hamper or serve as a threat to the survival of humanity. Today, the subject is still viewed by many scholars as an issue-centred subject and those states which accept it as such develop their curricular around various issues affecting the development and survival of humanity. For instance, in Ghana, the 2007 and 2010 syllabi for Social Studies in both the Senior High Schools (SHSs) and Junior High Schools (JHSs) were developed around issues that need redress.

In addition, four respondents who were also in-field Social Studies teachers pointed out that the ultimate goal of Social Studies is citizenship education. For instance, one of them said “I will say the ultimate purpose of Social Studies is citizenship education.” In line with this, another said “the ultimate purpose of social studies is to educate citizens, so citizenship education.” Though, the respondent believes that, the ultimate purpose of Social Studies is citizenship education, he does not know that it is different from education for the citizenry and therefore, used the terms as synonyms. However, it is important to note that the education for the citizenry is entirely different from citizenship education. One other response in this category was that “I think it is citizenship education that is training the children to be holistically developed and to be reflective and problem solvers.” He explained that “Citizenship education involves the upbringing of students who are well informed about the issues around them and equipping them with various skills to either solve or cope with such issues.” These assertions succinctly fit into Blege’s definition when he said Social Studies is citizenship education (Blege, 2001). Ayaaba (2008) asserts that Banks (1990), Martorella (1994), Ross (1997) and Blege (2001) regard Social Studies as citizenship education. In the school curriculum, citizenship development is the primary goal of Social Studies education (Banks, 1990; Martorella, 1994 cited in Ayaaba, 2008). Banks (1990) and Martorella (1994) are ardent that citizenship education is the major focus of the social studies curriculum.

Besides, four of the in-field teachers posit that the subject seeks to prepare individuals to fit into the society. By this, one of them explained that “Social Studies prepares students to know and do what is expected of them in the society. These include the knowledge, values, attitudes and general lifestyle they are supposed to adopt to fit well in the society.” In a similar view, one of the out-of-field teachers who is the head of Social Studies department in one of the schools indicated that the ultimate goal of Social Studies is “to prepare people to be good citizens by Ghanaian standards.” To him, there are some moral standards that are accepted by Ghanaians and as such, these values are supposed to be introduced to the upcoming generation through Social Studies. His assertion about the goal of Social Studies lies in the area of socialization aspect of the subject. Then I asked, “Where did you learn about the goal of Social Studies since you did B. Ed. Psychology at the University of Cape Coast?” He answered; “I learnt this from the conferences organized at Ajumako on how to teach Social Studies and from the syllabus.” Barr, Barth and Shermis (1977) cited in Dynneson and Gross (1999) assert that the purpose of citizenship education is to instill in the students the principles of an idealized American society. They maintain that what is important is how certain societal values are transmitted to students. From these statements, it can be inferred that Social Studies serves to decipher valuable knowledge, attitudes, values and skills that are worth inculcating in the younger generation in order to adequately furnish them to fit into the societies in which they find themselves. This also suggests that what is taught in Social Studies differ from nation to nation since what is considered

morally upright or as societal values is not the same everywhere. In other words, what may be considered culturally acceptable in one country might be frowned upon in another country. For instance, in the US and Britain, gays and lesbians are accepted and accorded some rights. But in Ghana and most other African societies, they see the practice as a societal canker that should be fought against vehemently. Nduanya (1978:145) contends that

Good citizenship may imply reasoned commitment to one's society (to its political and social ideology); possession of what Brown (1966:20) aptly called "a critical habit of mind that is the best means of withstanding propaganda"; possession of the concepts and generalizations, the thinking skills and the problem-solving techniques essential for coping with change.

In sum, they believe that the subject prepares students to fit very well in the society by inculcating in them the ideal values in the society.

One of the teacher-trainees in the field of Social Studies on internship said the ultimate purpose of Social Studies is "to let the students know their rights and responsibilities." So I asked, "do you think what you have said is the ultimate purpose of the subject?" He replied, "I will say so for now." In Ghana, it is not uncommon to see people fighting seriously for their rights but rarely consider their obligatory responsibilities as citizens of the nation. This issue is therefore central to the issues Social Studies seeks to address but cannot stand alone as the ultimate purpose of the subject because it goes beyond making learners to know their rights and responsibilities.

One other teacher said:

the subject is for societal reforms because I see the topics almost, I'm saying almost because not all, almost all the topics if you teach them well as Social Studies is meant to be taught, you are causing a change, you are instilling an attitudinal change in the lives of the individuals [sic].

The subject seeks to cause desirable attitudinal change in the lives of the learners in order to make them useful to the society. Ghana as a developing nation demands citizens who are patriotic, loyal, hardworking, industrious, capable and willing to contribute to its development. The subject therefore seeks to inculcate such virtues in the learners to make them valuable assets for the nation.

One other in-field teacher said, "I think the ultimate purpose is to make the citizenry informed about the immediate environment and issues within. The focus is not just about knowing the environment but, how to use the knowledge gained to solve problems confronting them." To him, getting the students understand their immediate environment will equip them with adequate knowledge to solve issues around them.

One of the Social Studies teachers who taught the subject for over ten years said "Social Studies has four major goals: (1) helps students to acquire knowledge, (2) developing desirable attitudes and values in students, (3) Helping students to acquire skills, (4) Combining the knowledge, attitudes, values and skills to help solve societal problems." To him, these contribute to make an individual informed, concerned, reflective and a participatory citizen. In the same vein, one of the in-field respondents said the purpose of the subject is all about attitudinal change. This is what Quartey (1990) meant when he said Social Studies is a subject that equips the learner with knowledge, attitudes, values and skills necessary for solving personal and societal problems. The NCSS (2009) admits that the advancement of liberty and justice for all, as envisioned by our country's founders, requires that citizens have the knowledge, attitudes and values to both guard and endorse the principles of constitutional democracy. Banks (1990) alerts that:

Social Studies is that part of the elementary and high school curriculum which has primary responsibility for 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.

He emphasizes that while other subjects also help students to accomplish the skills needed to participate in a democratic society, Social Studies is the only subject that has the development of civic competence and skills as its primary goal.

One of the teacher-trainees on internship said "The ultimate purpose of teaching Social Studies is to give individuals the general knowledge of the whole curriculum." Her perception about the goal of the subject might stem from her orientation about the subject at UCC since she made us to understand that they attend geography, economics, history, and sociology classes and that this package was what constituted Social Studies. If that is what is really done there, then her perception about the ultimate purpose of the subject was not a deviation but congruent to their practices. However, if Social Studies is seen as such, then, it succinctly fits Beard's (1963) description of the subject as a seamless web or better still a schizophrenic bastard child as it was put by Barr, Barth and Shermis (1977). Nevertheless, from the researcher's view, the subject is not to give learners the



general knowledge of the whole curriculum but decipher the distillate or relevant information from any discipline that are germane to addressing issues in the society. Therefore, learning all about the past (history), all about economics or geography are just but a conglomeration of the various social sciences and not Social Studies because Social Studies has a different focus and content. A mere conglomeration of fragments of topics from the social sciences into a restrictive disciplinary frame work under a sham conception of a new discipline is a non prolific and self defeating attempt and might not qualify Social Studies to stand as a new discipline.

Five of the respondents among which one was an out-of-field teacher said they had forgotten the goal of the subject either because they have studied it for long or due to family issues. This is a clear indication that some teachers do not see any link between the specific day to day objectives of the lesson and the broader goal of the subject that the subject aims at attaining. This has the possibility of derailing the teachers focus as to what to teach as well as what should be assessed. This could lead teachers to treat some of the Social Studies topics or units as would have been treated in the natural sciences or the social sciences like geography, economics or history. However, every Social Studies unit in the syllabus has a problem it tries to address and needs to be seen and treated as such, rather than looking at the units as it would have been perceived in the natural sciences or the social sciences. In some of the schools, the teachers were given course outlines by their heads of departments rather than the syllabus for the subject. As such, most of these teachers do not even read about the problems each unit seeks to address. Such units are therefore treated in ways the teachers feel they should be treated. Teachers who have done the social sciences and are teaching the subject are liable to teach it as perceived in their fields of study which might jeopardize the main intent of putting Social Studies in the school curriculum.

The above ideas expressed by various authors and teachers concerning the goal of Social Studies are not a contradiction to each other. Neither do I see the subject as “a smorgasbord of this and that from everywhere” thereby making the goal of the subject confusing and vague (Barr, Barth & Shermis, 1977 cited in Dynneson & Gross, 1999:24). But rather, their ideas complement one another in order to adequately fulfill the overall goal of the subject, thus, creating informed, concerned, reflective and participatory citizens who are capable of making reasoned decisions for the public good as active citizens in a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.

Though, experience played a very important role in teachers’ understanding of the goal of the subject, it was not a guarantee as such. This is because just as some of the experienced teachers were at ease in telling what the goal of the subject was, others fumbled signifying that they had either forgotten the goal or they had not got the goal of the subject at their finger tips as they teach the subject. For instance, the teacher who said “Social Studies has four major goals:...” taught the subject in the Senior High School for eleven years and spoke extemporaneously without preparation. This might be so because of a combination of several factors other than the number of years he taught. Apart from the fact that he was the head of department for Social Studies, he has been a mentor for Social Studies students who go on internship and has also participated in several seminars on how to teach Social Studies. These factors could be what triggered him to continuously read in order to update himself. The situation was different for another teacher who taught the subject for seventeen years. Though, trained in the subject, she said “the ultimate purpose of teaching social studies is to give individuals the general knowledge of the whole curriculum.” On hearing the question, she smiled with amazement, looked up for a while before giving the response. It was clear that though she taught the subject for several years, she had not gotten the goal of the subject at her finger tips as she taught the subject. Although, an examiner of the SSSCE now WASSCE, she had not gotten the opportunity to attend any of the seminars or conferences organized by Social Studies experts in the country as to how the subject should be perceived and treated.

From the above, one can say that, it does not take one to know the goal of the subject in order to prepare students for Social Studies WASSCE. This is because most teachers rely on pass questions and marking schemes for past exams to guide them teach the students and it has been yielding them the expected results they yen for. To them, the goal of the subject is not a guiding force to direct their actions but only makes one to sound as an intelligent Social Studies teacher. This is because, when asked whether the goal of the subject serves as a guide to their teaching, some of them responded, “I have not thought of it”. “I’m not very sure.” These are clear indications that they were not guided by the goal of the subject as they taught the subject. Nonetheless, one of the teachers out of the twenty-two interviewed responded,

Of course, the goal for me informs my choice of even teaching and learning materials, examples I use in teaching, virtually everything I do in social studies class. At the end of the

day, I do it such that it will translate into good citizenship that the children will not just learn for passing exams.

So, the fact still remains that the goal of the subject is not a guiding principle if teachers are teaching to test. Nevertheless, if the subject is to be dealt with ideally as expected, it must be guided and driven by the goal of the subject.

The less experienced teachers mostly said the goal of the subject is citizenship education or to solve issues in the society. Some of these teachers have a superficial understanding about the goal of the subject since they could not explain further what they meant by citizenship education. Four of the less experienced teachers interviewed had forgotten entirely what the goal of the subject is. This tells us that some people whilst at school learn to make their grades and think less about how they are going to practice after school. This implies that some teachers do rote learning for the sake of exams and soon forget after their exams. They therefore go to the classrooms without much to contribute toward the attainment of the ultimate purpose of the subject. Just as they learnt for the purpose of passing their exams, they are bent on coaching the students to write and pass rather than being passionate and enthusiastic in attaining the paramount goal of the subject in the students.

In connection with in-field and out-of-field teachers there were little differences in their understanding of the goal of the subject. The out-of-field teacher said the ultimate goal of the subject “is to prepare people to be good citizens by Ghanaian standards”. By implication, he meant citizenship education which was not different from what most of the in-field teachers said. This might be so because the out-of-field teacher was the head of department for Social Studies, he has been a mentor for Social Studies students who come for internship for several years, he has taught the subject for ten years and has attended conferences and seminars organized on how to go about the teaching of social studies as I was told during my interview with him. These factors might have compelled him to learn more about the subject and thus think as such. This explains the power of such conferences and seminars in bridging the gap between the in-field and out of field teachers.

However, the response of the above out-of-field teacher was different from the out-of-field teachers the researcher met during the pilot test of his instruments in some secondary schools in Winneba. To one of them, Social Studies is made up of geography, economics, history, political science and current affairs. He then concluded that “The subject is to make the students aware of their immediate environment and the world at large.” He added that he was teaching the subject because he was much interested in current affairs. This suggest that those who are teaching the subject and are not given any kind of training have different understanding about the goal of the subject from those who are trained.

In addition, there were no significant differences in the way males and females understand the goal of Social Studies. There were both males and females who either forgot or could not explain vividly the ultimate purpose of Social Studies. Nevertheless, most of the males and females explained in diverse ways the ultimate purpose of the subject which all complemented each other in attaining the ultimate goal of the subject. When I asked of the general aims/objectives of the subject as stipulated in the syllabus, almost all the teachers teaching Social Studies irrespective of their characteristics did not have the general objectives or aims of Social Studies as stipulated in the syllabus at their finger tips. Many of them were not even having access to the syllabus but were only given course outlines by their heads of department. This showed that most of the important things written at the preliminary stages of the syllabus concerning the rationale, general objectives among other things that should prepare the teacher on how to teach and assess students in the subject are not taken into consideration. The teachers do not see the relevance of such valuable provisions in the syllabus. Those who had the syllabus at hand as subject masters could not tell what the general aims of the subject were which showed clearly that they did not study that part of the syllabus. It is however, important that every teacher of Social Studies study the preliminary pages of the syllabus to acquaint them with the relevant information needed to handle the subject effectively and with much competency.

### **Conclusions**

The study was conducted in most of the prominent senior high schools in the Central Region which revealed that there are out-of-field teachers teaching Social Studies, some of which are even heads of department for Social Studies. If the phenomenon of out-of-field teaching exists in these highly esteemed senior high schools in the Central Region and Ghana for that matter, the situation may not be different in most of the senior high schools in the country.

In view of the nature and peculiarity of the subject in its goals and how it should be taught, it demands that the issue of out-of-field teaching be addressed in order to make the import of the subject be felt throughout the nation. This is because out-of-field teaching seems to pose serious threats to the attainment of the ultimate purpose of the subject. For the goal of Social Studies to be attained, it demands teachers who are well prepared with the subject matter of the discipline and what it takes to teach the subject effectively. This is because all the out-of-field teachers who availed themselves for the interview were those who have gone for Social Studies seminars or have done Social Studies as a second area but those who have not gone through any training on the subject were not willing to be involved in the study. In addition, Meyer (1970) suggests that much social order is a product of social norms and rules that constitute particular types of actors and specify ways in which they can take action. Such behaviors are not so much socially influenced as socially constructed. He maintains that institutions create cultures and norms that dictate the thinking of those involved. Institutions have an incentive to protect and distinguish between those on the inside and those on the outside, even when the differences are marginal.

The researcher therefore suggests that conferences should be held by experts of Social Studies with the support of government and other concerned NGOs at least ones each year in every region for Social Studies teachers. This is to deliberate on current practices that should be adopted to enhance the achievement of the indispensable goals of the subject. These conferences should centre on the rationale for the subject, the main goals that the subject seeks to accomplish and the various techniques that could be employed to achieve these goals. During such periods, the teachers will take time to assimilate the ideal practices of the subject since they are not learning to write any exams. It will also help to consolidate what was learnt from school thereby improving their classroom practices and making them more focus on the essentials of the subject.

Finally, there is the need for experts of Social Studies from the various institutions of training to hold a conference to deliberate on the goal of the subject in order to ensure harmonization of content. This will ensure that teachers of the subject irrespective of the institutions in which they are trained, their conceptions of the goals of the subject will be congruent. This will ensure that teachers of the subject teach toward the attainment of a common goal.

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