

# Implications of Teachers' Knowledge of Social Studies Profile Dimensions in Teaching and Learning in Senior High Schools

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## Abstract

This study was centred on implications of teachers' knowledge of Social Studies profile dimensions in teaching and learning in the senior high schools in selected districts in Ghana. The objective of the study was to assess the implications of graduate teachers' knowledge base of Social Studies profile dimensions in the senior high schools. This study adopted a multiple case study design. The data were used together to form one case. The study was carried out in three senior high schools within the Aowin and Wassa Amenfi West Districts in the Western Region of Ghana. The population for the study were the social studies teachers teaching in the Aowin and Wassa Amenfi West Districts. Both the graduate Social Studies teachers and the senior high schools were purposively and conveniently selected for the study. The study employed two instruments for the data collection, namely, interview guide and classroom observation protocol. The findings of the study revealed that: most Social Studies teachers did not have in-depth knowledge about the Social Studies profile dimensions. Also, most of the respondents did not possess both content and subject matter knowledge with respect to Social Studies profile dimensions except few who were directly exposed to the concept of profile dimensions while studying at the University. Based on the above findings, it is recommended that, Social Studies teachers in the senior high schools should study the profile dimensions of the subject to enable them employ its usage in the teaching and learning process so as to achieve the desired goal (s) and objectives of the subject.

## Keywords

Ghana, Profile Dimensions, Senior High Schools, Social Studies, Teachers' Knowledge, Teaching and Learning

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## 1. Introduction

Education has long been recognised as the central element in the development of human personality [1]. It is viewed as the backbone of national development and a crucial factor in human resource development. Education enables individuals to make the transition to new social orders by providing self-understanding and better knowledge of the choices available and a critical appreciation of the nature of change. Thus,

education at all the stages becomes a kind of future shock absorber [1]. This is the reason why governments spend large sums of money and other resources to fulfil the manpower needs of their nations.

It is evident that, as countries desire for development as well as higher achievements, the place of citizenship education which serves as a springboard for all learners to develop their capabilities as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society is

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paramount and cannot be underestimated [2]. Education for citizenship has become a prime concern and the focus of primary, secondary and the early education curriculum across the globe [2]. It is seen as the fulcrum on which the development of relevant knowledge, skills, values and understanding required to become informed, active and responsible citizens should revolve. This, therefore, goes to say that learners need a unique and peculiar type of education which will enable them to participate effectively in life. Social Studies education is one of the educational programmes that can help develop positive attitudes in citizens and thereby contribute to the socio-economic development of the nation.

The aim or main goal of teaching Social Studies at any level of education is to promote good citizenship [3]. This means that Social Studies is to prepare citizens who can make reflective decisions and participate successfully in the civil life of their communities, nation and the world. Thus, it is very prudent and imperative that much attention should be given to its teaching and learning in senior high schools so as to accomplish the intended outcome of the subject.

To make the teaching of Social Studies focused and more relevant to the achievement of its goal and objectives, teachers must understand the profile dimensions of the subject as stipulated in its curriculum to serve as a guide or spring board to direct their teaching and learning [4]. Teachers are expected 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 lose its intrinsic value if it does not address the contemporary persistent issues of human survival in the nation which is the main focus of the subject.

Although, a number of efforts have been made to improve upon the teaching of Social Studies through curriculum innovations and upgrading of teachers, there seems to be an impression that the main goal (s) and objectives of the subject are not met. It is argued that several factors account for the failure of classroom practices to achieve educational goals and objectives. However, one factor which is central to this phenomenon is the teacher, that is to say, teacher effectiveness [5]. It is on record that the knowledge of teachers' influences the assessment in Social Studies curriculum [6]. It is also a well-known fact that teachers' knowledge will influence how teaching is carried out in the classroom [7]. Hence, what seems to be the problem is the lack of knowledge especially about the profile dimensions in Social Studies exhibited by some graduate teachers teaching the subject.

It is obvious in contemporary Ghanaian secondary schools that teachers of Social Studies consist of both professionals

in the subject and novices [8]. They further argued that the prevalence of out-of-field teaching is unacceptably high. One may be doubtful as to whether these out-of-field teachers (novices) and the professionals are aware of the focus of the subject that is solving issues of human survival and the profile dimensions which underline its teaching, learning and assessment and whether they use the Social Studies classroom as a theatre for addressing the current persistent problems of human survival [9]. This study, therefore sought to explore the implications of teachers' knowledge of Social Studies profile dimensions in teaching and learning of the subject in the senior high schools in Ghana.

Thus, it looks as if there is huge or vast gap between intended objectives and actual classroom practices in the teaching and learning of Social Studies in Ghana. This requires Social Studies teachers to be aware of the profile dimensions of the subject to enable them formulate their behavioural instructional objectives in the teaching and learning process in order to promote acceptable attitudes, values and skills of students. This awareness prompted the researchers to conduct a study into the implications of teachers' knowledge of Social Studies profile dimensions in the teaching and learning of the subject in selected senior high schools in the Western Region, Ghana.

This study is aimed at exploring the implications of graduate teachers' knowledge of Social Studies profile dimensions in the teaching and learning of the subject in selected senior high schools in the Western Region of Ghana. This is guided by this question - What are graduate teachers' knowledge base of Social Studies profile dimensions in the senior high schools? The study was narrowed only to the graduate Social Studies teachers in the Aowin and the Wasswa Amenfi West Districts in the Western Region of Ghana. It was further delimited to assessing the knowledge base of profile dimensions of graduate Social Studies teachers.

## 2. Theoretical Perspectives and Literature Review

Generally, one of the essential requirements of every social enquiry is the need for a theory or a model to put the research into perspective within which a critical assessment of the work is done. A theory is a system of related ideas that enables one to explain and predict phenomena. Theory assumes the principles of causation and explanation that seeks to establish the relationship of cause and effect with a stated degree of certainty [10].

There are several theories that specifically address teacher learning as it relates to subject matter content. In addition to learning in formal settings, Social Studies teachers can also

learn their subject matter through informal experiences with Social Studies, particularly developing interest through diverse means. Therefore, it is through both formal and informal learning settings of graduate Social Studies teachers that the theoretical frameworks for this study have been chosen.

Shulman's Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) concept explains how teachers learn content knowledge, and other forms of teacher knowledge, and apply these types of knowledge appropriately in the classroom setting [11, 12]. It supports both content learning and curricular learning, but specifically emphasizes pedagogical content knowledge. It is important for teachers to understand the content being taught, how best to present the content in the classroom, and how to follow the curricular guidelines set forth for the subject [11, 12]. This will make the teacher develop some level of competence towards the subject reflecting higher efficacy levels. By having a thorough understanding of content, curriculum and pedagogy, the teacher can then be on top of issues and will be able to integrate the subject knowledge into a classroom setting to best facilitate student learning. At the heart of PCK is the manner in which subject matter is transformed for teaching. This occurs when the teacher interprets the subject matter, finds different ways to represent it and makes it accessible to learners.

The above theory has therefore been considered by the researchers because of its relevance to the problem of the study, the purpose and how it informs the chosen research approach for the study. It can be seen that the theory goes a long way to enable graduate Social Studies teachers at the senior high schools in Ghana to expose their learners to a more deductive means of learning such as being encouraged to think divergently, adopt problem based approach of learning and also use the enquiry approach to enable them construct their own knowledge about issues, topics and concepts being taught and learnt in the teaching and learning process. This will make learners get better understanding of concepts/ issues being presented so as to enhance their performance in the subject.

Knowledge is at the core of teacher education programmes and the foundation of teaching and learning [13]. Teachers' understanding of a subject matter and ability to share information with students comes from the foundations of knowledge they have gained. The knowledge base for teaching defines a set of knowledge necessary to be an effective teacher.

The knowledge of teachers has become a focus of interest to educators and policy makers hence attracting the attention of scholars in social research [12]. Teacher knowledge is therefore defined as "a body of professional knowledge that

encompasses both knowledge of general pedagogical principles and skills and knowledge of the subject matter to be taught" [14]. Teacher knowledge is also described in practical terms as the wisdom of practice developed through classroom experience [15].

Teachers are a critical factor in student learning [16]. Teachers control the learning environment and ultimately determine what is taught, when it is taught, and how it is taught [17, 16]. To be successful, teachers must have strong subject matter knowledge, understand the nature of the subject, be able to translate the subject's concepts into meaningful learning experiences for their students, and highlight applications for the subject within society and in the lives of students [18]. This indicates that knowledge for teaching develops with experience as teachers learn to blend their knowledge of students as learners with their knowledge of content to make concepts understandable [19].

It must be emphasised that effective learning of Social Studies occurs when learners are actively engaged in Social Studies lessons; making connections between Social Studies concepts; applying their knowledge of Social Studies to problem solving; supporting claims with evidence; and reflecting upon their methods, processes, and conclusions. This description of Social Studies learning requires that Social Studies teachers have a deep and flexible knowledge and understanding of Social Studies subject matter and concepts, as well as an understanding of students as learners, knowledge of instructional strategies, representations, assessment strategies and curricula resources [20]. Teacher's knowledge is closely related to individual experiences and contexts therefore, unique to the individual [21]. Successful teachers are able to transform their knowledge of Social Studies concepts into a form of knowledge that can be understood by learners by integrating their knowledge of learners, representations, instructional strategies, assessments, and curricular resources to create meaningful learning opportunities that make connections between lesson content and students' experiences [12]. To be effective, teachers need to (a) activate prior knowledge, (b) predict student difficulty with content, (c) adjust teaching approaches and strategies to better address diverse student learning needs, (e) make connections between concepts, (f) identify relevant connections between content and student lives, (g) provide opportunities for students to assess their learning, (h) use feedback on formative assessments to inform instruction, and (i) align instructional goals and methods with the topics being taught [5, 22, 24].

Prior to considering the knowledge base for teaching, it is useful to explore what it means "to know" something. There has been three conceptions or sources of knowledge based on examination of several disciplinary and epistemological

knowledge classification schemes. First, the disciplinary conception of knowledge describes canonical knowledge in the established disciplines. Second, the practical conception of knowledge represented by procedural knowledge derives from the wisdom of practice. The third form of knowledge is the experiential conception of knowledge based on [26] notion that knowledge is located in and based on human experience [25]. While there are other ways of knowing, for example, scientific or aesthetic ways of knowing, these three different ways of knowing provide a useful interpretive framework to conceptualise Senior High School Social Studies teachers' sources of knowledge or knowledge base on profile dimensions. Conceptions or sources of knowledge and what it means for teachers "to know" something raises broader questions of the purpose of this knowledge and what kind of knowledge is important in terms of student engagement [25].

Shulman identified Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) as a unique form of knowledge expressly for teaching. He described PCK as including subject matter knowledge, knowledge of potential student learning difficulties and students' prior knowledge for specific concepts, as well as the most effective models, analogies, illustrations, explanations, and investigations to make the concept understandable for students [12]. Grossman expanded upon Shulman's ideas to emphasise four general areas of teacher knowledge including: subject matter knowledge; general pedagogical knowledge; knowledge of context; and the core of Grossman's model, pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) [27]. PCK is defined as consisting of four components: (1) knowledge and beliefs about the purposes and goals for teaching Social Studies, (2) knowledge of students' understanding of Social Studies, (3) knowledge of Social Studies curricula and curricular resources, and (4) knowledge of representations and instructional strategies [27].

The specialised knowledge teachers acquire through classroom practice is similar to the unique knowledge acquired through other practice driven professions such as medicine or law [5]. The unique knowledge base that teachers possess is developed through classroom experience and allows teachers to engage in pedagogical reasoning and decision-making during planning and instruction to promote and support student learning [5, 24]. Teacher's knowledge is characterised as originating from both internal and external sources: internal sources include reflections upon experiences with students, parents, and colleagues; external sources include subject matter knowledge and contextual knowledge of the district, school, as well as, state and national standards [22].

Teacher knowledge is not a solitary construct which resides only within the individual but tends to be acquired and

developed through professional socialisation [22]. In essence, teachers form a 'collective knowledge' developed through discussions of experiences, problems and solutions taking place during professional development opportunities, at teacher meetings, in the plan room, and in the hallway [22]. This collective knowledge of teaching is described as teacher lore [22]. Teachers construct new knowledge that is based upon their understanding of teaching, experiences in the classroom, and identify what does and does not work [29]. This indicates that good teachers have strong subject matter knowledge coupled with an understanding of their students and effective representations and instructional strategies. Teachers continue to learn on the job with their knowledge grounded in daily experience. Collaboration with peers motivates teacher growth by maintaining a focus on teaching practice, students' learning and content knowledge as experiences are shared with colleagues [29].

Individuals who are well prepared in content knowledge can move into the classroom with minimal training and be effective teachers [30]. Without a deep understanding of subject matter content, teachers would be unable to generate accurate explanations or representations on the fly in response to student questions [31]. Subject matter knowledge is critical to good teaching; teachers must be able to identify learner misconceptions and without a strong knowledge base, identifying and addressing learner misconceptions would not be possible [23, 24]. However, subject matter knowledge alone is insufficient for good teaching and that experience in the classroom greatly influences teachers' ability to transform their subject matter knowledge into a form of knowledge more likely to be understood by learners [32].

Effective teacher is described as one who learns from teaching rather than one who has finished learning how to teach [20]. Experienced teachers hold extensive knowledge of teaching, learners, and learning including deep knowledge of subject matter and effective representations; a greater repertoire of instructional strategies; and strong ability to read cues from learners [33].

### 3. Methodology

The research approach employed for this study was qualitative. The qualitative approach usually emphasises on words rather than the quantification of numbers [34]. Again, it is a type of research approach which allows the researchers to watch people in their own territory, interact with them in their own language and their own terms. It is therefore participatory in nature in the sense that, it makes the community or the people to be immensely involved in the research process- right from the data collection stage through to the analysis stage and finally the interpretation stage [34].

This research approach was selected by the researchers because it involves an interpretive and naturalistic means to study a phenomenon.

The research design adopted for this study was multiple case study. Multiple case study is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores multiple of bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (that is observations, interviews, audio-visual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes [35]. A multiple case study research is good in facilitating understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research. In this study, the multiple case study design was used to produce detailed descriptions of the graduate teachers' knowledge of the profile dimensions using constructs to order the data and relate to earlier literature.

The population for the study was all teachers teaching Social Studies in the senior high schools in Ghana. The target population for the study was all graduate Social Studies teachers in the three senior high schools within the two study areas - Aowin and Wassa Amenfi West Districts in the Western Region of Ghana. According to the statistics obtained from the Assistant Head Masters of the schools, the total number of graduate Social Studies teachers in these three schools namely Nana Brentu Senior High Technical School, Asankrangwa Senior High Technical School and Asankrangwa Senior High School are six (6), three (3) and three (3) respectively. Therefore, the target population was all the twelve (12) graduate Social Studies teachers teaching the subject. It must be emphasised that since the number is not large enough, it served as the accessible population for the study and hence, the finite sample size for the study.

The sample size for the study was all the twelve (12) graduate Social Studies teachers teaching the subject in the selected schools. With regard to the sampling techniques employed for the study, the non-probability sampling techniques were used by the researchers. Specifically, the researchers used the purposive and convenience sampling techniques. The purposive sampling technique was used by the researchers to sample the twelve (12) graduate Social Studies teachers. This is because purposive sampling is used to select key informants for a study. Purposive sampling becomes appropriate option where the researchers requires information about a particular phenomenon and believes such information could be derived from the sampled unit [36]. In this regard and owing to the judgmental nature of the information to be required from the key informants, the researchers used the purposive sampling technique to select these respondents for the study. Again, the convenience

otherwise known as accidental sampling technique was used to supplement the selection of the teachers for the study. With this sampling technique, the researchers had to talk to graduate Social Studies teachers who were available and ready to be talked to.

Interview guide and observation checklist were employed by the researchers to gather relevant data for the study. Interview is often regarded as a conversational encounter between an interviewer and an interviewee with the ultimate idea of acquiring information from the latter by the former [37]. Since interviews are people-oriented, it allowed interviewees to construct their own accounts of experiences about their knowledge of Social Studies profile dimensions in schools by describing and explaining in their own words. It must be emphasized that, further information was elicited from participants through the use of observation technique to supplement the interview. The use of the observation was quite useful in getting a better understanding of context; cross checking information and possible differences between what people do and what they say. In using interviews, it was necessary to supplement this source with direct observation in order to establish the realities on the ground and to cross examine the responses.

Trustworthiness was highly ensured in data collection and analysis of data. Trustworthiness is a set of standards that honours participants ethically through researcher sensitivity to the topic and setting [38]. To ensure that the data for the study is trustworthy, the researchers relied on a tape recording of the interview and field notes as well as respondents' validation. To ensure validation, the recorded interviews were played to respondents for them to authenticate the responses. The aim of a piece of research is to have a measure that is reliable and valid [39]. Two examples of ways of dealing with these problems are to clarify the questions for the interviewees, and for the researchers to train themselves to be acquainted with possible problems. Verbatim tape transcriptions were availed to participants as soon as possible after the interviews. This allows the information to be clarified and elaborated [40]. Trustworthiness consists of four different components - (a) credibility: the validity of the findings (b) transferability: the applicability of the findings in other contexts (c) dependability: reliability of the findings at another time and (d) confirmability: objectivity of the researchers while carrying out his/her research. [41]. The combinations of these four terms constitute towards the trustworthiness criteria, thus forming conventional pillars for qualitative methodology [42].

Following the right methods in carrying out social research by way of selecting appropriate design, sampling, data collection and analysis, there is the need to consider other



moral and ethical dimensions in carrying out social research. Attention is drawn to the fact that researchers have moral and professional obligation to be ethical even when research subjects are unaware of or unconcerned about ethics [43]. Ethics in research have intrinsic values in protecting the right of subjects and are considered as an organizing function in research [44]. The principle of voluntary participation requires that people should not be coerced into participating in research. The other related issue of ethics in research is voluntary participation and this requires the informed consent of the participant. Essentially, prospective research participants must be fully informed about the procedures and risks involved in research and must give their consent to participate in the study.

On privacy of participants, there are two standards that are applied in order to help protect the privacy of research participants. Almost all research guarantees the participants' confidentiality. Participants for the study were assured that any information disclosed to the researchers will not be made available to anyone who is not directly involved in the study. Another stricter standard that the researchers employed was the principle of anonymity which essentially means that the participants will remain anonymous throughout the study even to the researchers.

Data collected by the researchers from participants were analysed by the use of the interpretive method based on the themes arrived at in the data collection. The themes were related to the research questions and interpreted on the number of issues raised by participants. These were based on questions on the semi-structured interviews and the observation of Social Studies teachers in the teaching and learning process. Also, narrative samples of text and statements from the individual interviews were used to provide rich description to further illustrate specific conclusions. However, with regard to the bio-data and observations conducted, percentages were used to show the frequency of the various responses from which conclusions were drawn.

## 4. Findings and Discussions

This section presents the findings of the study, based on the analyses of data collected. The researchers blended discussions with the presentation.

### 4.1. Characteristics of Respondents

Analyses of demographic data shows that:

Out of the sample size of twelve (12) graduate Social Studies teachers sampled for the study, 10 (83.3%) were males while the other two (16.7%) were females. This indicates that there

were more males than females sampled for the study. The large gap between male and female respondents shows that, Social Studies teachers who accept postings to the study areas are mostly males.

Out of the twelve (12) teachers used for the study, 10 (83.3%) had their first degree and 2 (16.7%) had their second degree in other subject areas other than Social Studies. This indicates that the number of respondents who teach with first degree out-numbered the total number of respondents with second degrees.

The respondents' area (s) of subject specialisation also revealed that, out of the sampled number of 12 respondents', 3 (25.0%) were trained in Social Studies while 9 (75.0%) were not trained in Social Studies. Thus, out of the nine (9) untrained respondents who teach the subject, 4 (33.3%) specialized in Political science, 1 (8.3%) in Sociology, 1 (8.3%) in International Relations and Development Studies, 2 (16.7%) in Geography and 1 (8.3%) in Psychology. This indicates that, at the Senior High School level, graduate teachers who were not trained in Social Studies yet teaching the subject outnumbered those trained in the subject and hence might have accounted for the ineffective teaching of the subject resulting in poor academic performance among learners in the subject.

Out of the twelve (12) teachers, 3 (25.0%) had taught Social Studies for between 1-5 years whilst 9 (75.0%) had taught the subject for between 6-10 years. The analysis shows that majority of the respondents [nine (9)] had taught Social Studies for six years and above and have had more teaching experience as compared to three (3) respondents who have taught the subject for less than six years. "Practice" they say "makes perfection". A long teaching experience is very necessary to help in the teaching and learning of a subject at any level of education. Long service and level of experience of respondents support traditional way of learning a trade where an apprentice goes for practical training of at least three years. The amount of time spent by somebody for training indicates the quantum of experience acquired so the experience of teachers is not any mean one. It can help them to teach enthusiastically since it will mean a slight adjustment of notes and repetition of issues one is familiar with. This goes to supports that the specialised knowledge teachers acquire through classroom practice or experience is a unique knowledge base and allows teachers to engage in pedagogical reasoning and decision-making during planning and instruction to promote and support student learning [5].

### 4.2. Graduate Teachers' Knowledge Base of Social Studies Profile Dimensions

It is evident that in the teaching and learning of Social Studies in senior high schools in Ghana, the concept of

profile dimension is very paramount. This is because; it is a central aspect of the Social Studies teaching syllabus for senior high schools, hence, forms the basis for instruction and assessment. Profile dimension as a concept in Social Studies describes the underlying behaviours for teaching, learning and assessment. In Social Studies, the three profile dimensions for teaching, learning and assessment are as follows: Knowledge and Understanding 25%; Use of Knowledge 25% and Attitudes and Values 50% [45]. Each of the dimensions has been given a percentage weight that should be considered in teaching and assessment. The weights indicated against the dimensions show the relative emphasis that the teacher should give in the teaching, learning and assessment processes in the subject. Combining the three dimensions in the teaching and learning process will ensure that Social Studies is taught and studied not only at the cognitive level, but will also lead to the acquisition of positive attitudes and values on the part of students [45].

This research theme sought to determine how familiar graduate teachers teaching Social Studies are with the knowledge base of the Social Studies profile dimensions at the Senior High School level. The focus of this section is to assess graduate teachers' knowledge base of Social Studies profile dimensions in senior high schools. The above theme was used as a guide to answer Research Question 1.

*What are graduate teachers' knowledge base of Social Studies profile dimensions in the senior high schools?*

The researchers employed semi-structured interview and observation as the tools for the data collection on this theme. A number of items were placed in the interview guide and the observation protocol to seek graduate Social Studies teachers' views on the issue. The following issues were placed on the interview guide to gather data to answer this research question: what is profile dimension? What are the types of profile dimensions in Social Studies? How do you get your source (s) of knowledge about the profile dimensions? and what is the essence of Social Studies profile dimensions in the teaching and learning of Social Studies?

When participants were asked to give their understanding on the concept of profile dimension in Social Studies, the following were some of the responses given by the graduate Social Studies teachers teaching the subject at the senior high schools: Evelyn (not the real name) who has been teaching the subject for the past six years had this to say: *I know profile dimension is about the knowledge and application of the subject or courses we teach in the schools.* Emmanuel (not the real name) who has taught the subject for the past six years also had this to say: *What I understand by this is... it covers areas that is expected of the children for instance their understanding about the topic, their attitudinal change as*

*well as also look at their knowledge where you as a teacher also gather your information as the knowledge is concerned to be able to do the teaching as well.* Eric (not the real name) who has taught the subject for one year said that: *The last time I checked from the syllabus, it was talking about something like the underlying behaviours for teaching, learning and understanding.* John (not the real name) who has been teaching the subject for the past nine years responded that: *In my own way I think profile dimension is like the summary or what you intended to achieve by teaching that subject or what goes in because it comprises of a lot of issues when teaching because when you are teaching is not for the children to excel academically but there are other things that you want to impart to the students so that will form the dimensions of the teaching.* Mensah (not the real name) who has also taught the subject for the past five years had this to say: *Ok, thank you. My understanding of the profile dimension is the underlying behaviours of subjects and these are also useful in teaching and learning and assessment.*

A critical look at the responses provided by the participants during the interview sessions suggest that they have varying understanding about the concept of profile dimensions but could not give accurate responses to the concept as expected hence did not demonstrate an in-depth knowledge base about Social Studies profile dimensions. Among the varied misconceptions about Social Studies profile dimensions expressed by participants were that: profile dimension is the summary of what a teacher intends to achieve in the course of teaching the subject and also it is perceived as the underlying behaviours of subjects. This might have serious negative implication on the teaching and learning of the subject. This finding is supported by the assertion that individuals who are well prepared in content knowledge can move into the classroom with minimal training and be effective teacher [30] Similarly, it is posited that without a deep understanding of subject matter content, teachers would be unable to generate accurate explanations or responses to students' questions [31]. Subject matter knowledge is critical to good teaching; teachers must be able to identify learner misconceptions and without a strong knowledge base, identifying and addressing learner misconceptions would not be possible [23, 24].

However, some of the respondents gave satisfactory responses to the question to demonstrate some level of understanding about Social Studies profile dimension. For instance, Doris (not the real name) one of the female respondents who has taught the subject for the past six years had this to say: *Profile dimension simply describes how a teacher teaches, how the learners learn and how the teacher assesses the learners... Hence, it simply describes the*

*underlying behaviours for teaching, learning and assessment.* Again, Solomon (not the real name) responded that: *Profile dimension is basically the underlying behaviours describing the teaching, learning and assessment.*

From these two responses, it could be inferred that the participants have an in-depth knowledge and understanding about the meaning of Social Studies profile dimensions. Thus, the implication of their in-depth knowledge base about Social Studies profile dimensions is that, it could facilitate effective teaching and learning in their respective schools so as to achieve the desired objectives and goals of the subject. This is because, for effective teaching and learning of Social Studies in senior high schools in Ghana, there is the need for Social Studies teachers to inculcate the right skills, positive attitudes, values and relevant knowledge in students to see Social Studies as problem-solving which can enable them solve their personal and societal problems. This could only be achieved when Social Studies teachers teach their lessons to cover the profile dimensions in the subject. Their understanding of the concept of profile dimension in Social Studies coincides with the views that profile dimension describes the underlying behaviours for teaching, learning and assessment as indicated in the literature. Thus, in teaching, teachers measure the behavioural changes that occur in learners. These changes are measured in terms of what the learner can do after going through the teaching and learning process [4] and [45]. The above findings show that most of the graduate Social Studies teachers did not have an in-depth knowledge base about Social Studies profile dimensions.

When this question was posed to the respondents- *what are the types of profile dimensions?* during the interview sessions, a number of responses were elicited from the respondents. Among the responses included the following:

Solomon (not the real name) said: *Basically, profile dimensions have three forms and they are; knowledge and understanding, use of knowledge and the attitudes and values.* Mensah (not the real name) indicated that: *Alright what I can say is that we have the use of knowledge, knowledge and understanding and attitudes and values.* Desmond (not the real name) who has taught the subject for seven years had this to say: *I know of knowledge and understanding. I also know of use of knowledge and attitudes and values.*

The responses given by these three graduate Social Studies teachers on this item indicate that they share the same thought on the types of Social Studies profile dimensions. This same thought was supported by the assertion when it asserted that in Social Studies, the three profile dimensions for teaching, learning and assessment are as follows:

Knowledge and Understanding 25%; Use of Knowledge 25% and Attitudes and Values 50%. [45]. It further emphasised that each of the dimensions has been given a percentage weight that should be considered in teaching and assessment and that the weights indicated against the dimensions show the relative emphasis that the teacher should give in the teaching, learning and assessment processes in the subject. Combining the three dimensions in the teaching and learning process will ensure that Social Studies is taught and studied not only at the cognitive level, but will also lead to the acquisition of positive attitudes and values on the part of students as indicated in the literature [45].

On that same item, other responses elicited from the rest of the respondents included the following: Evelyn (not the real name) a female respondent who has been teaching the subject for the past six years had this to say: *To my best of knowledge, I know knowledge and understanding, process skills and values and attitudes.* Emmanuel (not the real name) who has also taught the subject for the past six years responded that: *They are knowledge and understanding, values and attitudes and process skills.* John (not the real name) one of the respondents who has been teaching the subject for the past nine years had this to say: *Social studies as the name implies is supposed to be an attitudinal change that is first one if you want to see attitudinal change in the children as far as our culture is concerned, and then you also want the children to know their environment and also academically because Social Studies is a combination of so many subjects we have Government, Economics, etc.* Joseph (not the real name) who has been teaching the subject for the past nine years responded that: *Aaaah, we have knowledge and understanding, application of knowledge and analysis, synthesis and evaluation.*

The responses given above really suggest that graduate teachers teaching Social Studies at the Senior High School level have varied views regarding the types of Social Studies profile dimensions. Thus, whereas two of the participants mentioned the forms of Social Studies profile dimensions as *knowledge and understanding, values and attitudes, as well as process skills* on one hand; the others indicated *knowledge and understanding, application of knowledge and analysis, synthesis and evaluation;* and *attitudinal change and knowledge of the environment* as the forms of Social Studies profile dimensions. However, it is evident that majority of them are not abreast with the forms of Social Studies profile dimensions as indicated in the teaching syllabus of the subject for senior high schools.

When this question - *How do you get your source (s) of knowledge about the profile dimensions?* was posed to the graduate Social Studies teachers who were interviewed. Four (4) out of the twelve (12) respondents gave similar responses.



Thus, the responses they gave to the question asked are as follows: Doris, (not the real name) one of the respondents who has taught the subject for the past six years had this to say: *I get my source of knowledge from the Social Studies syllabus, from my schooling and then during my Post Graduate Diploma in Education lessons.* Again, Peter (not the real name) being one of the respondents also said this: *Well, I get it from the syllabus that we are using and even from the content that we were taught in the University for example the Foundation to Social Studies.* Joseph (not the real name) said that: *We use the syllabus... It is clearly indicated in the syllabus... Almost all the course we were taught exposed us to the concept of profile dimensions.* Solomon (not the real name) responded that: *You see I get my source from pamphlets and the syllabus that I use to teach. I also get my source of knowledge from some of the subjects studied in Social Studies at campus for instance the foundation of social studies.*

The responses derived from the respondents above suggest that their source (s) of knowledge base about Social Studies profile dimensions emanated from content, subject matter and pedagogical knowledge. Thus, with these teachers deriving their source (s) of knowledge about the Social Studies profile dimension from those sources mentioned above, they will be able to teach effectively and become successful teachers in the classroom. In support of this as indicated in the literature [18]. This indicates that to be successful, teachers must have strong subject matter knowledge, understand the nature of the subject, to be able to translate the subject's concepts into meaningful learning experiences for their students, and highlight applications for the subject within society and in the lives of students. The view that individuals who are well prepared in content knowledge can move into the classroom with minimal training and be effective teachers supports the outcome [30]. The same view coincided with the assertion that the background knowledge of Social Studies teachers is built from training institutions and this goes to influence the way they teach (i.e. selection of content, unit or topic, formulation of objectives, modes of teaching and assessment tool used) [7].

On the other hand, a participant responded that: *It varies... some from the textbooks, internet and I must be frank with you, I am almost 60 years and I have been in the teaching field for almost all the subject areas and I have realised that social studies cut across, you can see it in geography based on that experience.*

A cursory look at this response suggests that apart from the participant deriving his/her source (s) of knowledge about Social Studies profile dimensions from relevant sources such as textbooks and the internet, teaching experience has

contributed immensely to his knowledge base about Social Studies profile dimensions. "Practice experience" they say "makes perfection" [5]. A long teaching experience is very necessary to help the teaching and learning of a subject. Specialised knowledge teachers acquire through classroom practice is a unique knowledge base and allows teachers to engage in pedagogical reasoning and decision-making during planning and instruction to promote and support students learning [3]. The assertion above supports the findings. The implication is that, although, all the graduate Social Studies teachers interviewed responded that they derive their source (s) of knowledge from varied sources, most of them did not possess the desired content and subject matter knowledge as their knowledge base with respect to Social Studies profile dimensions hence were seen to be inadequate. This could be the result of not been directly exposed to the concept "profile dimensions" as part of their education whilst studying at the University.

The participants were also asked - *What is the essence of profile dimension in the teaching and learning of Social Studies?* The following were some of the answers given by the graduate Social Studies teachers interviewed:

Evelyn, (not the real name) who has been teaching the subject for the past six years had this to say: *Ok, with the emphasis on values and attitudes, I know Social Studies as a course has to do with we helping to develop the attitudes and values of students and also through the knowledge it helps us to handle certain societal problems... so with the students' knowledge of Social Studies, it will help him/her to become a useful person in society.* Doris (not the real name) another female respondent who has taught the subject for the past six years also said this: *It helps the teacher to plan how to deliver the lesson and then how to assess the students.* Again, John (not the real name) yet another interviewee who has taught the subject for the past nine years had this to say: *Yeah, if you don't have it then it means you will go off beat because you will not be able to teach whatever you are supposed to teach as a teacher. In the same way, without the profile dimensions, learners will not be able to learn the basic concepts teachers want them to learn in the subject... so it will let you know where you are to focus your attention, the right stuff you need to give to the students.* Joseph (not the real name) one of the respondents who has taught the subject for the past nine years also said that: *Specifically, that is what determines the kind of behaviours you want the students to acquire especially when it comes to assessment.* Finally, Bismark (not the real name) another respondent who has been teaching the subject for the past five years said that: *Without the profile dimensions I don't think there will be better teaching because as I said earlier,... it entails how a teacher teaches and helps the students in learning and also*

*assessing the students so without the profile dimensions I don't think there will be teaching at all.*

From the responses, it could be inferred that respondents have some interesting views regarding the essence of Social Studies profile dimensions in the teaching and learning of the subject. Two of these interesting views were presented by Bismark (not the real name) and Doris (not the real name) when they said that: *without the profile dimensions I don't think there will be better teaching because as I said earlier, it entails how a teacher teaches and helps the students in learning and also assessing the students so without the profile dimensions I don't think there will be teaching at all and it helps the teacher to plan how to deliver the lesson and then how to assess the students respectively.* These interesting views are in agreement in the literature that a central aspect of the Social Studies syllabus is the concept of profile dimension that forms the basis for instruction and assessment [4]. This shows that most of the respondents interviewed responded that Social Studies profile dimensions are very

essential in the teaching and learning of the subject and that it behoves on every Social Studies teacher to inculcate them during lesson planning and delivery.

Furthermore, after the respondents had been interviewed, their lessons were observed in the classrooms as they were teaching. This was done to ascertain whether the data gathered during the interview period were in line with their classroom practices. All the 12 graduate Social Studies teachers' lessons were observed. With this, an observation checklist (Very Good, Good, Average, Below Average and Not Available) was used. The items under this research questions included; teachers' knowledge base of Social Studies profile dimensions and relatedness of knowledge presented and identified instructional behavioural objectives. Frequencies and percentages were used to compute items 1-2 in the observation checklist. In all 12 respondents (Social Studies teachers) lessons were observed and rated. The results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Observation of teachers' knowledge base of social studies profile dimensions.

Items	Very Good (%)	Good (%)	Average (%)	Below Average (%)	Not Available (%)	Total (%)
Teachers knowledge base about Social Studies profile dimensions	1 (8.3)	3 (25.0)	4 (33.3)	4 (33.3)	-	12 (100)
Relatedness of knowledge presented and identified instructional behavioural objectives	-	7 (58.3)	1 (8.3)	4 (33.3)	-	12 (100)

Source: Field Observation, December, 2017

Table 1 reveals that for item 1 which focuses on teachers' knowledge base about Social Studies profile dimensions, 1 (8.3%) out of the 12 respondents rated Very Good, 3 (25.0%) rated Good, 4 (33.3%) rated Average, 4 (33.3%) of the respondents rated Below Average and none of them rated Not Available. This indicates that majority of the respondents 8 (66.7%) did not exhibit in-depth knowledge about Social Studies profile dimensions as against 4 (33.3%) of the total respondents who demonstrated in-depth knowledge about the profile dimensions. Also, for item 2 which talks about the relatedness of knowledge presented and identified instructional behavioural objectives, the Table reveals that out of the total number of respondents, none of them rated Very Good or Not Available, but 7 (58.3%) out of the 12 teachers were rated Good, 1 (8.3%) rated Average and 4 (33.3%) rated Below Average. This indicates that on the objectives set for the lessons, 5 (41.7%) were not related to the lessons except 7 (58.7%) of the objectives set that were related to the lessons taught.

Results from research question 1 show that, most of the respondents did not have an in-depth knowledge base about Social Studies profile dimensions in senior high schools. This finding was more evident from the results obtained from the participants during the interview and the observation sessions.

However, the purpose of this research question was to find out how familiar the respondents were with the Social Studies profile dimensions as indicated in the Social Studies teaching syllabus for senior high schools and the importance, they attach to them. As indicated in the literature review, an effective teacher should be familiar with the profile dimensions of the subject he or she teaches which serve as a direction and guide in his or her instructional teaching.

These findings are supported by the view that individuals who are well prepared in content knowledge can move into the classroom with minimal training and be effective teachers [30]. On the same wavelength is this assertion that without a deep understanding of subject matter/content, teachers would be unable to generate accurate explanations or responses to students' questions [31]. Subject matter knowledge is critical to good teaching; teachers must be able to identify learner misconceptions and without a strong knowledge base, identifying and addressing learner misconceptions would not be possible [23, 24].

The implication here is that much is needed to assist graduate Social Studies teachers at the senior high schools to acquire the needed knowledge base of Social Studies profile dimensions and the subject matter required to enhance the

quality of teaching and learning of Social Studies in Ghanaian schools. The respondents' performance leaves much to be desired. Most of the graduate teachers teaching the subject lacked the necessary knowledge and skills to promote effective and efficient teaching and learning of the subject. Thus, the effect of this ineffectiveness of these teachers might result in moral indiscipline of the youth in the Ghanaian society. As indicated in the literature review, the essence of Social Studies is to bring about positive changes in the learners' behaviour and to enable them acquire the necessary tools - knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to solve both personal and societal problems that might confront them.

It is the profile dimensions that reflect in instructional behavioural objectives of every lesson that form the basis for the selection of content, teaching and learning activities and resources that would help bring about effective teaching and learning. This therefore means that effective teaching of Social Studies requires teachers of the subject to exhibit certain behaviours and practices which are relevant for the attainment of Social Studies profile dimensions. Thus, responses gathered from the respondents during the interviews confirmed what transpired during the observation where most of the respondents were not familiar with or did not possess in-depth knowledge about Social Studies profile dimensions based on how their lessons were taught.

## 5. Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

Most Social Studies teachers did not have in-depth knowledge about the Social Studies profile dimensions. It was realised that the sampled graduate Social Studies teachers at the senior high schools were not familiar with the Social Studies profile dimensions. Most of the sampled teachers had not been exposed to both content and pedagogical knowledge in Social Studies hence seen as untrained Social Studies teachers.

Most of the respondents did not possess both content and subject matter knowledge with respect to Social Studies profile dimensions except few who were directly exposed to the concept of profile dimensions while studying at the University. Hence, there are difficulties in teaching to attain the desired goal (s) and objectives of the subject. Thus, in order to educate students in Social Studies to become competent, reflective, concerned and participatory citizens capable of contributing their quota to the development of their societies and the nation, as well as minimising moral decadence in the society, the country requires more knowledgeable, competent and professionally committed teachers. These teachers are therefore expected to translate

theory into practice in order to meet the challenges confronting the nation and the world in general.

The implications for teaching and learning is that since the profile dimensions describe the underlying behaviours for teaching, learning and assessment, graduate Social Studies teachers not having an in-depth knowledge base about the profile dimensions will find it difficult to teach and assess their learners' learning outcomes in the teaching and learning process to achieve the desired goal (s) and objectives of the subject which is to help prepare learners to be well informed, concerned, decision makers and participatory citizens who are willing to help in solving personal and societal problems. With this, much is needed to assist graduate Social Studies teachers at the Senior High School level to be abreast with the profile dimensions in Social Studies to enhance quality teaching and learning of the subject that will result righting the wrongs in societies.

Based on the conclusions and the implications of the study, for effective teaching, learning and assessment of the subject, it is therefore recommended that, Social Studies teachers in the senior high schools should study the profile dimensions of the subject in details to enable them effectively employ its usage in the teaching and learning process. This will help to achieve the desired goal (s) and objectives of the subject introduction in the school curriculum in Ghana as espoused by Quashigah et al that "The varying conceptions through time and space indicated that Social Studies is seen as a subject introduced solely to right the wrong in society, and its teaching and learning must be centred on issues and how problems are solved to unearth youth with positive attitudinal building skills and behavioural change" [46].

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