# Fostering National Unity and National Consciousness in Ghana through Social Studies Education

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**Abstract:** Social Studies as a subject in Ghana, has the potentials of teaching functional knowledge and desirable values into students for fostering national unity and consciousness. This study sought to find out the national unity and national consciousness contents in junior and secondary school social studies curricula in Ghanaian schools as well as the perception of students on social studies' role in promoting national unity. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with content analysis. A sample of 208 Form Three Senior High School students from Ofori Panin Senior High School was selected through a convenience sampling technique. Findings of the study showed that contents for the promotion of national unity and national consciousness as part of social studies education were moderately provided for in the JHS and SHS syllabi. Students also have a favourable view of social studies education as an instrument for the promotion of national unity and consciousness. However, the teaching and learning of the subject is challenged by the inadequate period allocation on the time table for SHS, non-use of TLMs by teachers, and overloaded syllabus.

*Keywords*: social studies education, national unity, national integration, national consciousness, social studies curriculum

## 1. Introduction

National development can be manifested if the citizens of the country are united, connected, and work together conscientiously. Ghana is a pluralist society with diverse ethnic groups, with differences in culture, tradition, norms, and customs. Since the independence of Ghana in 1957, there has always been a need for national unity for nation-building. Several governments have made efforts aimed at bringing the people of Ghana together to have a common heritage and live as a united, peaceful unitary nation. However, the country has faced ethno-tribal clashes, religious crises, political crises, chieftaincy disputes, ethnocentrism, and all kinds of corruption. All these problems stand as the factors that hinder national unity and national integration.

In Ghana, several governments, both civilian and military regimes have prioritized national unity, national consciousness and national integration as a sine qua non to nation-building, and therefore taken steps aimed at bringing the various facets of Ghanaian society together. Some of these programmes include the introduction of the Ghana National Service Scheme (GNSS), the Computerized School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) of the Ghana Education Service, integrative political parties under the auspices of the national constitution.

The GNSS system was first founded in 1969 by an act of Parliament, Article 179, and reconstituted in 1973 under the National Degree of Redemption Council (NRCD) 208, 1973 [1]. The Scheme seeks to instill the meaning and spirit of nation-building and integration in the youth through effective programmes. It further gives them the opportunity to appreciate the nation's diversity and the need to respect the cultures of others. So far, the programme has achieved much, especially in learning other peoples' cultures and encouraging marriages between National Service members from different cultures.

The CSSPS was introduced in 2005 with a view to addressing most of the problems connected with the manual system of selection of JHS students into SHS. However, though not the aim of the introduction of the programme, it has led to distribution JHS students across the nation, where students are sent to different regions and districts with different cultures and lifestyle from their ethnic groups. Students have the opportunity to learn outside their immediate environment. These have made the youth to appreciate the nation's diversity and making friends.

As a measure to boost national unity, the 1992 Constitution of Ghana mandated that for any political part to exist and operate, it must have branches in all the regions and also branches in from 2 / 3 of the districts in each the region. The party must also be national in character and not be formed along ethnic / tribal, regional and religious lines. Besides, the party's name, symbols, or motto should have no religious, ethnic or regional connotations. Other efforts at ensuring national unity include the use of the same constitution, national anthem, pledge, national flag, coat of arms, and currency, organization of national cultural festivals, national sports competitions, and national education competitions.

Despite the various attempts in Ghana to ensure genuine national unity, ethnic suspicion still looms large within the polity. According to Mamdani [2] ethnicity is a cultural identity when it is based on a shared culture. In contrast, it is a political identity when the political leaders, and the law of the state, identify people based on ethnicity and discriminate among people based on their ethnicity. It is becoming apparent in Ghana that some political parties enjoy some patronage among certain ethnic groups and also along regional allegiance. When ethnicity is politicized and used by politicians for their personal gain, it becomes harmful. The culture of winner takes-all politics in Ghana is serving as a dis-unifying factor in Ghana. This has resulted in the dismissal of people believed not to be members of the ruling party, and instead, only members of the ruling party are offered political appointments. In some cases, government contracts and businesses are offered to party loyalists. Most national issues are viewed along partisan lines with the opposition and ruling parties taking entrenched positions.

According to Attafuah [3], following substantial progress in Ghana's nation-building, like other African nations, it remains deeply divided, broken, and entangled along ethnic lines. A prime example is the typical Asante-Ewe animosity, which has been abused by crooked politicians since the independence of Ghana in 1957. He adds that, despite the significant personal relationships and business alliances across the two ethnic divisions, and also the several successful marriages between matrilineal Asante women and men from patrilineal Ewe ethnic groups, both ethnic groups continue to be the most feared ethnopolitical rivals, with common suspicions and ill-will attributions.

Ghana's intergroup relations have often been marked by ethnic competition, confrontation, rivalry, hegemony, and marginalization, and these have served as obstacles to the development of nationhood in Ghana. These have been disheartening, persistent, and often disabling. For instance, in some parts of Ghana, given long traditions of intermarriages and playful relationships, neighboring ethnic groups are still caught up in pre-medieval enmity and inter-ethnic warfare, such as parts of the Volta Region and the Bawku area. Also, in 1994, a dispute over the price of a guinea-fowl in one area of Ghana's North became an intense, full-scale conflict between two previously neighboring ethnic groups-the Nanumbas and the Konkombas. Over 4000 thousand people died in that war, and many more were internally displaced; thousands of people migrated into the heart of Accra, and a slum settlement called Sodom and Gomorrah, known for its scale of invincible immorality, crime, and brutality, was established. Despite these deficiencies in national integration and nation-building, these ethnic animosities have not degenerated into widespread armed conflicts, as has been witnessed in several African countries such as Rwanda, Kenya, Ivory Coast, Liberia and Nigeria [3].

In Ghana, the issue of promoting inter-ethnic tolerance, peace, and political harmony continues to be as challenging today as was. These social upheavals are suggestive of the limiting role of social studies education in our schools. This is centered on the assumption that those youth who have indulged in violence and other social vices today have not been adequately taught essential concepts of social studies education such as the concept of culture, democracy, religious tolerance, national unity, etc. Social studies with an emphasis on citizenship education in Ghana has the task of addressing major citizenship issues, that are crucial to building the nation in fostering unity and consciousness among students. Social studies is a vital subject of the educational system in Ghana as it is mandatory for all students in primary, junior, and secondary schools.

Social Studies as a problem-solving discipline, can be used to transform the nation into a united and peaceful country. Kissock [4] defines Social Studies is "a program of study which the society uses to instill in the students the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and actions which it considers important concerning the relationships human beings have with each other, their world and themselves" (p.3). Chukwu [5] sees Social Studies as the integration of interrelationships of different subjects intended to instilling national unity and national awareness, inculcating self- and national survival values and attitudes, acquiring the skills and competencies required for individuals to help foster national development. From the above, it can be said that Social Studies education primarily aims at citizenship education. The study of social studies is out to solve the problems of tribalism, intolerance, disunity, etc, through the inculcation of positive thinking and patriotism among students. Kissock [4] states: "Social studies have come to be seen as a tool for national development". It is only through national integration and unity in diversity that development can be attained.

There seems to be scare researches of social studies' role in fostering national unity and national consciousness

and students' perception of the subject in promoting unity and awareness in Ghana. In Ghana, the Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) of the Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for designing the curriculum for the various levels of pre-tertiary education teaching syllabi. Since issues of national unity and consciousness are often addressed in social studies, it is assumed that the CRDD will pay attention to them. However, it is uncertain how much of the curriculum they include in the teaching syllabi issues of national unity and national awareness. Besides, literature is limited in terms of students' perceptions of social studies education in fostering national unity and national consciousness. Does the junior and senior high schools' social studies curriculums adequately address issues surrounding national unity, national integration, and national consciousness? What are the perceptions of students of social studies as subject fostering for national unity, national integration, and national consciousness? What challenges do students face in learning social studies? Answers were solicited for the above issues in terms of the relevance of national unity and consciousness to national development and nation-building.

## 2. Literature review
### 2.1 The forging of national unity, national integration and national consciousness

The terms national integration, nation-building, national loyalty, national cohesion, and united community national unity are sometimes interchangeably used with the concept of national unity. However, the term national unity is an everyday concept which can take diverse meanings for different people. So far, there are several definitions for national unity, yet most of its fundamental concepts are more or less interrelated. Amri cited in Chang et al. [6], articulated that, national integration involves the processes that produce national identity in terms of cultural, social and political position among a separate group; whereas, national unity is described as the processes that bring together the entire community and nation to build a shared interest and oneness identity to love, and to be full of pride of the country. Chang et al. [6] citing Abdullah combined the words-integration and unity and defined as a process of uniting a community under a single national identity.

National integration, according to Jega [7] is a condition whereby the country citizens more and more see themselves as a single nation, conjoin by common historical occurrences and shared ideals, and instilled with the character of loyalty and solidity that go beyond conventional ancient varied leanings. Edosa [8] sees the idea of national integration to be a process in which the representatives of a State consider themselves like one people, treat each other equally and collaborate in a cooperative and free manner and make a peaceful resolution of their differences for the nation' interest as a whole. In this way, unity, fair treatment, co-operation, consensus, and peaceful conflict-resolution become essential components of loyalty to the nation. Through this, appropriate treatment, teamwork, compromise, unity and peaceful resolution of disputes thus become the indispensable mechanism of allegiance to the nation. Arisi [9] asserts that national integration is a type of mutual support that involves uniting different societal groupings by way of a collective identity, setting aside key disparities, but simultaneously not disregarding each group's unique character. According to her, national unity can be achieved through socialization processes such as the use of a uniform education system, the same language, and inter-marriage practices.

According to Jacson and Chinatu in Peter [10], integration is an assimilation of different ethnic and religious elements of the population into a cohesive society, providing fairness of opportunity for all members of that society. Thus, national unity refers to the process by which people or individuals come together to promote togetherness and mutual understanding among the country or nation. National integration involves the act of uniting different people from different ethnic, religious, and political backgrounds into a single whole to bring about peace, stability and prosperity. National integration is the awareness among a country's citizens of a collective identity. Simply, it is unity in diversity. Though we belong to different tribes, religions, and cultures, we become conscious of the fact that we all are one and must live in unity.

National integration is seen as a significant and focused undertaking, the failure of which results in severe consequences. Therefore, it is not surprising that Odumegwu-Ojukwu cited in Edosa [8] perceives it as 'active nation-building', meaning "forging out a nation out of our diverse ethnic groups." (p.64).

Morgan cited in Peter [10] noted that integration could be classified as a three-phase project, process, and product. Integration as a project involves the willingness and efforts to achieve cohesion. Integration processes are the practical steps taken to transform separate nationality groups into one nation. The outcomes of the integration processes are the product of integration.

Being conscious of something (consciousness) could mean finding out something, realizing something, discovering something, and feeling something, or being sensitive or sentient [11]. According to Allen cited in Oppong [11], consciousness

is seen "as the state of being conscious, that is, the physical and mental state of being awake and fully aware of one's environment, thoughts and feelings" (p.5). Similarly, Ozumba [12] also describes consciousness as an intrinsic sense of being and essential belonging to the universe of life.

According to Oppong [11], therefore, national consciousness concerns the state of knowledge of one's environment and the requisite sense of collective identity, unity and bonding among citizens within a particular country. Therefore, within the idea of 'national consciousness,' there is a presumption in the presence of national awareness of a people's collective will, arguing that there is no 'us' without 'them.' That understanding helps people to have a "collective identity" not just about who they are but also about how other people around them are essential to nation-building [11].

Being nationally conscious is enabling people to think first of all of themselves as Ghanaians and secondly as members of their ethnic community. National consciousness establishes a collective heritage that, in effect, pushes the nation's spirit toward national prominence. Consciousness, bonding, identification, and patriotism have been described as core elements within the idea of national consciousness. All these aspects of national consciousness, as discussed, form the basis for national integration and unity, which minimizes the disparities between ethnic groups and enables them to work together to advance the political, economic, social, cultural, or psychological needs of the nation [11].

The idea that social studies should promote national unity and consciousness in the nation's students has received attention from researchers across the globe. Arisi [9] argues that the knowledge taught in social studies is necessary for a decent living and fostering national integration and cohesion in the Nigerian community. This is because much of the material of social studies is extracted from the experiences of the learner's world. Arisi also posits that the social studies parameter emphasizes that whatever society 'man' lives, he has to do at least two main things. Firstly, he has to communicate with his fellow human being. Secondly, he has to adapt to the environment and make himself entirely useful. Therefore, he has to relate to that component of the world where he resides.

Okam [13] notes, unlike the traditional Social Science disciplines, teaching Social Studies is not just to emphasize neither a propagation of knowledge nor an acquisition of information for its own sake as such. Okam [13] further notes that, the pedagogical underpinnings of Social Studies is such that it is expected to aim at assisting the learner in acquisition and development of certain social skills and desirable attitudes and values which are of interest for nation-building, human development and national integration.

According to Mezieobi cited in Peter [10], an essential feature of social studies education is its social relevance or social sensitivity-the ability to mirror the realities of the environment and society in which social studies is taught. The social sensitivity philosophy of social studies enables social studies educationists and practitioners to identify problems of their society, such as national integration problems in our context and seek articulate solutions to stem them. The subject focuses on teaching interactive accomplishments on the inculcation of proper values, which, among other things, are relevant to the enrichment of national consciousness and integration.

Omooba, Obi and Olabode cited in Peter [10] note that social studies have been described as the key subject indispensable for the attainment of national unity and consciousness. It, therefore, has an uphill task to educate Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups on the interdependence of various groups, of social responsibilities with each other, of the concept of equality with one another and the philosophy of one nation with one indivisible destiny.

According to Kankam [14], in Ghana, promoting nation-building and national integration is hinged on the effective social studies education since the subject is the most suitable instrument in advancing development in unity. He asserts further that social studies provides relevant information and knowledge which helps students to be nurtured as active, responsible and reflective citizens. Social studies draws its content from various disciplines such as geography, history, etc, to promote civic competence. Social Studies offers change needed for persons to appreciate the culture and civic issues. The nature of social studies needs a holistic view of knowledge and that all disciplines need to advance man's understanding of problems and solutions. Because of its integrated nature, the subject takes its content from Geography, Sociology, Political Science, Economics, History, Psychology and Anthropology. Indeed, Oppong [11] notes that "while promoting national unity, patriotism and national pride, the history curriculum should also encourage respect for, and acceptance of, those belonging to other cultures and ethnicities. It further strengthens the students' attributes of patriotism and national pride". Adjepong and Kwarteng [15] have asserted that issues of patriotism are in the domain in the study of history. Also, the study of history induces people to contribute to nation-building since the lessons in history bring up the massive contributions of their forefathers [16]. From the above views, this means that, the history strand of the social studies curriculum instills knowledge of the country, patriotism, and pride and respect for others cultures and traditions of the country.

Adzahlie-Mensah [17] contends that social studies education is in line with Ghana's philosophy of education. This is

because its primary goal is the production of competent, concerned and participatory citizens with civic competencies required to lead society in resolving perplexing social issues that are of significant concern to humanity. Ghana's education system seeks to equip the youth with values, aptitudes, knowledge, attitudes, and skills to effectively deals with the evils of society, including poverty, ignorance, diseases, low productivity, conflicts and dependence. It is in this direction that Social Studies focuses on imbibing relevant knowledge, requisite skills, positive, attitudes and values into learners.

## 2.2 The development of social studies post-independent Ghana

Social Studies is an integrated area of study in the Ghanaian educational system at the basic, secondary and tertiary levels. Quartey [18] posits that social studies could be defined as a "study that equips the youth with tools necessary in solving personal and community-related problems". This means that, social studies does not focus largely on distributing knowledge; but also emphasize the inculcation of a certain quintessence of knowledge that will help people to acquire the tools they need for life. These tools are knowledge, values, attitudes, and skills. Such tools will help the learner address personal as well as group problems. According to CRDD [19], 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" (p. ii). These suggest that Social Studies' ultimate goal is seen as preparation for citizenship.

It can be said from the above that social studies aims to prepare young people to possess the information, values, and skills necessary for informed and active participation in society. Indeed, most Social Studies educators agree that citizenship education is the ultimate justification for Social Studies. Citizenship is so fundamental to the Social Studies that in its 1998 syllabus for high school social studies, the Ghana Education Service (G.E.S) [20] reconciled the two by claiming that "social studies is citizenship education". The National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) [21] in America, which has long been a leading advocate for social studies, endorsed this. According to the NCSS, the primary goal of social studies is the preparation of students to be productive citizens and that through the curriculum, students would have the opportunity to apply their civic knowledge to solve problems in schools.

From the above, it can be identified that the content or subject matter of social studies includes essential information, ideas, skills, issues and inquiry procedures drawn from the group of disciplines called the social sciences. Concepts, principles, generalizations and processes from the social sciences serve as a foundation on which the Social Studies curriculum draws, integrating and fashioning them as desired to provide students with meaningful learning experiences. It is therefore apparent from these definitions that one main feature that makes social studies more distinct is that it integrates many fields of endeavor which go outside the social sciences.

It can also be inferred that; the essential area of social studies is human relationships. The heart of social studies is the association of relationship that develops among people as they try to coexist in the various group settings that compete for their loyalties. Social studies study individuals and groups of people and how they relate with one another. In the study, importance is attached to individual qualities such as diligence, critical thinking, patriotism, obedience, honesty, as well as group ideals such as co-operation, tolerance, interdependence and any other socially desirable habits, ideals, attitudes, and values. This indicates that social studies serves as an instrument by which a society spreads its acceptable values, norms, behaviors, and beliefs. Good citizenship is dependent on the values, attitudes and behaviors that one shows towards others in society. Hence, social studies imbibes in learners desirable democratic values and attitudes such as honesty, respect for oneself and others, tolerance of divergent views, hard work and discipline in other to live a responsible life.

According to Tamakloe [22], dating from the 1940s, social studies as a subject was incorporated into the teacher training college curriculum in Ghana. Nevertheless, Agyemang-Fokuo [23] noted that. Social studies education was not allowed to thrive because of the negative views and attitudes of both teachers and students towards the social studies program. In the early years in the 1950s, in the teacher training colleges, the teaching and learning of single subjects like geography, economic s or history has replaced social studies which incorporated facts, principles and generalization from subjects such as geography and history into a single subject to explain issues or solve problems. Tamakloe [22] noted that the reintroduction of single subject teaching was because graduates of the social sciences who were to teach social studies specialized in single subjects and hence could not deal with the use of the integrated approach in teaching social studies. Besides, the students themselves also embraced the one-subject approach as they viewed it as a chance for them to better their grades in these single subjects [23].

Under the system of experimental junior high schools in 1976, Social Studies was once again introduced into the curriculum as a core subject. At the teacher training colleges, there was a need for the training of student-teachers with specialization in social studies to handle the subject in these experimental schools. Yet, after churning out the first three batches of social studies teachers for the program, an overabundance of teachers was discovered as there was no corresponding increase in the number of junior high schools. As a consequence, in the 1981 / 82 academic year, Social

Studies was discontinued at the colleges [24].

Following new educational reforms in 1987, Social Studies was for a second time reintroduced into the school system as a core subject for the primary and JHS levels. As a result, Social Studies was reintroduced as one of the elective subjects in the teacher training colleges to train specialist teachers to teach junior high school social studies. In 1987, the University of Cape Coast (UCC) mounted a Bachelor's degree program in Social Studies. It proceeded to launch a master's program in curriculum studies in 1992 with students graduating in social studies as an elective to ensure that the subject was developed to meet modern trends. Additionally, the University of Cape Coast, Institute of Education, launched a master's program in teacher education with a specialization in social studies in 2009 and a master's degree in social studies in 2014 by sandwich. The University of Education, Winneba also mounted a Diploma programme in Social Studies in 1998 and subsequently introduced Degree, Masters, and PhD programmes, all in an attempt to ensure that adequate teachers are prepared to handle the subject to achieve its stated goals and aspirations of the society.

Social studies is taught from the basic and secondary school levels in Ghana as a core subject. Wilson [25] states that since 1972 social studies has been taught in Ghana at the primary and junior secondary levels. However, the subject has metamorphosed over the years, particularly at primary school level, from 'civics' to 'social studies' to 'environmental studies' and 'citizenship education'. As of now, the name 'social Studies' is maintained at the JHS and SHS levels.

According to CRDD [19], the general aims of teaching syllabus for social studies at the Junior High School (JHS) are *"to help the pupil"*:

*1. Understand the interrelationships between the social and the physical environment and their impact on the development of Ghana.*

*2. Appreciate the impact of history on current and future development efforts of the country.*

*3. Appreciate the various components of the environment and how these could be maintained to ensure sustainable development.*

*4. Recognize the major challenges facing Ghana and be able to develop basic knowledge and skills for dealing with such a challenge.*

*5. Understand the dynamics of development in the world and their impact on development in Ghana.*

*6. Develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for personal growth, peaceful co-existence, and respect for peoples of other nations.*

*7. Develop a sense of national consciousness and national identity"* [19]. (p.ii).

The CRDD [19] describes Social Studies as "a study of the problems of society". It also describes the scope of the subject as multi-disciplinary taking its contents from the social science subjects such as sociology, history, geography, economics, and. psychology. Essential elements of the principles, theories, facts and knowledge from these areas of study are woven into a subject of its own. Also, CRDD [19] notes that the rationale for the subject is to prepare individuals to fit in with society by equipping them with knowledge of their society's culture and way of life, its problems, its values and its hopes for the future. As a subject, Social Studies helps students to understand their society better; it helps them to investigate how their society works and thus helps them develop the critical and at the same time, developmental mind that transforms societies.

The nature and content of Junior High School social studies is concerned with equipping the student with an integrated body of knowledge, skills and attitudes that will help the student gain a broader perspective of Ghana and the world. The integration is done along with three main themes: The Environment; Governance, Politics and Stability; Social and Economic Development. Also, the preconditions for the successful study of social studies at the JHS are knowledge and understanding of primary school Citizenship Education, observational skills and a rational mind to life [19]. This suggests a closer relationship exists between the Citizenship Education studied at the upper primary level and the Social Studies at the JHS level.

According to the CRDD [26], the general aims of Social Studies syllabus for Senior High Schools are to help students to:

1. Develop the ability to adapt to the developing and ever-changing Ghanaian society.

2. Acquire positive attitudes and values towards individual and societal issues.

3. Develop critical and analytical skills in assessing issues for objective decision-making.

4. Develop national consciousness and unity.

5. Use enquiry and problem-solving skills for solving personal and societal problems.

6. Become responsible citizens capable and willing to contribute to societal advancement.

It should be noted that the essence and logic of social studies at the JHS and SHS levels are similar. Hence, the content of SHS social studies syllabus is organized along the same three themes of The Environment; Governance, Politics and Stability; Social and Economic Development. In addition, the pre-requisite skills required for a successful study of social studies at the SHS are knowledge and understanding of primary school level Citizenship Education, completion of JHS Social Studies, observational skills and a rational mind to life [26].

One common theme that can be found in the aims / objectives of the various social studies curricula materials is the development of national unity and national consciousness. This has been stated explicitly in the JHS Social Studies syllabus as in aim number 7 "to develop a sense of national consciousness and national identity". Moreover, the SHS social studies syllabus also states one of its aims as "to develop national consciousness and unity". It can, therefore, be said that the objectives of the various social studies syllabi clearly show that social studies is a fertile ground for the promotion of national unity and national consciousness among Ghanaians.

Social studies help to develop national consciousness in the citizens (students) by teaching those things that promote national consciousness such as national anthem, national pledge, national symbols and their interpretations. Social studies education also fosters social integration and national unity, which contribute to national development. When other cultures are exposed to the child, it makes way for cultural accommodation, high level of tolerance, reduction in religious intolerance and conflicts of various magnitudes.

## 3. The design of the study

This study was aimed at exploring the extent of social studies education in promoting national unity among senior high students in Ghana. However, the specific objectives were to determine to what extent the social studies syllabi of the Junior High School (JHS) and Senior High School (SHS) have provided for the contents of national consciousness and unity; to explore students' perception of social studies education role as in promoting national consciousness and unity as well as to ascertain the challenges that students faced in learning social studies. The study was guided by the following research questions:

Research question 1: To what degree does Ghana's JHS and SHS social studies curriculum content provide for national consciousness and unity?

Research question 2: What are the perceptions of SHS students of social studies education in inculcating national unity and national consciousness among Ghanaians?

Research question 3: What challenges do senior high students faced in learning social studies?

The results from this study are hoped to highlight on the need for teaching social studies at all educational levels in Ghana, as an efficient curricular tool for instilling the customs and tenets of good citizenship in learners and fostering of national consciousness and unity. The findings of this study are also expected to serve as an impetus for further research work on the roles of social studies in Ghana and the need for its study in Ghanaian schools.

The methodological approach used for this study combined qualitative and quantitative paradigms. A qualitative interpretive inquiry which employs content analysis as a tool to analyze documents was used in the examination of the social studies syllabi for JHS and SHS. According to Bryman [27], qualitative content analysis is an "approach that emphasizes the role of the investigator in the construction of the meaning of texts" (p.542). If used for the analysis of documents, it helps the researcher(s) to create categories or themes from the data, which can then be interpreted in light of the study objective. In this regard, the Ghana junior high 2007 social studies and the 2010 senior high school social studies syllabi were deemed essential and adequate for analyzing what it was that the social studies curriculum required students in Ghana to think about, be conscious of, and contribute to. In this regard, a Pro-forma was used to gather information from the Social Studies curriculum for JHS 1-3 and SHS 1-3 published by Curriculum Research and Development Division in 2007 and 2010 respectively. The researchers subjected the contents of the curriculum across the various levels indicated above to critical content analysis to identify contents or themes that have a direct or implied relevance for national unity / integration and consciousness. Topics / units in the social studies syllabus were categorized into three groups: explicit, implicit and a category of those that were not related to national unity, integration and consciousness. Explicit topics / units are topics that specifically provide national unity, integration and consciousness elements. The implicit topics / units are those that give an inferred and related element of national unity, integration and consciousness.

Second, quantitative data was collected using a questionnaire to collect from Form Three students in Ofori Panin Senior High Secondary School in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The population consisted of 482 final year students of Ofori Panin Senior High Secondary School of which 215 were selected through a convenience sampling technique; however, 208 questionnaires were retrieved from the respondents. The choice of final-year third-year students was

motivated by the expectation that these students could provide the necessary answers as data for the study, as they had learned the subject from the right away from the primary to the SHS level. A 22-item questionnaire that sought to seek information on students' perception of Social Studies role in promoting national unity, integration and consciousness among students in Ghana and the challenges faced in learning the subject was developed. The questionnaire was used a four-point Likert scale in which respondents were entailed to respond to each item in terms of their degree of agreement or disagreement. The four-point scale ranges from strongly disagree (SD) 1, strongly disagree (SD) 2, agree (A) 3, to strongly agree (SA) 4. Data collected were analyzed quantitatively through frequency counts and percentages to answer the research questions using SPSS version 21. A summary description of the data was made with the use of frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations.

One drawback was the lack of involvement of social studies teachers, who could have clarified some of the findings or explained them. Another is the limited sample using only one school. Follow-up research, using teachers or both teachers and students expanding the number of schools, could provide more answers.

## 4. Content analysis and student perspectives on the social studies curriculum

Research 1: To what extent does Ghana's JHS and SHS social studies curriculum content provide for national consciousness and unity?

Table 1 shows a content analysis of the social studies syllabi. The analysis examined the units / topics in the curriculum, and how these topics addressed national unity, national integration and consciousness issues. Topics / units in the social studies syllabus were categorized into three groups: explicit, implicit and a category of those that were not related to national unity, integration and consciousness. Explicit topics / units are topics that specifically provide national unity, integration and consciousness elements. The implicit topics / units are those that give an inferred and related element of national unity, integration and consciousness. Table 1 presents only the explicit and implicit topics in the Ghanaian JHS and SHS social studies syllabi that inculcate national unity, integration and consciousness.

From Table 1, it is observed that there are topics in the JHS and SHS social studies syllabuses that are explicitly geared towards the inculcation of national unity and consciousness and others that are covert. Topics found to be explicit in the JHS syllabus include "Ghana as a Nation", "Colonization and National Development", "Independence and Nationhood", "Citizenship and Human Rights", "Our Culture", "Our Constitution", "Conflict Prevention and Management", and "Promoting Political Stability in Ghana". Again, topics found to be explicit in the SHS syllabus include "Our Culture and National Identity", "National Independence and Self-Reliance", "Peace Building and Conflict Resolution", and "Our Constitution, Democracy and Nation Building". These topics contain specific themes on the development of Ghana and her struggles for independence. They also describe the various upheavals that occurred after independence and the current democratic dispensation and how the individual can contribute to sustaining it. Generally, in the teaching and learning of these topics, some of the elements of national unity and consciousness, such as unity in diversity, patriotism, tolerance, awareness, peaceful co-existence and bonding, are brought to bear. For example, in the topic "Ghana as a Nation", the students are made aware that virtually all Ghana's ethnic groups historically migrated from different places at one time or another to their present locations and have lived together as different ethnic groups in the past. In terms of teaching and learning activities, the students are expected to identify the migration pathways of some key ethnic groups using the map of West Africa and locate their present place on a map of Ghana. Students are also asked to examine ways of accelerating and maintaining the integration of all the country's peoples without ethnic discrimination so that all ethnic groups can transition into to the future in harmony, unity, prosperity for Ghana's development. Under the topic "Promoting Political Stability in Ghana", students are made to examine the issue of Ghana's ethnic and party rivalries that have developed an environment of persistent turmoil. They are also asked to discuss ways of preventing political conflicts. In the topic, "Our Culture and National Identity", among other things, the students are to engage in an extensive discussion of cultural features and practices in their communities that they believe will facilitate national integration, aspects of Ghanaian culture which unite people together as one community, how national symbols inculcate loyalty, and the cultural values and characteristics of Ghanaian that contribute to the country's positive image. From the above, it could be observed that these topics / units could be used to enhance national unity, integration and consciousness by encouraging, for example, tolerance, moral values, peaceful co-existence, patriotism, commitment and common identity, although they may not explicitly refer to national unity, integration and consciousness issues.

**Table 1. Explicit and implicit topics in the Ghanaian social studies syllabus
that inculcate national unity, integration and consciousness**

| Class | Units / Topics | National unity and national consciousness-related content / issues |
|---|---|---|
| JHS 1 | • Ghana as a Nation (E)<br>• Colonization and National Development (E)<br>• Independence and Nationhood (E)<br>• Citizenship and Human Rights (E) | • Ethnic diversity, peace, stability, unity, ethnic pluralism<br>• National independence, nationhood<br>• Political independence, patriotism, nationhood, founding leaders<br>• Citizenship, Democratic ideals, rights and responsibilities |
| JHS 2 | • Our Culture (E)<br>• Our Constitution (E)<br>• Law and Order in our Community (E)<br>• Conflict Prevention and Management (E)<br>• Ghana's Co-operation with Other Nations (I) | • Cultural diversity, ethnic pluralism<br>• Organs government, state authority, freedoms and obligations<br>• Law and order, peace and stability<br>• Tolerance, peaceful co-existence, conflict prevention and management, understanding, trust.<br>• Co-operation, bond of friendship |
| JHS 3 | • Government and Society (E)<br>• Promoting Political Stability in Ghana (E)<br>• Problems of Development in Ghana (I) | • Awareness of the political organization and administration of the Country, loyalty<br>• Tolerance, peace and stability, democratic ideals<br>• Social, political and economic challenges, need for honesty, hard work, commitment, etc |
| SHS 1 | • Our Culture and National Identity (E)<br>• National Independence and Self-Reliance (E)<br>• Peace Building and Conflict Resolution (E)<br>• The Youth and National Development (I) | • Cultural diversity, national identity, cultural values, national symbols<br>• Founding leaders, political independence<br>• Peacebuilding, respect for one another, co-operation, tolerance, justice, fair-play<br>• Hard-work, commitment, patriotism |
| SHS 2 | • Leadership and Followership (E)<br>• Our Constitution, Democracy and Nation Building (E)<br>• The Role of the individual in Community Development (E)<br>• Promoting National Socio-Economic Development (I) | • Loyalty, perseverance, integrity, fair-play, leadership and followership in nation-building<br>• Constitutional rule and nation building, democracy and it's role in nation building<br>• Communal spirit, community self-development, active participation, value of vison and initiative<br>• National aspirations, positive attitude to work, hard work, co-ordination |
| SHS 3 | • Rights and Responsibilities of the Individual (E)<br>• Ghana and the International Community (E) | • Values of commitment and patriotism, challenges in exercising of rights and responsibilities at all levels,<br>• Reciprocal relationship, co-operation, dialogue |

**E = explicit, I = implicit**
**Source: CRDD (2007, 2010)**

The contents of the JHS and SHS Teaching Syllabi for Social Studies issued by the CRDD were analyzed. Table 2 shows the summary of the extent to which national unity related contents topics are covered in the JHS and SHS Social Studies Syllabi. Comparing the extent of coverage of national unity, consciousness and related contents in terms topics, national unity, national integration and national consciousness-related relevant topics/units were about 44.4% and 43.5% in the JHS and SHS Social Studies syllabi respectively. Further analysis of the curriculum contents also revealed that national unity issues were distributed across all the classes under each level of education in different proportions.

**Table 2. Summary of the extent to which national unity and consciousness-related contents
by objectives and topics are covered in the JHS and SHS social studies syllabi**

| Level | Class | No. of Units / Topics | Number of Units / Topics Relevant on National Unity and Consciousness | % of coverage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| JHS | JHS 1 | 10 | 4 | 40.0 |
| | JHS 2 | 10 | 5 | 50.0 |
| | JHS 3 | 7 | 3 | 42.9 |
| | Total | 27 | 12 | 44.4 |
| SHS | SHS 1 | 8 | 4 | 50.0 |
| | SHS 2 | 9 | 4 | 44.4 |
| | SHS 3 | 6 | 2 | 33.3 |
| | Total | 23 | 10 | 43.5 |

Research 2: What are the SHS students' perceptions of social studies education in inculcating national unity and national consciousness among Ghanaians?

Research question two sought to find out from participants their perception of social studies in promoting national unity and consciousness. The responses of participants were measured using twelve statements using a four-Likert scale as 'Strongly disagree' (1), 'Disagree' (2), 'Agree' (3), and 'Strongly agree' (4). Table 3, presents the result of students'

perception of social studies in promoting national unity and consciousness. A cut-off point value of 2.5 was used as the decision value. It was observed that the respondents' cumulative mean response on all the 12 items was 3.26, which was found to be higher than the decision mean of 2.50. Strongly agree and agree were combined as 'agree' and strongly disagree and disagree combined as 'disagree. The participants agreed with all 10 positive statements on social studies' role in promoting national unity and consciousness with mean agreement ranging from 3.29 to 3.67.

Items 1 and 2 were statements on how the teaching of culture in social studies could make students respect other people's culture. Specifically, most respondents (99.0%) agree that the teaching of social studies makes learners appreciate and respect one another's culture and the rest 1.0% in disagreement. This item received the topmost mean response of 3.67 with a standard deviation of .51. The standard deviation of this item was the lowest among all the items. This means there were little variations in the responses of the respondents on this item as compared with any other item. Also, the statement that "teaching of Ghanaian culture in social studies lesson will make some students see their culture as being superior to other cultures" was rejected by the respondents with a mean value of 2.39 (SD = 1:19) with 44.2% of them in agreement and 55.8% in disagreement.

Items 3 and 4 sought to reveal students' views of social studies' role in promoting ethnic diversity for national unity and integration. The statement that "the teaching of various cultures in Ghana to students through social studies lesson will help in creating unity among the students" received a mean score of 3.49 (SD = .62) with 96.2% in agreement and the rest of 3.8% in disagreement. Also, 92.8% are in agreement that "social studies education promotes the unity of the various ethnic groups in our society" (M = 3.46, SD = .70) with 7.2% in disagreement. On the whole, the students support the view that social studies education promotes unity in ethnic diversity.

Items 5 and 6 concerns the role the teaching and learning of social studies avoids conflicts and foster peace among the citizenry. The statement that "the teaching of social studies about Inter-ethnic relationships and marriages could help reduce inter-ethnic crisis and promote communal peace in Ghana" received a 94.7% agreement and 6.3% disagreement with a mean score of 3.53 (SD = .69). However, the respondents rejected the statement that "social studies education enhances the poor relationship among the various ethnic groups". This was shown by the mean score of 1.66 (SD = .92) with 84.1 % in disagreement and the rest of 15.9 % in agreement. This means that the students support the view that social education promotes peaceful co-existence and inter-personal relationships, which are ingredients for unity and national integration.

Items 7 and 8 were directly concerned about social studies education in fostering unity among the people. On this, 96.2% of the respondents were in agreement with the statement that "Social studies promotes interpersonal relationships in the achievement of our ultimate goals of developing unity and peace" with 3.8% disagreeing. The statement recorded a mean value of 3.46 with a standard deviation of .60. However, 88.9% of the respondents were in agreement with the statement that "the teaching of democratic ideas in social studies ensures a respectable relationship among political parties, the organs of government and the individual for national unity" with 11.1% disagreeing. A mean value of 3.29 (SD = .75) was recorded for this statement. From the above, it can be observed that a majority of the respondents belief that social studies curriculum can foster national unity.

Items 9 and 10 sought to find out from participants their perception of social studies education in promoting national integration. The statement that "the teaching of social studies instills in Ghana's students the idea of building peace to bring harmonious living for economic and social development" received a 95.2% agreement and 4.8% disagreement with a mean score of 3.53 (SD = .65). Also, 95.7% of the respondents were in agreement with the statement that "social studies inculcate the knowledge of tolerance, co-operation and unity among Ghanaians" with 4.3% disagreeing. The mean score for this statement was 3.55 (SD = .61). This suggests that the students support the view that social studies curriculum can bring about national integration.

Lastly items 11 and 12 elicited from the respondents the role of school studies in invoking national consciousness among the citizenry in terms of their rights, responsibilities and patriotism. The statement that "through social studies education, students get to know the constitution, their rights and the corresponding responsibilities for nation building" received a 97.1% agreement and 2.9% disagreement with a mean score of 3.66 (SD = .58). Also, the statement that "social studies as a school subject is capable of making Ghanaians students love one another and be patriotic" was endorsed with a mean response value of 3.39 (SD = .65) with details showing that 92.8% were in agreement, and the rest of 7.2% in disagreement with this view. This means that the respondents view social studies education in fostering national consciousness (communality and patriotism) in the people. Generally, it has been seen that social studies education is a potential agent of achieving national unity, integration and consciousness in Ghana. Thus, participants do not feel strongly that social studies education is irrelevant in achieving national unity, integration and consciousness in Ghana.

**Table 3. Students' perception of social studies education in promoting national unity and consciousness**

| Statement | Agree N (%) | Disagree N (%) | Mean | Std. Dev |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The teaching of social studies make learners appreciate and respect one another's culture. | 206 (99.0%) | 2 (1.0%) | 3.67 | 0.51 |
| 2. The teaching of Ghanaian culture in social studies lesson will make some students to see their culture as being superior to other cultures. | 92 (44.2%) | 116 (55.8%) | 2.39 | 1.19 |
| 3. The teaching of various cultures in Ghana to SHS students through social studies lesson will help in creating unity among the students. | 200 (96.2%) | 8 (3.8%) | 3.49 | 0.62 |
| 4. Social studies education promotes the unity of the various ethnic groups in our society. | 193 (92.8%) | 15 (7.2%) | 3.46 | 0.70 |
| 5. The teaching of social studies about Inter-ethnic relationships and marriages could help reduce interethnic crisis and promote communal peace in Ghana. | 197 (94.7 %) | 11 (5.3%) | 3.53 | 0.69 |
| 6. Social studies education enhances poor relationships among the various ethnic groups. | 33 (15.9%) | 178 (84.1%) | 1.66 | 0.92 |
| 7. Social studies promotes Interpersonal relationships in the achievement of our ultimate goals of developing unity and peace. | 200 (96.2%) | 8 (3.8%) | 3.46 | 0.60 |
| 8. The teaching of democratic ideas in social studies ensures a respectable relationship among political parties, the organs of government and the individual for national unity. | 185 (88.9%) | 23 (11.1%) | 3.29 | 0.75 |
| 9. The teaching of social studies instills in Ghana's students the idea of building peace to bring harmonious living for economic and social development. | 198 (95.2%) | 10 (4.8%) | 3.53 | 0.65 |
| 10. Social Studies inculcate the knowledge of tolerance, co-operation and unity among Ghanaians. | 199 (95.7%) | 9 (4.3%) | 3.55 | 0.61 |
| 11. Through social studies education, students get to know the constitution, their rights and the corresponding responsibilities for nation building. | 202 (97.1%) | 6 (2.8%) | 3.66 | 0.58 |
| 12. Social studies as a school subject is capable of making Ghanaians students love one another and be patriotic. | 193 (92.8%) | 15 (7.2%) | 3.39 | 0.65 |

**Decision mean = 2.5, mean of means = 3.26, mean of standard deviation = .71**

Research Question 3: What challenges do senior high social studies students faced in learning social studies?

Table 4 shows the perception of students about the challenges they faced in learning social studies. The responses of participants were measured using a four-Likert scale as 'Strongly disagree' (1), 'Disagree' (2), 'Agree' (3), and 'Strongly agree' (4). The details show that they were not in agreement with some of the factors as challenges they faced in learning social studies. This is based on the cumulative mean response of 2.15, which is lower than the decision mean of 2.50.

**Table 4. Students perceived challenges in learning social studies**

| Statements | Agree N (%) | Disagree N (%) | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teachers do not use Teaching Learning Materials | 124 (59.6%) | 84 (40.4%) | 2.68 | 1.16 |
| Difficulty in understanding Social studies lessons | 35 (16.8%) | 173 (83.2%) | 1.76 | 0.82 |
| Absence of suitable textbooks | 98 (47.1%) | 110 (52.9%) | 2.36 | 1.13 |
| Lack of interest in social studies | 47 (27.4%) | 151 (72.6%) | 1.99 | 0.98 |
| Inability to read and understand social studies materials | 29 (13.9%) | 179 (86.1%) | 1.75 | 0.87 |
| Uninteresting topics | 53 (24.5%) | 155 (74.5%) | 1.93 | 0.95 |
| Overloaded syllabus | 106 (51.0%) | 102 (49.0%) | 2.53 | 1.12 |
| Inadequate period allocation on the time table | 115 (55.3%) | 93 (44.7%) | 2.69 | 1.18 |
| Unable to answer social studies questions | 40 (19.2%) | 168 (80.8%) | 1.85 | 0.90 |
| Teacher not encouraging student participation in the class. | 56 (26.9%) | 152 (73.1%) | 1.95 | 1.08 |

**Decision mean = 2.5, mean of means = 2.15, mean of standard deviation = 1.02**

The significant items participants agreed with were inadequate period allocation on the time-table recording the highest mean response of 2.69 with 55.3% agreed and the rest 44.7% in disagreement. In the same vein, they believe that teachers do not use teaching-learning materials (TLMs), and this received the second-highest mean response of 2.68 with 59.6% in agreement and the rest 40.4% in disagreement. Also, participants believe that the overloaded syllabus was a

challenge with the third-highest mean response of 2.53 with 51% in agreement and the rest 49% in disagreement.

# 5. Reflections and recommendation

The study findings reveal that the Curriculum of Social Studies for the JHS and SHS in Ghana contained topics that were related to national unity, national integration and national consciousness. The national unity, integration and consciousness related themes seem moderately reflected in the JHS and SHS social studies curricula. It was observed that a general aim that runs through the goals of the various social studies curricula materials at the various pre-tertiary levels is the development of a sense of national unity and national consciousness. This has been stated explicitly as an aim of social studies in aim number 7 in the JHS social studies syllabus which states as "to develop a sense of national consciousness and national identity" [19] (p.ii). Moreover, the SHS social studies syllabus also states one of its aims as "to develop national consciousness and unity" [27] (p.ii). Topics like "Our Culture and National Identity", "Democracy and Nation Building" and "Peace Building and Conflict Resolution" have been provided. Some related general objectives for some units include to: "develop national consciousness and unity for nation-building" "develop national consciousness and the spirit of unity with fellow Ghanaians", "appreciate the importance of building peace and resolving conflicts", and "recognize the relevance of acceptance of democratic values and commitment to the preservation of the unity, law, and order in society".

It can, therefore, be said that the aims, general objectives and topics of the various social studies syllabi clearly show that social studies is a fertile ground for the promotion of national unity and national consciousness among Ghanaians. Social studies facilitates the development of national consciousness in the citizens (students) by teaching those things that promote national consciousness such as the national anthem, national pledge, national symbols and their interpretations. Social studies education also fosters social integration and national unity, which contribute to national development. When other cultures are exposed to the child, it makes way for cultural accommodation, high level of tolerance, reduction in religious intolerance and conflicts of various magnitudes.

The findings also revealed that students expressed a positive perception of social studies education aim for promoting national unity. It was observed that their cumulative mean response was 3.26, which was more than the decision mean of 2.50. This shows that the students agreed that with social studies education aim of inculcating knowledge, attitude, value and skill in learners in uniting people of different backgrounds into a single entity, united by shared tradition, and interest. This means that social studies education can serve as an instrument for national integration. The result of this finding has shown that the respondents are in support of the idea that social studies can serve as a vehicle for national integration. This is in line with Kankam [14] when he claims that social studies education is the most appropriate tool in advancing development in unity, thus, fostering national integration and development. Further supporting this finding is the stance of scholars such Chukwu [5] and Arisi [9]. This is in line with Chukwu's [5] view that social studies will develop in the student positive attitude towards cohesion, camaraderie, teamwork, the inculcation of acceptable values of integrity, justice, hard work, honesty, and fairness as one's input to the nation's growth.

Much as the senior high students have recognized the importance of social studies education in promoting national unity and consciousness, the study has indicated that students face problems in learning the subject. Foremost amongst them is the inadequate period allocation on the time-table, overloaded syllabus and the non-use of teaching-learning materials by teachers in their lesson delivery to establish concepts. The respondents believed that the senior high school social studies syllabus is overloaded with so many topics. This obstacle was compounded by the allocation of inadequate periods on the time-table for the study of social studies. Respondents also cited the non-use of instructional materials by teachers as an obstacle for the effective teaching of social studies.

Findings of this study have shown that content for fostering of national unity and national consciousness as part of social studies education has been moderately provided for in the JHS and SHS syllabi. Students also have a positive view of social studies education aim for promoting national unity and consciousness. However, the learning of the subject is hindered by allocation of insufficient periods on the time-table for social studies, teachers' non-use of instructional materials, and overloaded syllabus. In this respect the following recommendations are made:

Social studies should be maintained as a school subject by the CRDD in any future curriculum reforms as its study promotes national unity and national consciousness among the citizenry which is necessary for the nation-building and the sustainable development of the nation.

The Ministry of Education should increase the number of periods allocated to social studies in the SHS time-table so that the subject can be effectively taught and learned.

Teachers in social studies should use TLMS to promote effective social studies education.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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