

Social Studies Curriculum: Teachers' Conception and Efficacy Beliefs in Junior High Schools in Ghana

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Abstract

Social Studies Teachers' Conception and efficacy beliefs can never be underestimated in the evaluation of Junior High Schools curriculum in Ghana. The study focused on how teachers' conception of Social Studies affect their efficacy beliefs in teaching. The study adopted the descriptive survey design using quantitative approach. The population for the study comprised of all the 50 teachers teaching Social Studies in the Tano South District. Purposive and convenient sampling techniques were used to select the respondents for the study. The data for the study was collected using questionnaire and teacher sense of efficacy scale adapted from [1]. Frequency tables and percentages were used to analyse the data using SPSS. The study revealed that, a significant number of Social Studies teachers had no conception about what Social Studies is or ought to be. This position made teachers to find themselves in varied conceptions and definitions attributed to the subject. The study also concluded that, most of the Social Studies teachers involved in the study rated their level of efficacy very high in terms of classroom management, instructional strategy and student engagement. The study recommended that, Social studies teachers should dedicate enough time for preparation of lesson plans, teaching learning materials and other related activities that will make the teaching of the subject effective and also impact on the attitude of learners positively.

Keywords

Conception, Efficacy Beliefs, Social Studies, Junior High Schools, Ghana

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1. Introduction and Background

The article has the following arrangements: firstly, an introduction shows the background of themes important to the study; secondly, it presents a review of literature on Social Studies and the schools' curricula and the concept of teacher efficacy; thirdly, a methodology of the research is presented; results and their discussions are presented in the fourth part and finally the conclusions with recommendations

of the work are shown in the last chapter.

The relevance of education in the development of the individual and nations are well documented in the literature. Education enables individuals to fulfil aspirations aimed at achieving social, economic and political progress. It also enhances peoples' development of general reasoning faculties, causes values to change progressively and increases receptivity of new ideas and attitudes [2]. Education is an important tool that transforms and shapes individual, societal and national development.

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Rationale for Social Studies is a multi-disciplinary subject that aims to equip learners with knowledge, attitudes, values and skills that will enable them to become active, informed, innovative, and responsible citizens. Social Studies addresses the challenges or problems that confront and threaten the survival of the Ghanaian society. It does so, by providing the learner with the opportunity to apply concepts, theories and generalisations from a variety of relevant disciplines to analyse, investigate and come out with appropriate solutions to personal and societal problems. It provides an opportunity for learners to further explore their immediate environment and the world at large. Therefore, Social Studies specifically focuses on developing the learners' curiosity, critical thinking, problem-solving skills and competencies for personal development and leadership. Besides, it seeks to enhance communication and collaboration, creativity and innovation, digital literacy, cultural identity and global citizenship [3].

However, the philosophy of Social Studies curriculum will enable learners to develop skills and competencies through a combination of social constructivism and social realism. These theories emphasise learning as an active process where the learner constructs knowledge rather than acquiring it. Learners will take responsibility for the environment, appreciate the richness and the diversity of Ghana's culture. They will also be willing to take advantage of social changes relating to globalisation, technological advancement and digital literacy. It is envisioned that the curriculum will promote the development of a holistic worldview of learners to make them creative, honest and responsible citizens. It is expected that learners will demonstrate competencies in making independent and healthy choices regarding their personal development and well-being. By developing awareness of themselves, their immediate and wider environment, they become national and global citizens. Learners are to be guided to maximise the opportunities offered by new technologies to express their beliefs and further enhance their moral perspectives and values. The teacher should emphasise these important areas in the day-to-day learning as they are aimed at promoting higher order thinking among learners [3].

Social Studies aims at producing reflective, concerned and competent citizens, who will make informed decisions for individual and public good. The subject seeks to produce morally upright Ghanaians, who are responsible and capable of maintaining healthy lifestyles and preserving their environment for sustainability. Specifically, the subject will enable learners to:

- 1) explore and protect the environment
- 2) exhibit sense of belonging to the family and community

- 3) appreciate themselves as unique individuals
- 4) demonstrate responsible citizenship
- 5) develop attitudes for healthy and peaceful co-existence
- 6) ensure sustainable use of resources
- 7) develop sense of patriotism and national pride
- 8) make themselves globally competitive [3]

Notably, recent studies in Ghana revealed that most Social Studies teachers do not possess the pedagogical knowledge to efficiently teach the subject [4]. A research conducted in Secondi-Takoradi on Social Studies Teachers' Content Knowledge revealed that most teachers have inadequate content knowledge. This made them not able to understand the essence of the problems in the syllabus [5]. As a result, teachers could not select facts which would develop the civic competences of the learners. From the findings it can be deduced that though Social Studies has been taught for twenty-five years in Ghana, the nation has not fully benefited from it. For this reason, a study on "teacher trainees varying conceptions of Social Studies in the colleges of education in Ghana" published in *America Journal of Social Science Research*, recommended that, appropriate inferences, teaching resources and trained teachers for the subject should be given serious attention by the government for the intended achievement national goals of Social Studies [6].

It is imperative to state that the ability to come out with any action plan to remedy this situation demands that a diagnostic study of beliefs and sense of efficacy of Social Studies teachers be carried out. Teacher efficacy defined as a joint, simultaneous function of a teachers' analysis of the teaching task and his or her assessment or his or her personal teaching competence or skills [7]. They further stressed that in assessing self-perceptions of teaching competencies, the teacher judges' personal capabilities such as skills, knowledge, strategies or personality traits balanced against personal weaknesses or liabilities. The role teacher factors play in classroom change and improvement depend on how self-efficacy could mediate and influence teacher learning and pedagogical change [8]. A research study on teacher-trainees' sense of efficacy in implementing the Basic School Social Studies curriculum in Ghana published in *International Journal of Educational Research and Information Science* revealed that Social Studies has become indispensable since the subject introduced solely to right the wrong in society is taught mostly by graduates from the Colleges of Education (CoE) [9]. This posits that, a teacher efficacy belief has direct effect on teaching performance. Therefore, teacher efficacy beliefs play a phenomenal role in ensuring that curriculum objectives are attained.

Social Studies is a study of the problems of society [10].

Social Studies curriculum seeks to equip learners with positive attitudes that will enable them to function effectively in the society [3]. It appears the purpose of Social Studies is not being achieved as the skills and changes in learners are not being seen in them and might therefore lead to the relevance of the subject being questioned. This has resulted in different factors being used to explain the failure. Teachers' inadequate pedagogical competencies such as subject matter mastery, knowledge of instructional methods, and assessment techniques in Social Studies and the philosophy of teaching the subject should be looked as some of the factors said to be affecting the realization of the objectives of the subject [11-13]. The various philosophies relating to citizenship education, amalgamation of the social science and an approach to the teaching of the social sciences also appear to blur the realization of the subject's goal.

The internal belief and the subject knowledge of teachers is one of the central issues raised which is the efficacy beliefs of teachers. Many studies have been carried out on the limiting factors influencing the realization of the goals and objectives of social studies, but the issue of efficacy belief on the realization of the objectives of Social Studies is ignored [11, 12]. This study therefore sought to fill the gap by assessing how the subject's conception and the efficacy beliefs of teachers influence the realization of the objectives of teaching Social Studies in our schools. The purpose of the study is to examine the subject's conception and efficacy beliefs of teachers on the teaching of Social Studies. The study was guided by these two (2) research questions- 1. What is Social Studies teachers' conception of the subject? 2. "What is the efficacy beliefs Social Studies teachers' hold about the teaching of the subject"?

2. Review of the Literature

2.1. Teachers' Conception of Social Studies

Social Studies has its roots from the United States of America. Social Studies was introduced in America in the 1880s and was linked up with the activities of the American Historical Association until 1921 when the National Council of Social Studies was formed to circulate information on the current trends of the subject. By 1920, the subject had metamorphosed from being purely a study of history into a subject that aims at acquainting the youth with the skills needed to solving societal problems. In the 1930's the subject focused on human problems [10].

The beginning of Social Studies in America some years ago, became obvious that the America society was in a difficulty as a result of violence and all kinds of social disharmony, the youth were also becoming increasingly wayward while group

violence and child delinquency were flourishing [14]. Stakeholders of education in America advocated for the introduction of a subject in the school curriculum to address these problems and to produce good and responsible American citizens, resulting in the introduction of Social Studies in the school curriculum in America. Social Studies therefore originated from America in an attempt to find solution to social disharmony threatening the survival and integration of the youth due to social forces within the country, and the concerns and fear that Africa Americans and native Americans may not be able to fit into the society unless they understand the society and the social forces operated within it and ways to recognize and respond to social power [15].

However, Social Studies was introduced in Britain in the 1920s, and following the Hadow Report of 1926, it focused on how to equip the youth to become well trained adults in an industrialized society [10]. The development of Social Studies in Britain was for nation building out of its trade recession in the wake of its Industrial Revolution. The introduction of the subject had its shortfalls as the British Education system had some dissatisfaction in the 1950-60s when Social Studies, described as liberal Education in Britain, lost its early impact because it was focused on industrialization and dictatorship in changing society. The young learners in the States schools were taught to honour the Queen, to obey superiors and run away from every police officer [16].

It was the effort to review Social Studies in Britain that brought about Africa Social Studies Programme (ASSP) [10]. The Oxford Conference in 1967 and the Mombasa Conference of 1968 also influenced the study of Social Studies in Africa". The introduction of Social Studies in Ghana and the continent has its roots in the Mombasa Conference of 1968. In that year a group of newly independent African States met in Mombasa, Kenya, under the chairmanship of Dowuona Hammond, then Ghana's Minister of Education, to take a decision on previous exploratory conference on Social Studies. At the conference, they decided to introduce Social Studies in African schools and to use the subject as a tool in preparing citizens for the newly independent states in the African continent. An international organization called the African Social Studies Programme (ASSP) was set up to help African Countries to organize their own programme in Social Studies and to promote the subject across the continent including Ghana [14]. This led to the introduction of a new system of education, which shifted from the British subject-centred curriculum to an integrated curriculum. First, on an experimental basis in 1976 and nationwide in 1987 and emphasized an inquiry approach to teaching and learning

which laid emphasis on the attainment of affective objectives, and the development of vocational and creative skills, as well as the attainment of cognitive objectives [17]. It was anticipated that Social Studies, for example, would facilitate the development of more positive attitudes toward society and the environment among students [18].

Social Studies in Ghana according to the content of 2007 syllabus for JHS is the study of society and its problems. The subject throws more light on matters of the society (e.g. constitution and nation building; rights and responsibilities of the individual; the institution of marriage; self-identity, the youth and national development; education and social change; and others), whilst Nigeria basically deals with social issues. To him, Social Studies of America had grown from learning from purely history into a subject that aims at acquainting the youth with skills that can cause the necessary change in the citizen, whilst in Britain Social Studies is seen as inculcating industrial skills in the individual to catch-up with the needs of the industrial revolution. This shows that the conception of Social Studies will always dictate the philosophy of the subject [10].

Defining Social Studies has been problematic since its inception. Social Studies is caught up in ambiguity, inconsistency and contradictions that it represents a complex educational enigma, defying any final definition acceptable to all [19]. Social Studies is a subject whose definition has been in a constant state of flux". They backed their assertion with the fact that the subject has been defined in various ways by different writers, different commissions and different committees over the years. For this reason, they concluded that "there is no single universally accepted definition of Social Studies" [20]. Notwithstanding these varied definitions they have classified Social Studies into three schools of thought. Thus, Social Studies as an approach to the teaching of the Social Sciences, as the amalgamation of the Social Sciences and as citizenship education Social Studies defined as an approach of teaching [19]. Social Studies is the Social Sciences simplified for pedagogical purposes, distinguished by its method. Social Studies is an integrated interdisciplinary approach to the study of society and the environment [18]. In effect, what they mean is that the content of Social Studies must reflect its method of teaching, different from other subjects.

Another school of thought also views the subject as an amalgam, interdisciplinary and 'integrated and that, it is an outgrowth of the Social Sciences [19, 21, 22]. Social Studies gains some of its identity from the Social Sciences such as History, Political Science, Geography, Economics, Sociology, Anthropology and Psychology [23]. This is not different from the assertion that Social Studies is an interdisciplinary field of learning, drawing upon the concepts and means of the

Social Sciences and related areas [24]. The proponents of this conceptual approach therefore perceive Social Studies as a subject that draws together knowledge and content from Geography, History, Sociology, Anthropology and Civics in order to bring more powerful understanding of a central idea.

Others perceive the subject as citizenship education. The Curriculum Research and Development Division of Ghana currently referred to as National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) define Social Studies as "the study of the problems of society" [18]. The subject prepares the individual to fit into society by equipping him/her with knowledge about the culture and ways of life of their society, its problems, its values and its hopes for the future [18]. Another author asserted 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" [25]. The authors view of citizenship education is in line with what Quartey postulated Social Studies to be, as the study that equips the youth with tools necessary in solving personal and community related problems [10]. To them, the main emphasis of Social Studies as citizenship education is on developing the relevant knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will enable learners to make reflective decisions and act on them to solve both personal and societal problems. Social Studies as the study of man in society [26]. The same view is shared by the National Council for the Social Studies in a report that indicated Social Studies is understood to be those whose subject matter relates directly to the organization and development of human society and to man as a member of the social group. The report emphasizes that Social Studies deals with man in relation to his environment. This means man must be able to influence his environment to his benefit [27]. The authors stressed that Social Studies has the sole aim of developing civic competencies as its primary goal.

Citizenship Education is the development of the ideas, beliefs, habits, behaviours and attitudes of the individual so that citizens may become a useful member of the society and contribute their share for the up-liftment of the society [21]. This means that the main mission of this conceptual perspective is that Social Studies prepares students to be responsible, productive and concerned citizens with the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse democratic society in an interdependent world. This implies Social Studies deals with solving the problems of man. The notion that the subject must equip the individual with civic competence will enable him/her to live and to be lived with. In this direction their expectations are that the content and scope of the subject must be issue centred and problem

solving. If valid objectives are to be drawn from the various definitions given above, then each of them will have a different outline of content altogether. The confusion created by varying definitions could hinder the teaching and attainments of objectives. However, putting the various conceptions and explanations of Social Studies together, provide a definition that can be used to support any Social Studies instructional programme [24]. In their view, Social Studies could be seen as "an integration of broad field of learning, drawing upon the can summarily be seen as integration of concepts and processes of the social sciences and related areas; it features problem-focused inquiry, ethical decision making, and personal or civic action on issues vital to individuals and their society" [24]. Their definition has two implications. The first is the material that is studied (the content of Social Studies). This includes information, ideas, skills, generalizations, concepts, principles, issues, and inquiry procedures drawn from the social sciences - history, geography, government, civics, political science, economics, sociology, and anthropology. Others are literature, music and the visual and performing arts, religion and archaeology. These fields serve as resources for the Social Studies curriculum which blends and integrates them as and when necessary to provide learners with worthwhile experiences. The second implication is the purpose of Social Studies, which is citizenship education [24]. A survey of definitions of Social Studies reveals that there is general agreement that citizenship education is a crucial element and an important reason for Social Studies Education. As a result, teaching Social Studies holds a special hope for creating responsible citizens [28]. This shows that consensus definition and conception of Social Studies will help to sharpen its focus and enhance its growth in Ghana and the continent of Africa. However, it appears reaching consensus has been problematic.

Various studies have proven that lack of consensus about the definition of Social Studies have affected teachers as well as students with regards to what the subject is or ought to be. This has resulted in mixed results from the various studies that have been conducted especially in Ghana and Nigeria [12, 28]. For instance, a study on Pedagogical Content Knowledge of teachers revealed that teachers agree that Social Studies focus should be seen as citizenship education which aims at preparing the learners or young ones to become competent, concerned and reflective citizen in the country. In addition, teachers agreed that the scope of Social Studies should be based on solving issues or problems that threaten human survival [28]. This position was supported in a study titled "teachers' perception of teaching citizenship education to primary school children in Cape Coast" which revealed that, teachers' in the study area had knowledge in

citizenship education. On the contrary, other studies have proven that Social Studies teachers lack understanding of the subject they teach [12]. A study on Social Studies teachers' competency needs for effective implementation of Universal Basic Education Programme in Nigeria concluded that most Social Studies teachers' are incompetent in the knowledge of the subject, content as well as in teaching including communication skills [29]. Also, a research conducted in Secondi - Takoradi on Social Studies teachers' content knowledge in Senior High Schools reveals that most teachers lack content knowledge in Social Studies [11]. This made them not able to understand the essence of the problems in the syllabus. There is also the need for a quality assurance mechanism to be instituted in the teaching profession to ensure that teacher preparation programmes in the country are designed to focus on the needs of society. The classroom practices of teachers, as far as Social Studies is concerned, must be centred on the current knowledge and understanding of what the subject is; issues centred and problem solving [30].

Conceptualisations of the Social Studies curriculum have direct effects on what and how the subject is taught. The confusion created by varying definitions and perceived objectives hinders the teaching and attainments of the subject's goal-positive attitudinal development and behavioural change [6]. The goals of Social Studies have never been easy to define. This stems from the fact that various authorities in the field have tried to come out with the goals of the subject. Citizenship Education is the primary focus of Social Studies in the school curriculum which promotes desirable participatory citizenship [25]. The author further noted that "while the other curriculum areas also help students to attain some of the skills needed to participate in a democratic society, the Social Studies is the only curriculum area which has the development of civic competence and skills as its main goals" [25]. Similarly, the main goal of Social Studies is to help students to be able to make informed decisions for the purpose of solving personal and influencing public policy. It is clear that citizenship preparation remains the cardinal goal of Social Studies. Therefore, Social Studies curriculum implementers have a task of equipping learners with the social competencies required of effective citizens [31].

It is therefore being recommended that the gap between the Colleges of Education Social Studies curriculum and that of the Basic School be bridged by changing the Environmental / Social Studies curriculum in the colleges to reflect Citizenship Education / Social Studies at the Basic Schools. There is also the need for a quality assurance mechanism to be instituted in the teaching profession to ensure that teacher preparation programmes in the country are designed to focus

on the needs of society. The classroom practices of teachers, so far as Social Studies is concerned, must be centred on the current knowledge and understanding of what the subject is; issues centred and problem solving [30].

2.2. Teacher Efficacy of Social Studies

Self-efficacy defined as “people’s judgment of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance” [32]. He further explained that self-efficacy “is concerned not with the skills one has but with judgments of what one can do with whatever skills one possesses” [32]. Self-efficacy as “concerned with judgement of personal capability”. That is a belief that one is capable of performing in a certain manner to attain certain goals. Bandura argued that an individual’s own beliefs in their ability to achieve a task will be related to their actual success or failure in a given task. “...different people with similar skills or the same person under different circumstances may perform poorly, adequately or extraordinarily depending on fluctuations in their belief of personal efficacy” [32].

Teacher efficacy actually is a joint, simultaneous function of a teacher’s analysis of the teaching task and his or her assessment of his or her personal teaching competence or skill [1]. They stressed that, in assessing self-perceptions of teaching competence, the teacher judge’s personal capabilities such as skills, knowledge, strategies or personality traits balanced against personal weaknesses or liabilities in this particular teaching context [1]. Efficacious teachers are therefore concerned about students learning and will be prepared to put in their best to bring out the desired learning outcomes.

Research shows that people who are highly efficacious have the capability to show higher levels of effort and are resilient in their efforts, even in difficult and challenging situations [33]. Teachers who possess high efficacy characteristics will be able to step into difficult roles with the confidence and ability to change the student’s opinion about school and learning while at the same time cultivating a strong desire within the student to learn. These types of pedagogical strategies help students to become motivated, focused on learning, and succeed academically [34].

Teachers’ self-efficacy is a teacher’s belief that he or she can reach even difficult students to help them learn [35]. As a teacher, the number one goal is to allow the student to learn. With a strong set of skills and self-efficacy, teachers can assist students in the development of their cognitive capabilities. When discussing self-efficacy one must remember that the behaviour recognizes the world wide spread ability of the human being. Efficacy alternates based on the function it refers to. “Efficacy beliefs involve different

types of capabilities such as management of thought, affect, action, and motivation” [32]. According to research, the characteristics of efficacious teachers are:

- 1) Better organizations
- 2) Willingness to try new ideas to meet student’s needs.
- 3) Being less critical of students whenever they make mistakes, more positive about teaching.
- 4) A reluctance to refer students to special education services.
- 5) More likely to implement positive classroom management strategies [34]

Therefore, teachers with high levels of self – efficacy are linked to high student achievement; these teachers have the ability to work hard under difficult circumstances and to motivate students to attend school and do well [36]. However, studies that investigated the effects of teaching efficacy or performance recognized the need to see what propels teaching efficacy recommends that further investigation on novice teachers’ self-confidence at different times and to note consistency patterns, or growth as it relates to teacher efficacy attributes [37]. In order to distinguish why self-efficacy levels, differ, researchers must first have a thorough understanding of the sources of self-efficacy [32].

2.2.1. Sources of Teacher Efficacy

Individual’s self-efficacy is not static traits. Indeed, efficacy beliefs are the product of cognitive processing [32]. However, four sources of efficacy beliefs: enactive mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and physiological should be considered for effective teaching. Enactive mastery experiences or performance accomplishments are the most important source of efficacy beliefs [32]. As individuals experience success in a particular situation, expectations are raised with regards to future success in a similar situation. Enactive mastery experiences provide the individual with the evidence that he or she “can do whatever it takes to succeed” [32]. However, repeated failures lower efficacy expectations. Individuals create self-knowledge structures with regards to their efficacy beliefs. These beliefs are tested each time the individual experiences a situation relating to that efficacy beliefs. Bandura asserts that it is not the success or failures themselves that change efficacy beliefs, but the premium the individual places on the various factors that contributed to these events. In Bandura’s view, the strength of existing efficacy beliefs, the task difficulty, contextual factors, the effort put into the task and the biases in individuals’ focuses on the successful or poor performances are all that can affect the potency of enactive mastery experiences [32].

The second source of efficacy belief is learning through

vicarious experiences. This is based on the opinion that people judge their own capabilities in comparison to the capabilities of others. That is, seeing someone else perform a task gives an individual the confidence that they too can achieve at the same levels because individuals assess their capabilities in relation to what others have achieved. For such domains, individuals compare themselves to models who they perceive as similar to themselves [32]. Notably, observing models (classmates, colleague teachers, competitors, etc.) that are believed to be similar in ability or competence level can serve as an important source of information for self-evaluation, especially when the observer levels familiarities in the modelled task [38]. Models similar to oneself succeed, individuals can persuade themselves that they can also perform successfully [32]. However, if a similar associate fails to perform an individual's own efficacy beliefs tend to lower [39]. Bandura noted that efficacy is elevated more when there is not a huge disparity between an individual's own beliefs about his or her capabilities and what they are told about their capabilities by the significant other [32].

The fourth source of efficacy belief information is an individual's physiological and affective states. Depending on the context in which these physiological activities occur, individuals may relate the causes to different sources of physiological indicators such as heart rate, trembling, sweating, etc. come into play [32]. For instance, sweating during an interview could not be interpreted as due to the room temperature or ascribed to feeling or stress or lack of confidence. Bandura further argues that pre-existing efficacy beliefs can bias the cognitive processing of physiological and affective states so an individual with positive views of their ability is less likely to interpret sweating in an interview as a sign of their inability to cope with them as compared with an individual with a low sense of efficacy. Affective features such as mood can also play a part in efficacy beliefs, with positive moods tending to produce positive efficacy beliefs and negative moods reducing perceived efficacy [40].

Teachers' efficacy beliefs can be enhanced through the effective combination of efficacy information from different sources because each source of efficacy information alone may contribute in a certain way to the enhancement of teachers' efficacy beliefs [41]. Therefore, it is best for research investigating teachers' efficacy beliefs to consider the various sources of efficacy information. Sense of efficacy in implementing the Basic School Social Studies curriculum in Ghana has become indispensable since the subject was introduced solely to right the wrong in society. Social Studies hold it a duty to help students have better, more realistic ideas about the multiple realities of what constitutes the subject in the real world since they

(teachers) influence what is taught [9].

2.2.2. Measurement of Teacher Efficacy

Ever since researchers first became interested in teacher efficacy beliefs as a possible influence upon which students' achievement and success of educational interventions, the measurement of teacher efficacy has strongly featured in the literature [1]. Varying ways of measuring teacher efficacy emerged in an attempt of improving upon the validity and reliability of the existing tools.

The first attempt at measuring teacher efficacy was done by the RAND cooperation with a five point Likert scale items rated from strongly agree to strongly disagree. They developed two items based on the locus of control theory framework to assess teachers' personal beliefs about their teaching ability and whether or not teachers can overcome external factors to increase student motivation and performance [42]. The teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale is considered to capture a wide range of teaching tasks and as such valid and reliable assessment of teacher efficacy beliefs. It can be used to measure three dimensions of teacher efficacy: instructional strategies, student engagement, and classroom management. Using the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale in research could help improve on understanding of teacher efficacy beliefs [1].

3. Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey design using quantitative approach. The population consisted of all Social Studies teachers in Ghana. The target population for the study consisted of all Social Studies teachers in the Junior High Schools (JHS) in the Tano South District. These teachers have taught the subject for so many years hence they have the expected subject conception, efficacy beliefs and experience in the selected district. There were fifty (50) Social Studies teachers at the JHS level in the district. Non-probability sampling technique (purposive and convenient sampling techniques) was used for the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select all the fifty (50) teacher trainees teaching Social Studies during their teaching practice period. While the district and forty-one schools were conveniently sampled for this study.

The main instrument used to gather data was questionnaire. The data gathered was analysed using the Statistical Product using Service Solutions (SPSS). The researchers coded each questionnaire for identification before scoring into frequency tables and percentages. The first set of questionnaire made up of sixteen (16) closed ended items was used to solicit information on the teachers' conception of Social Studies. The questionnaire sought to answer research question 1

“What is Social Studies teachers’ conception of the subject”?. The researchers sought to find out teachers understanding of Social Studies in the context of the conceptual definition of Social Studies in the Basic School Social Studies curriculum. Data gathered from research question one (1) were analysed, using frequencies and percentages to find out the teachers’ conception of Social Studies teaching in JHS. Data gathered to answer research question two (2) in order to find out teachers’ sense of efficacy belief in students’ engagement, classroom management and instructional strategies were also analysed using mean, standard deviation and ranges. The individual respondents scores were summed up and calculated for percentages in ranges from 8-15 very low, 16-23 low, 24-32 high, and 33-40 very high. The second set was teacher efficacy scale made up of twenty-four (24) items was used to answer research question 2, “What is the efficacy beliefs Social Studies teachers’ hold about the teaching of the subject?” The respondents were to assess their own sense of efficacy beliefs in Student Engagement, Classroom Management and Instructional Strategies. It was a teacher sense of efficacy scale developed by [1]. They had advised earlier that a valid measure of teacher efficacy must consider both personal competence and an analysis of the task with certain resources and constraints in a particular teaching context. A twenty-four (24) item Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale was adapted extracting three variables, each with eight (8) items, namely, Student Engagement, Classroom

Management and Instructional Strategies. A Teacher Sense of Efficacy scale was selected for this study because it is a self-report measure which guarantees confidentiality and therefore more likely to elicit more openness in response, with regard to the kind of information required from respondents. Data obtained through the questionnaire was measured on the Likert scale. To each statement, on the instrument respondents’ responses ranged from 1-Nothing, 2-Very Little, 3-Some influence, 4-Quite a bit of influence, 5- A great deal of influence.

4. Findings and Discussions

This section presents findings on these two (2) research questions. 1. What is social studies teachers’ conception of the subject? 2. What is the efficacy beliefs Social Studies teachers’ hold about the teaching of the subject”?

4.1. Teachers’ Conception of Social Studies

One of the main objectives of the study was to assess the extent of Social Studies teachers’ conception of the subject. The first set of questionnaire made up of sixteen (16) closed ended items was used to solicit information on the teachers’ conception of Social Studies to answer the research question one (1) for the study. Frequencies and percentages were constructed to achieve this objective. The results are presented in the Table below:

Table 1. Results of Conception of Social Studies Teachers’ about the Subject.

Subject conception	Citizenship education	Amalgamation of the social sciences	No conception
Scores	26 (52%)	14 (28%)	10 (20%)

Source: Field Data, 2017. N=50

Table 1 provides respondents view of Social Studies Teachers Conception of the subject. The results show that out of the 50 respondents, 26 (52%) conceived Social Studies as citizenship education while 10 (20%) of them had no specific conception about what actually the subject is all about hence they provided mixed answers regarding their conception about Social Studies. Once more than fifty percent of the respondents have conceived the subject as citizenship education, it is likely to impact positively on the teaching and learning, hence it will help achieve the curriculum goals of the subject. Though the 20% who had no specific subject conception are in minority, yet in absolute terms they are significant. Since they are professionally trained Social Studies teachers, they are expected to have a conception of the subject they teach. Therefore, there is the need to re-orient them in the subject. The 28% who conceived the subject as amalgamation of the Social Sciences are likely to teach the subject wrongly and the consequences will be severe on students’ performance and attitudinal change.

Therefore, there is the need to reorient them to the nature and philosophy of Social Studies in Ghana as contained in the JHS Social Studies Curriculum. The finding confirms the recent studies conducted on Teacher Trainees’ Varying Conception of Social Studies in the Colleges of Education in Ghana which revealed that, teacher trainees hold different conception of the subject. The study therefore concluded that differences exist in the conceptualisation of Social Studies as Citizenship Education and that mentees conceptions formed about Social Studies will live with them, and might influence their classroom practices [43].

However, it is instructive to state that majority (52%) of the respondents are in agreement that Social Studies is Citizenship Education. This standpoint is consistent with other studies that have been conducted in Ghana recently [12, 28]. A study on Pedagogical Content Knowledge of teachers revealed that teachers agree that Social Studies focus should be seen as Citizenship Education which aims at preparing the learners or young ones to become competent, concerned and

reflective citizen in the country [28]. In addition, teachers agreed that the scope of Social Studies should be based on solving issues or problems that threaten human survival. The finding above also, confirms the philosophical position of [20, 25]. In the context of Ghana, Social Studies is Citizenship Education which aims at producing reflective, competent, responsible and participatory citizens [14]. This goes to support the view of the National Council for Social Studies in America 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 [3]. There is general agreement that Citizenship Education is a crucial element and an important reason for Social Studies Education [20]. As a result, teaching Social Studies holds a special hope for creating responsible citizens.

Though majority of the respondents are of the view that Social Studies is Citizenship Education, a significant number (28%) of the respondents conceived the subject as amalgamation of the social sciences or had no specific conception (20%) about what Social Studies is or ought to be. Social Studies teachers in the Secondi-Takoradi

Metropolis do lack content knowledge in Social Studies and this made them unable to understand the essence of the problem in the syllabus [5]. Because of this, they lack understanding of the general objectives of the subject, hence, could not select facts to address the attainment of the goals and objectives of the subject. If a teacher is largely ignorant or uninformed, he can do much harm [44]. When teachers possess inaccurate information or conceive knowledge in narrow ways, they may pass on these ideas to their students.

4.2. Efficacy Beliefs of Social Studies Teachers

The efficacy beliefs Social Studies teachers hold about the subject were assessed using the teacher efficacy scale [1]. This part of the analysis is based on the research question 2- "What is the efficacy beliefs Social Studies teachers' hold about the teaching of the subject"? The efficacy beliefs were assessed in three main aspects of Teaching-Student Engagement, Instructional Strategies and classroom management. Table 2 displays the summary of the results obtained from the assessment of the teachers' efficacy beliefs in the teaching of Social Studies.

Table 2. Efficacy Beliefs Social Studies Teachers' hold about the Teaching of the Subject.

Variables	Very low	Low	High	Very high
Overall Teacher efficacy	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	26 (52%)	23 (46%)
Student engagement	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	23 (46%)	27 (54%)
Instructional strategies	2 (4%)	3 (6%)	12 (24%)	33 (66%)
Classroom management	0 (0%)	7 (14%)	15 (30%)	28 (56%)

Source: Field Data, 2017 N=50

Table 2 presents the results of efficacy beliefs Social Studies teachers' hold about the teaching of the subject in the three main categorized areas (Student Engagement, Instructional Strategies and Classroom Management). The results are in the ranges with 8-15 ranked very low, 16-23 low, 24-32 high and 33-40 very high. The results show that majority of the Social Studies teachers rated their sense of efficacy beliefs in teaching Social Studies high (52%). Also, all the three subscales of teachers' efficacy beliefs, which is student engagement, instructional strategies and classroom management were rated very high (54%, 66% and 56%) respectively. Cumulatively the efficacy belief of the respondents was high. This clearly shows that teachers have high sense of efficacy in all the three subscales.

For instance, a study on Self-Efficacy of Senior High School Teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis in terms of the instructional strategies, classroom management and student engagement subscales using the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale by Tschannen-Moran indicated a relatively higher mean score and this indicated that teachers had a better self-efficacy in devising instructional strategies, managing the

classroom and as engaging students as well [45]. The fact that teachers' self-efficacy belief was found to be high indicated that they had a strong belief about adequate knowledge and skills of effective teaching behaviours with respect to instructional strategies, classroom management and student engagement. This was supported by the previous studies on examining the relationships between high school teachers' wellbeing and their efficacy, reported a relatively high score on teachers' efficacy subscales [46]. The finding of the researchers is consistent with overall teachers' indicated relatively higher self-efficacy in both studies [45].

The finding on the Student Engagement shows that majority of the Social Studies teachers (54%) confirmed to effectively engage their students. The result generally shows that teachers hold positive efficacy beliefs in teaching the subject through student engagement. The overall computed mean and standard deviation of (M=4.23, SD=1.14) which is more than test value of 3.0 gives that statistical evidence. Considering the individual items, the results show that the selected Social Studies teachers believe that they have a role to play through engaging difficult pupils during Social Studies lessons.

With respect to the Instructional Strategies, the results indicate that most of the Social Studies teachers (66%) claimed to effectively use Instructional Strategies. This result is consistent with that of the teachers' beliefs through student engagement. The results from the study gives ample evidence to believe that teachers in the course of instructional periods, can use their efficacy beliefs in Social Studies to assist pupils. The overall mean and standard deviation of ($M=3.53$, $SD=.92$) summaries the results. This also supports the assertion that teachers with higher efficacy levels are more likely to persevere in their attempts to reach learning goals when they encounter obstacles, are more prone to experiencing effective instructional strategies that represent a challenge and are more willing to run risks in their classrooms [48]. A study on elementary teachers' self-efficacy beliefs postulated that, using the responsive classroom approach, an instructional strategy involving classroom methods aimed at actively engaging students in learning [49]. These methods incorporated "caring into the daily routine as well as providing a proactive approach to discipline that helps children acquire self-control and take responsibility for their actions [49]. With this approach, students acquire self-assessment skills that influence how they evaluate and modify their thoughts, particularly if they are displaying undesirable behaviours. Self-directed learning is supplemented with instructional social influences that affect children's beliefs of their cognitive efficacy [32].

With regard to Classroom Management the Social Studies teachers largely (56%) proved that they effectively manage their classrooms to maximize learning. To corroborate whether Social Studies teachers hold positive Efficacy Beliefs about the Teaching of the Subject in the quest of their Classroom Management, the results shows that most Social Studies teachers hold the belief that Social Studies can be used to manage the classroom. The overall mean and standard deviation of ($M=3.74$, $SD=.937$) gives that clear indication when the questionnaire items were analyzed individually. Teachers create an excellent classroom climate and achieve superior pupil progress largely by displaying more professional characteristics at higher levels of sophistication within a very structured learning environment [50]. Teachers who were highly efficacious in classroom management favoured the mutually focussed classroom management styles of integration and compromise, indicating that they desired a proactive approach in handling student teacher conflict. The responses provided by the respondents support the existing findings above that highly efficacious teacher's (Social Studies teachers) are more willing to take personal responsibility for addressing student's behavioural issues with individual students than are teachers with low efficacy [51].

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study revealed that, the majority of Social Studies teachers teaching in the Junior High Schools in Ghana are in agreement that Social Studies is citizenship education. This is important because having a positive conception about Social Studies as a teacher is one sure way of making positive impact with regards to achieving the curriculum goals of the subject. The study also revealed that, a significant number of Social Studies teachers had no conception about what Social Studies is or ought to be. The position these teachers find themselves in can be attributed to the varied conceptions and definitions attributed to the subject. The study also concluded that, most of the Social Studies teachers involved in the study rated their level of efficacy very high in terms of classroom management, instructional strategy and student engagement. Thus, Social Studies teachers irrespective of their academic and professional background and the number of years teaching Social Studies gave high rating to their efficacy. This implies that Social Studies teachers generally perceive their ability to execute the teaching of the subject.

It is recommended that, Social Studies teachers should dedicate enough time for preparation of lesson plans, teaching learning materials and other related activities that will make the teaching of the subject effective and also impact on the attitude of learners positively. To achieve this, extensive reading is a prerequisite. Teachers must therefore dedicate enough time reading and to ensure adequate preparation, teachers need at least three basic reading materials (the syllabus/curriculum, textbook and the teacher's guide) to prepare for lessons.

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