

# Mentees' Social Studies Curriculum Conceptions and Their Classroom Practices in the Junior High Schools (JHSs) in Ghana

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## Abstract

*Researching* on Colleges of Education (CoE) final year teacher-trainees' (mentees) Social Studies curriculum conceptions and their classroom practices in the Junior High Schools (JHS) in Ghana has become indispensable since the subject introduced solely to right the wrong in society is taught mostly by diploma teachers from the country's thirty-eight public Colleges of Education. Qualitatively, interpretative research technique was carefully chosen for this study. Non-probability sampling method was used. Classroom observation and interview outcomes of teacher-trainees were triangulated for consistency. Ratings of the observation were put into weighted average. *The* study revealed that School Based Assessment (SBA) was essentially not focused on attitudes and values; that is, affective skills development. Assessments were of mainly lower level of understanding like knowledge and comprehension. For the teaching of social studies to makeover, it is recommended that Social Studies tutors of CoE should hold it a duty to help students have better, more realistic ideas about the multiple realities of what constitutes Social Studies in the real world since they (teachers) influence what is taught.

## Keywords

Conceptions, Curriculum, Classroom Practices, Social Studies, Teacher-Trainees, Junior High Schools (JHS), College of Education

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## 1. Introduction

This paper presents the outcome of the Colleges of Education final year teacher-trainees' Social Studies curriculum conceptions and their classroom practices in the Junior High Schools in Ghana. The paper is structured into five (5) main sections namely; the Introduction, Review of the Literature, Methodology, Findings and Discussion and the Conclusion. The first section introduces the structure of the paper, the context and aims and objectives of the paper. The literature review section reviews the relevant literature on issues pertaining to teachers' curriculum conceptions and its

influence on curriculum implementation in Social Studies. The methodology section presents a broad description of the methodology and procedures adopted in the conduct of the study. Findings resulting from the study are presented and discussed in the section following the methodology and conclusions with recommendation.

Quality teacher education has been seen as a crucial factor for effective educational outcomes in moving the nation forward. This shows that the development of education could not be successfully done without looking at the teacher and the training to be acquired. This indicates that teacher training in Ghana should be given priority and subjects like

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Social Studies taught in Colleges of Education should be geared towards nation building (Quashigah, Dake, Bekoe, Eshun, & Bordoh, 2014).

An outcome of a research by Bekoe and Eshun (2013a:44) on Social Studies curriculum feuding and implementation challenges in Ghana, revealed that "Teacher Training Institutions subscribe and use a particular conception of Social Studies curriculum for the production of Social Studies education graduates". This is further buttressed by Quashigah *et al.* (2014:11) that "College of Education (CoE) in Ghana use a particular conception of Social Studies for the production of Social Studies teachers, which is very different from that of the Junior High School (JHS)... Although both the CoE and JHS Social Studies curricula see the subject as an integration of knowledge, the point of contention has been the nature and acceptable level of integration." To them, the foregoing implies that a gap is being created in the knowledge and the ideal practices of newly qualified teachers from the colleges of education.

This suggests that the way Social Studies is taught need to get a makeover and be woven around relevant issues that will unearth positive behavioural change in learners. Eshun and Mensah (2013a:83) assert that "Social Studies should be taught as a holistic subject, which should reflect behavioural change in students and not facts from other social sciences. Social Studies teachers should stress on teaching of skills more than the factual content. The main role of the Social Studies teacher is to emphasize the development of relevant knowledge, positive attitudes, value and problem solving skills of students." This calls for the need of harmonizing all Social Studies curricular documents to reflect problem solving.

This notwithstanding, so many Social Studies teachers only teach by lecturing and expect rote memorisation from their students. This happens often because of the "overwhelming amount of material contained in a typical state Social Studies curriculum framework" (Vogler & Virtue, 2007: 55). One main reason teachers have to cover so much information is because of high stakes testing. Researchers have found that "teachers under the pressure of high stakes testing tend to increase their dependency on teacher-centred instructional practices (e.g. lecture) and the superficial coverage of content driven textbooks" (Vogler & Virtue, 2007:56). High stakes testing has caused teachers to move away from student-centred approaches "such as discussion, role-play, research papers, and cooperative learning" because they need to learn "just the facts" because that is what the tests cover (Vogler & Virtue, 2007:55).

What is disturbing about these facts is that research has shown that students learn more from student-centred

approaches. Eshun and Mensah (2013b:185) assert that, "teaching Social Studies is stressed to be done in student-centred techniques and strategies." The authors, further stressed that, brainstorming, role-playing, simulation, discussion and debate were the major techniques stressed by both Colleges of Education curriculum and the JHS Social Studies syllabus in Ghana. This makes information becomes more meaningful to them; therefore, they retain it for longer periods of time. Cuthrell and Yates (2007) found that Social Studies content should be in-depth with lessons and activities. The type of lessons an educator teaches is based on the conception of the subject and the philosophy of teaching and learning. Each teacher should possess philosophy which "provides guidance and direction in choosing objectives, learning activities, and assessment procedures" (Ediger, 2007:18).

In Ghana, according to Quashigah *et al.* (2014:3) "the teaching syllabus for Social Studies prepares the individual by equipping him or her with knowledge about the culture and ways of life of their society, its problems, its values and its hopes for the future." These clearly show that the ultimate aim or objective of integrated Social Studies is Citizenship Education.

The issue has been this, "although Social Studies is seen as an integrated body of knowledge of the social sciences, there is an issue of acceptable level of integration" (Bekoe & Eshun, 2013a:43). As a result of this, "teachers have varied conceptions about Social Studies as an amalgamation of the social sciences, citizenship education, reflective inquiry or problem solving" (Bekoe & Eshun, 2013b:92).

This paper has become necessary because according to Kankam, Bekoe, Ayaaba, Bordoh and Eshun (2014) curriculum differences seem to be evidenced in the Social Studies scope of content for Colleges of Education and how the JHS teaching syllabus for Social Studies is structured in Ghana. The clear curricular difference is seen as a problem in a sense that Social Studies syllabus they will use to teach at the JHS will not be in consonance with what they were taught while in college. There was therefore the need to conduct a study that will examine the Colleges of Education final year teacher-trainees' Social Studies curriculum conceptions and their classroom practices in the JHS in Ghana.

The purpose of the study was to explore the Colleges of Education final year teacher-trainees' Social Studies curriculum conceptions and their classroom practices in the JHSs in Ghana. The research was guided by this question-What are the classroom practices of the final year teacher-trainees in the JHSs in Ghana as a result of their Social Studies curriculum conceptions? The research covered three

(3) public Colleges of Education in the Western Region out of the thirty-eight (38) public colleges in Ghana. In addition, the study covered only the Social Studies curriculum at the Colleges of Education, the JHS and the final year teacher-trainees. All the colleges offering the general programme have homogenous social studies curriculum and population characteristics.

## 2. Review of the Literature

Defining what should be in the curriculum plans for the classroom requires answering the questions (1) who should determine what is taught?, and (2) what material should be taught? It would appear that there are a limited number of options available to curriculum developers in answering these questions. Who determines the curriculum can only be one or more of the following: (a) students' needs or wants, (b) teachers' knowledge and expertise, or (c) government's policies in response to society's problems or issues. The options for determining the substance of curriculum relates to either (a) important content, such as what make-up citizenship education or (b) important processes, such as knowing how to learn. Many studies have explored how teachers conceive of various subjects, including, Social Studies, Mathematics, English language, History etc. impact on curriculum implementation (Calderhead, 1996). Studies have shown that teachers develop a subject understanding that is "broad and deep, enabling them to facilitate the building of similar connections in the minds of others" (Calderhead, 1996:716). A reason for looking at Social Studies curriculum is that most teachers are not just delivery mechanisms or conduits for curriculum; rather they are creators or makers and implementers of curriculum (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992).

Cheung (2000) has argued that orientations to curriculum (a) explain why teachers emphasise certain topics, (b) clarify the real meaning or intent of curriculum documents, and (c) influence both teaching profession and curriculum development. In general, studies of teachers' understanding of the subjects they teach have shown those conceptions affect the way teachers teach and assess (Ertmer, 2005; Quashigah, Eshun & Mensah). Researchers have argued that teachers' conceptions of curriculum affect the content of curriculum implementation (Bekoe & Eshun, 2013; Bekoe, Kankam, Ayaaba, Eshun & Bordoh, 2014).

Research studies of (Bekoe & Eshun, 2013c; Quashigah, Eshun & Mensah, 2013) conclude that teachers' conception of a subject or a curriculum would shape their perceived curriculum and therefore their implemented curriculum. This implies that teachers' conception is of high importance in the implementation process. It is therefore useful to inquire into

the characteristics of Colleges of Education final year teacher-trainees' Social Studies curriculum conceptions and their classroom practices in the JHS in Ghana.

An article by Bekoe and Eshun (2013:44a) on Social Studies curriculum feuding and implementation challenges in Ghana, revealed that "Teacher Training Institutions subscribe and use a particular conception of Social Studies curriculum for the production of Social Studies education graduates". The implication here is that teachers may come to conceptualize the subject differently based on how they will perceive the scope of content of the subject. It shows clearly that "there are confusing arrays of conceptual perspectives concerning the aims, nature and content of Social Studies and that cultivation of a clearer conception of the subject in Ghana has become very necessary" (Bekoe & Eshun, 2013b:93).

This calls for effective teacher who will assess his / her teaching and learning outcomes bearing in mind the general aims of social studies in the school curriculum in Ghana. With this Eshun, Bordoh, Bassaw, and Mensah (2014:47) emphasise that "effective formative assessor requires someone who has the necessary depth of content knowledge of the subject s/he is teaching". This implies that Social Studies can be taught and assessed best by a teacher who is highly abreast with scope of content knowledge of the subject curriculum.

The fore-going really shows that there is therefore the need for a national pathway to curriculum design, development and implementation in the broad scope of the content of social studies. This has become necessary because a findings of research conducted by Bekoe and Eshun (2013c:111) shows that teachers varied conceptions about Social Studies as an amalgamation of the social sciences, citizenship education, reflective inquiry or problem solving have influence on their classroom practices. This is further supported by Quashigah, Eshun and Mensah (2013:84) that the pedagogical content knowledge of Social Studies teachers do influence the way they assess their lessons.

## 3. Methodology

Qualitatively, interpretative research technique was carefully chosen for this study. Triangulation was used to test the consistency of findings obtained through the observation and the interview conducted. The observation ratings were as follows: *Absent (1)*, *Weak (2)*, *Average (3)*, *Good (4)*, *Very Good (5)*, and *Excellent (6)*. The population for this study included all final year teacher-trainees offering the general programme for Diploma in Basic Education (DBE) certificate in the three Colleges, namely Enchi, Holy Child, and the Wiawso Colleges of Education in the Western Region of the Republic of Ghana.

Non-probability sampling method (purposive and convenience sampling techniques) was used to select the sample of districts, colleges and respondents for the study. In all there are thirty-eight (38) public Colleges of Education in Ghana. Thirty final-year teacher-trainees: ten from each of the three colleges were observed in a classroom setting while they teach and also interviewed after their lessons

#### 4. Findings and Discussions on Trainees' Social Studies Conceptions and Their Classroom Practices

The main objective of this section is to establish whether the differences in conceptions and curricula structures of Social Studies have differential impact on the classroom practices of final year teacher-trainees on teaching practice at the Junior High School (JHS) level. Observation checklists of twenty-three (23) items were used to observe Social Studies final year teacher-trainees teaching the subject at the JHS level on two different occasions. While observing teacher-trainees and pupils during lessons, the researchers recorded and wrote down salient points. To ascertain whether there was consistency, outcomes from the observation were cross-checked with the responses given by trainees when they were interviewed. Thus, for clarifications of ratings given, checklists were ticked based on what was observed, documented and the interviews conducted.

For the observation checklist to be in line with effective Social Studies teaching it was based on the scope of a number of scholars. Some of the checklists were created; others were adopted and modified to suit the nature of the research. Teachers' sense of efficacy scale were modified from Megan Tschannen-Moran and on what Smith and Ragan (1999), Bednar and Levie (1993), Zimbardo and Leippe (1991), Wetzell, Radtke and Stern (1994), and Simonson and Maushak (2001), had drawn on findings from a number of studies to create a series of guidelines for designing effective instructional approaches for right attitudinal change, developing positive attitude, values and skills in learners. Some of the units under which topics were selected from the JHS Social Studies syllabus, taught by mentees and observed by the researchers in the three Colleges are significance of some natural features of the earth; population growth and development in Ghana; government and society; promoting political stability in Ghana; problems of development in Ghana; sustainable national development; and the youth and discipline. The observation ratings, and interviews are discussed below:

Responses from the item – *Lesson focuses on desired*

*behaviour by respected role model; Teacher uses modelling* shows that most of the mentees observed were not using modelling, for instance when this topic “the concept of discipline, and identifying activities of indiscipline in society” was observed it was realised that, those who taught the topic were not citing examples of personalities who were disciplined and whose life need to emulated in society. If Social Studies are seen as an attitudinal subject then lessons of that nature must focus on desired behaviour by respected role model.

Item 2 which is - *Lesson presentation focuses on how to practice desired behaviour; why some things must not be repeated in life* shows a weighted average of 2.2 indicating Weak rating. Observing mentees on the topic “examine the factors that promote the operation of democracy” which is one of the ideals by which one can practice some desired behaviours like respect of the rights of people. It was realised that they were not up to the task of teaching and explaining properly the following: a good and workable constitution; respect for the rights and freedoms of the people; observance of the rule of law; the existence of political parties; and free and fair elections.

Item 3 which is - *Teacher-trainee uses most effective persuasive messages in a credible manner that gets students to think about an issue or object in concrete, and vivid images that have definite implications for behaviour* shows a weighted average of 1.4 indicating Absent. Teacher-trainees observed were also interviewed for proper clarification of ratings given them by asking this question - *Must Social Studies teacher use credible persuasive messages to get students to think about an issue or object in concrete, vivid images that have definite implications for behaviour? Give reasons for your answer.* With the above question, the respondents have the following to say: Kweku Abeiku, (not the real name) said “no why should I teach always by using persuasions...will that make my pupils learn...then the very day they will see I am not using it...means they will not learn...also, because the JHS pupils are matured they can learn without real objects...Concrete materials usage must be concentrated at the early childhood stage of education and the primary schools”. However, Kwamena, (not the real name) said “yes because persuasive messages and real objects can make students to think about issues under discussions in a concrete manner...This makes the lesson real and practical, hence reduce teacher's talking time in lesson presentation and thereby make pupils to be involved in the lesson delivery”. Mansa, (not the real name) said “yes because the use of concrete materials and creating persuasive messages can create a conducive atmosphere in class which can propel students to contribute to classroom activities...This helps students to understand topics treated

*better*". The findings show that most of the mentees observed were rated Absent on the usage of credible persuasive messages to get students to think about an issue or object in concrete, vivid images that have definite implications for behaviour. The varying reasons given in the interviews conducted did not give a full support for the classroom activities observed.

Item 4 which is - *Teacher-trainee uses follow-up activities in lesson presentation* shows a weighted average of 2.4 indicating Weak. Mentees observed were also interviewed for proper clarification of ratings given them by asking this question - *Should Social Studies teacher use follow-up activities that have definite implications for behaviour and why?* With this question, Francis (not the real name) has this to say "*the use of follow-up activities in teaching can help a lot... this can help pupils understand things taught very well...the need for re-call is brought to the fore*". Edward, (not the real name) has this to say "*yes, because without asking your students questions on what you think they know... How will you get to know if they really got what you taught within the day or a day before that lesson?*". The assertions made during the interviews on the theme supports the observation, especially as mentees were observed using previous relevant knowledge especially on what they had already taught their pupils in introducing their lessons.

Item 5 which is - *Teacher-trainee uses open-ended questions in lesson presentation* shows that most of them were not seen using open-ended questions in their lesson delivery. Mentees observed were also interviewed for proper clarification of ratings given them by asking this question - *Should Social Studies teacher use open-ended questions that have definite implications for behaviour and why?* With this question, greater number of the interviewees said although open-ended questions can have implications for behaviour, using it while teaching pupils can consume a lot of one's instructional time, especially when the class is large and many pupils are prepared to answer questions orally. Others said, its marking is subjective and very difficult; thus make them prefer setting objective questions and close ended questions. The teaching of Social Studies must be taken serious by incorporating open ended questions in assessing concepts taught in class as this will make pupils to come out with divergent views that will help remedial measures to be carried out by the class teacher.

Item 6 which is - *Lesson was presented through purposeful intellectual involvement* shows a weighted average of 2.1 indicating Weak rating. Teacher-trainees observed were also interviewed for proper clarification of ratings given them by asking this question - *Must Social Studies mentee elicits and creates an aroused state in learners through intellectual involvement in class and why?* Maanan, (not the real name)

said "*I am fond of involving my pupils in teaching and learning... this makes them to be directs participants in the teaching and learning process...it encourages them to learn and discover more knowledge for themselves as they have in mind that any time I enter their class they will be made to contribute to my lesson...I always motivate them...even the weaker ones*". With this wonderful assertion, however, it was concluded from the observation and interviews conducted that majority of the mentees were not abreast with the trend, as to how it can be carried out and the need for it.

Item 7 which is - *Teacher-trainee involves students in role-play* shows a weighted average of 1.6 indicating Absent rating. Most of the mentees were seen using teacher-centred techniques instead of child-centred techniques. Ama, (not the real name) one of the mentees whose lesson presentation was solely on role-play; did very well in the observation and was also interviewed on why she used such an approach and technique in teaching? The response was "*I used the pupils-centred approach in the sense that it makes lesson lively and as pupils get to know that activities are performed by their own colleagues...they tend to pay attention, and contribute to the classroom situation... This makes things observed become an imprint in the mind, knowledge shared and activity displayed is retained...transfer of knowledge can be done...can be applied in other situations in life*". However, the majority of the mentees observed and interviewed were not involving their students in role-play as a teaching technique and do not see the reason why they should do so since it can be time consuming. This makes them to resort to other conventions of teaching. This goes to suggest that the way Social Studies is taught need to get a makeover.

Item 8 which is - *Teacher-trainee involves students in discussion* shows a weighted average of 2.0 indicating Weak rating. Teacher-trainees observed were also interviewed for proper clarification of ratings given them by asking this question - *Must Social Studies mentees involves students in discussion? Explain your answer.* Ike (not the real name) said "*not necessarily yes, but the most important thing is using a technique either child-centred or teacher-centred that will help your pupils to understand the topic taught...one thing about discussion I like is that it help pupils to share ideas and tolerating one another*". Eduafuaa (not the real name) said "*it is said that when pupils hear they may forget, when they see their teacher performing an activity they will remember, but when they are involve in the teaching like using discussion it will help them to retain what was taught for a long time...using discussion is very good*". It is well reported that gaining students attention and engagement during class is very challenging. This implies that discussion can motivate students, especially when the activity involves authentic learning, which is, allowing students to collaborate,

reflect on, and synthesise their learning.

The outcome of item 9 which is – *Teacher-trainee involves students in brainstorming* shows a weighted average of 1.2 indicating Absent rating. Teacher-trainees observed were also interviewed for proper clarification of ratings given them by asking this question - *Must Social Studies mentees involves students in brainstorming and why?* Kweku, (not the real name) said “*brainstorming as a child centred technique makes students involve themselves in the teaching and learning process and this enables them to think and help them to discover things on their own...however, there are difficulties associated in its usage...this notwithstanding I use it rarely*”. Kwame (not the real name) said “*it will be good using it but I see it to be wasting of instructional time, especially the class I am teaching are not of good academic standings...in your lesson note you are to use the technique but will abandoned it and go for teacher-centred technique like lecturing when they do not contribute in the lesson delivery*”. The observation coupled with the interviews indicated that most mentees are not fond of using brainstorming as a teaching technique even when the technique is stated in their lesson notes.

Item 10 which is – *Mentee uses lecturing technique in lesson delivery* shows a weighted average of 4.0 indicating Good rating. Final year teacher-trainees observed were also interviewed for proper clarification of ratings given them by asking this question - *Why did you use that teaching technique in your lesson delivery?* Kofi, (not the real name) said “*the teacher-centred technique help teachers to complete the tasks given by their lead mentor on time...this gives more room for remedial teaching to be carried out*”. Abena, (not the real name) said “*although lecturing at times makes pupils bored and wanted to sleep in class,...it does not help students to be active participants in lesson presentation at times and also makes them feel that they do not belong to the class...one can still manage his/her class well and motivate the students to follow the lesson...content are well covered when used...even our college tutors use the same thing...supervising or assessing your teaching at teaching practice in the out-programme you are then told you were using teacher-centred approach, next time used child-centred approach for better class participation...we learn from them*”. The findings from the observation supported by the interviews conducted can make one draw inferences that most of the respondents preferred using teacher-centred technique (i.e. lecture) in teaching Social Studies.

Item 11 which is – *Instruction was presented with relevant Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs)* shows a weighted average of 2.3 indicating Weak rating. Final year teacher-trainees observed were also interviewed for proper clarification of ratings given them by asking this question -

*Do you present your lessons with Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs) in every lesson? Explain your answer.* Araba (not the real name) said “*Teaching and learning material is very essential in teaching as it reduces your talking time, make lesson interesting and understandable... but I am not an artist so cannot draw or sketch better things on manila cards... I quite remember I once pasted a TLM on the “bb” and asked my pupils to look and say what they see... Surprisingly some of the pupils said it does not resemble what I think the drawing is supposed to be...it was a time that a link tutor was assessing my teaching... It was an embarrassment, since then I decided to go for either pictures in pupils textbook or any other source and not to draw them myself again...I normally use them...not every lesson...you took me by surprise that is why you did not see me using TLM*”. Emmanuel (not the real name) the mentee who was rated “Good” said “*there are TLMs you can improvised, whilst others you either buy them or get them freely from the environment... you see the school I am doing my teaching practice do not even see the need to store TLMs for teaching and learning...asks your mentor or the lead mentor and you would be told we do not have them here...you will be discouraged...so it is not all lessons that I use TLM... Anytime I get information that link tutors will becoming for supervision then I will do everything possible to get TLM for teaching... you see it is your life*” Majority of the mentees observed used TLM(s) in teaching, but some were not attractive, so they were not appealing to students. Some of the colours used were not matching the background colour of the cardboard so they were not highly visible to be seen from the extreme end of the class. Teaching materials are very important in curriculum implementation. This shows the need for worthwhile TLMs to be used in teaching and learning of Social Studies.

Item 12 which is - *Instruction presented was technically stimulating with problem solving approach* shows a weighted average of 1.3 indicating Absent rating. Although traditional and contemporary theories have provided a base for teaching for critical thinking in Social Studies, many schools are still graduating students who are ill-equipped to problem-solving. These suggest in teaching and learning of Social Studies problem solving approach must be stressed and used by teachers.

Item 13 which is – *Instruction presented was attitude development packed* shows a weighted average of 1.2 indicating Absent rating. Final year teacher-trainees observed were also interviewed for clarification on this question- *is Social Studies supposed to be taught with the aim of developing positive attitude of pupils? Give reasons.* With this question, the interviewees have the following to say: Adjoa, (not the real name) came out that “*Social Studies is*

*like any other subject which need to be taught in class for pupils to learn and pass for them to progress from one level of their education career to another but not necessarily building attitudes...basically if it is about attitudes then HIV/AIDS, Integrated Science course and P.E in the Colleges can do that too...it is like a compulsory ladder in education that one need to climb from the JHS to SHS, training college...students even at times need to pass it to gain admission to the university".* Efua, (not the real name) said "it is not important to teach Social Studies with the aim of developing positive attitude of pupils... How can such a thing be done? I will teach it like teaching any subject...attitude is within and it will only be seen through interaction with one another". This implies that there is a problem on how mentees come to conceptualise Social Studies in terms of its meaning, content, and whether it is an attitude building subject.

Item 14 which is – *Teacher-trainee provides post-instruction discussion or critique opportunity* shows a weighted average of 1.6 indicating Absent rating. Trainees observed were also interviewed for clarification on this question-*Do you provide post-instruction discussion or critique opportunities and why?* Adom (not the real name) said "Oh ending my period, the next important thing which is a must that as a mentee I need to do is to evaluate my lesson by giving my pupils some class exercise to do...that is all...it must be based on the objective set in my lesson note". Ayeyi (not the real name) said "it is good that you ask them if they have some difficulties for further explanation to be given...before oral or written exercises are given...teaching goes with exercise...after that you can tell them their strengths and weaknesses...there is limited time for all this...teaching practice is teaching for marks". The outcome of the observation proved that most mentees were not providing post-instruction discussion or critique opportunities with their pupils. However, when they were interviewed it revealed otherwise; their comment depicted that it is normally done when there is an external assessor. This indicates that mentees do come out that they will practice an activity and do otherwise in the real classroom practices. Invariably in the real classroom practices mentees were not providing post-instruction discussion or critique opportunities with their pupils.

Item 15 which is – *Mentee reinforces appropriate or desired behaviour* shows a weighted average of 1.5 indicating Absent rating. Teacher-trainees observed were also interviewed for clarification on this question - *Must Social Studies teacher teach learners to model and reinforce desired behaviours? Give reasons for your answer.* With the above question, most of the respondents said yes with varying reasons. They gave examples of people who are worthy of emulation like the late Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Mr. Kofi Annan and other

renowned personalities in society. To them it will help pupils mould their lives in a positive manner by forgoing behaviours that will not help them to achieve the feat of their role models. This implies that what was observed was different from what trainees came out during the interview.

Item 16 which is – *Teacher-trainee motivated students to engage in systematic thinking, rather than lapse into mindless processing* shows a weighted average of 2.0 indicating Weak rating. For clarification for the theme observed, interview item 26 was asked – *Is motivation important in teaching and learning of Social Studies? Explain your answer.* One of the trainees, Mansa (not the real name) who was rated "Good" said "yes with the following reason "I do not think my JHS Social Studies teacher had any idea what an impact he had on my life... He was my class six teacher's opposite and taught me much about how motivation could help one... He was consistent and concerned, always motivating...while my class six teacher was drunk or ignored me by not motivating me in class... He praised me while my class six teacher criticised... He prized my mind and my accomplishments; my class six teacher cared only about abusing; by insulting and caning... I learned a great deal from that teacher about who I was...and that I was an important person... I think I am becoming a teacher myself to be like him, so that I could make a difference for some other child." This implies that the positive influence of an educator on the life of a child can be significant.

Item 17 which is – *School Based Assessment (SBA) was essentially focused on attitudes and values; that is, affective skills development* shows a weighted average of 1.1 indicating Absent rating. Mentees observed were also interviewed for proper clarification of ratings given them by asking this question – *Must Social Studies School Based Assessment (SBA) essentially focused on how to solve problems or dealing with the affective skills development and what do you want your Social Studies pupils to achieve after teaching?* With the question, the respondents have the following to say: Narkwa, (not the real name) has this to say "since I was taught the subject is finding answers to challenges... I will also tell my pupils that Social Studies is solving problems we face in life... I will ask them questions based on how they will solve problems...this will help them to become great people in future". This, however, most of the mentees said they will be happy when they see their students understand what they teach them, passing their exams and not about how to solve problems or dealing with the affective skills development. The implication from this result is that most of the respondents were not concerned with inculcating into the students the right knowledge, values, attitudes and skills which is the ultimate goal of Social Studies.

Item 18 which is – *Mentee could foster student creativity in answering questions* shows a weighted average of 1.6 indicating Absent rating. The observation ratings was based on the following: most of the mentees were not seen motivating their students to ask questions; some also said the questions pupils asked will be answered later; others gave the questions asked by the pupils as an assignment; and a pupil's question was harshly rebutted when a mentee was heard saying - *"you see...this is not a sensible question since it is not within the area of what we are learning this morning...our topic is different from the question you just asked...okay"*. This comment and others really shows that most of the mentees observed were not fostering students' creativity in answering questions.

Item 19 which is - *Mentee could provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused* shows a weighted average of 1.5 indicating Absent rating. After the observation, interviews were also carried out using the theme to cross-check ratings given. Aba (not the real name) said *"In teaching pupils, one of the importance of setting objectives is that by the end majority of them will understand the lesson taught...there are some pupils whatever explanation or examples you give they will not follow your lesson...so if there is time you can give them one-one attention or lesson taught again...and if not, then, there is nothing that I can do... We are just supporting our mentors...difficult things will be tackled by them"*. Outcome of the other mentees interviewed shows that majority are not having the skills of giving alternative explanation or example when their pupils are confused in the teaching and learning process. This goes to supports the observation ratings given.

Item 20 which is – *Mentee could implement alternative methods, techniques and strategies in teaching Social Studies* shows a weighted average of 1.5 indicating Absent rating. What is disturbing about these facts is that research has shown that students learn more from student-centred approaches. Educators rather propose that teachers must use learner-centred pedagogies and techniques like debate, panel discussion, simulation, drama and role-play, and oral reports to develop positive skills and values in students

Item 21 which is – *Mentee uses a variety of assessment strategies in teaching* shows a weighted average of 1.4 indicating Absent rating. Observation ratings were based on the following: most of the mentees were not assessing pupils in the affective domain and how to acquire problem solving skills. What was documented were mainly of the cognitive domain; which were of mainly lower level of understanding like knowledge and comprehension. Even with the cognitive domain, mentees observed were not assessing their pupils in application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation which may help them to become analytical thinkers. Teachers must not

only be abreast with teaching skills in the cognitive but must also be knowledgeable on how to assess attitudinal learning.

Item 22 which is – *Mentee is aware of the philosophy of Social Studies curriculum at the Colleges of Education and this is portrayed in their teaching* shows a weighted average of 2.0 indicating Weak rating. Mentees observed were also interviewed for proper clarification of ratings given them by asking this question - *Are you aware of the philosophy of Social Studies curriculum at the Colleges of Education and how was it portrayed in your teaching?* Kobena (not the real name) said *"the philosophy of the subject is to teach and teach it well... It is like any other subjects we were taught at college to go out there to teach...teaching our primary and JHS pupils to understand and pass their BECE examination...that will be the joy of any mentee-a teacher to be"*. Araba (not the real name) out of the fifteen mentees, however, hit the nail on the head by saying *"the main idea for teaching the subject at the college is to equip us with the needed knowledge for us to be able to mould pupils to be respectful, obedience and tolerance... I mean guiding pupils to behave well... do what the community they live is expected of them...good behaviour is what I am talking about here... to me that is the philosophy of the subject"*. This, however, the outcome of the observation and that of the interviews depicted that most of the mentees were not aware of the philosophy of Social Studies curriculum at the Colleges of Education. This means that Social Studies tutors should be sensitised to let trainees know the reasons underpinning the subject introduction in Ghana.

Item 23 which is - *Teacher-trainees have the needed knowledge to plan and implement the Social Studies curriculum* shows a weighted average of 2.2 indicating Weak rating. Mentees observed were also interviewed for proper clarification of ratings given them by asking this question – *How do you find the teaching and learning of Social Studies while at college and the teaching of the subject at the JHS?* For this question, Fiifi (not the real name) a lead mentee said *"most of the topics we are asked to teach are just new to us... This makes us to do a whole lot of research...it is difficult and time consuming to grasp the new ideas"*. Kuuku (not the real name) said *"it is very interesting, although, I am pursuing the general programme, there are many topics I will not be able to teach them properly since such topics have no link with what I was taught while at college... Although, one needs to be resourceful as a teacher... I am trying..."* Majority of the interviewees said many of the topics in the JHS Social Studies syllabus have no bearing on what they were taught in Social Studies while at College. They went on to say that the CoE curriculum which is geography concentrated do not reflects the content of the JHS syllabus. This really implies that teacher-trainees were not having fair

knowledge to plan and implement the Social Studies curriculum. The problem is created as a result of the differences in College of Education Social Studies curriculum and that of the JHS Social Studies syllabus. Contextualizing this section, mentees were found presenting facts to pupils than delivering concepts using ideal pupil-centred techniques like discussion, role-play, debate/argumentation, simulation, and other cooperative learning techniques by bringing on board how problems related to a given topic would be solved.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendation

Differences exist in the classroom practices of final year teacher-trainees from the Colleges of Education as a result of the differences in conceptions and curricula structures of Social Studies used by the Colleges and the JHS. Mentees' conceptions about Social Studies have great impacts on their classroom activities (the way they select content, unit, topic, set objectives, teach and assess pupils).

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.

Mentees lack the teaching skills to impart Social Studies as a problem/issue-oriented subject to pupils. Mentees were found presenting facts to pupils than delivering concepts using ideal pupil-centred techniques like discussion, role-play, debate/argumentation, simulation, and other cooperative learning techniques that will bring on board how problems related to a given topic could be solved. Mentees were not at good standings in terms of methodology, content knowledge and skills in teaching Social Studies. The outcomes of what trainees said Social Studies ought to be taught were not seen in their classroom practices. Trainees lack teaching skills.

School Based Assessment (SBA) was essentially not focused on attitudes and values; that is, affective skills development. Assessments were of mainly lower level of understanding like knowledge and comprehension.

Mentees are ill-equipped to problem-solving skills as they had difficulty interpreting certain aspects of the official curriculum documents of Social Studies. The yawning gap between the CoE and the JHS curriculum led to the confusion.

Mentees are not having the fair knowledge to plan and implement the Social Studies curriculum. Mentees of CoE lack the basic Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) of the

JHS Social Studies curriculum.

It was deduced that implementation of curriculum becomes successful when the teacher's curriculum conception, teacher-constructed syllabus, the teacher's personality, the teaching materials and the teaching environment interact with the learner on a positive note.

For the teaching of Social Studies to makeover, it is recommended that Social Studies teachers of CoE should hold it a duty to help students have better, more realistic ideas about the multiple realities of what constitutes Social Studies in the real world since they (teachers) influence what is taught.

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