

## Research Article

# Perceptions of Social Studies Teachers on Teaching Rationale in New Juaben Senior High Schools, Ghana: A Qualitative Study

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**Abstract:** This study explored how Social Studies teachers perceived the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies in the New Juaben Senior High Schools in the Eastern Region of Ghana. Negative attitudes and behaviour among the youth in schools and after are becoming a great concern to Ghanaian society. The rationale for teaching and learning the subject is to produce good citizens. The above indicates that Social Studies as a subject is capable of developing positive attitudes and values in learners to bring about a reduction if not eradication, of negative attitudes among the youth in school and beyond school. For a subject to achieve its core mandate or rationale depends mainly on the teacher. It is based on the above that this research seeks to investigate how the teachers perceived the rationale for teaching and learning the subject at the Senior High Schools in the country. The research made use of qualitative design, using semi-structured interviews to explain and improve qualitative data knowledge. The simple random sampling precisely the lottery method was used to choose a sample size of 24 Social Studies teachers for the study. The study found that most of the teachers perceived the rationale for teaching the subject at the Senior High School as good and capable of producing good and responsible citizens. It is recommended that Social Studies teachers at the Senior High Schools should teach the subject along the rationale of the subject to produce responsible citizens.

**Keywords:** perception, rationale, social studies teachers

## 1. Introduction

The earliest use of the term “social studies” to refer to a school subject was by Thomas Jesse Jones in an article published in the American newspaper, the Southern Worker, in 1925 (Tabachrick, 1991). He later expanded the article into a book titled Social Studies in the Hampton Curriculum, in which he expressed concern that unless young African Americans and Native Americans learned to understand society, the social forces operating within it, and ways to recognize and respond to social power, would never become integral members of the broader society (Tabacbrick, 1991, p.725). Thus, the traditional view of the origins of Social Studies is that in the early 1960s, American society was overwhelmed by violence and social discord. America’s youth became increasingly disobedient, while group violence and child delinquency were rampant (Blege, 2001). In the face of these problems, stakeholders in American education advocated the introduction of a subject in the school curriculum to address the problem in order to produce good and responsible youth. Thus, in 1960, the National Education Association (NEA) was formed to review school curricula to meet the changing needs of American society. One of the NEA’s subcommittees is the Committee on Social Studies in

the American School Curriculum. The committee found no other subject other than Social Studies to help stabilize the society in America (Blege, 2001).

The above clearly shows that the main reason for the introduction of Social Studies in the United States was to help solve social problems. They believe that no other discipline than Social Studies can bring the magic of stability to their society. This suggests that the discipline has the ability to change the bad behaviour of young people in order to build a better society in their country. To add to the above. As Martorella (1994) pointed out the subject, Social Studies produces students who are reflective citizens and have knowledge of concepts, facts, and generalizations concerning the organization, understanding and development of individuals, groups and societies. This means that, Social Studies with its rationale for teaching and learning is capable of equipping future leaders with critical thinking skills to be able to think deeply into issues confronting them as individuals and their society.

According to Nworgu (2007), Social Studies was introduced into German schools shortly after World War II. The subject was used to establish a new political order and provide citizens with a solid knowledge base for good citizenship. In the United Kingdom, he asserts, the subject was used to legitimize the teaching of social sciences, particularly sociology, while also preparing students for their future roles in society. In Japan, Social Studies is taught as a means of cultivating a more democratic society. As a result, it fulfilled its primary objective and rationale of preparing students for responsible citizenship in a democratic community and all facets of national development in the country.

According to Opare and Agyei-Amponsah (2019), Social Studies is crucial for equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary for active citizenship and national development. The study of Social Studies and its rationale in Senior High Schools is considered critical in developing students' critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills to help them become active and responsible citizens who contribute to national development (Munthali & Chavula, 2017; Saatw, 2018).

Various studies have demonstrated that Social Studies and its rationale can help reduce, if not eradicate, societal problems to promote national development by fostering civic engagement and social responsibility among students (Kang, 2015; Saatw, 2018). Therefore, understanding how teachers perceive the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies can inform the development of more effective teaching strategies. For Quashigah (2014), Ghana's future depends on how well today's school children are taught democratic values like freedom of speech and problem-solving. These skills and habits are required to lead a free society in their country. Wu et al. (2017) support this viewpoint by stating that Social Studies and its rationale is to prepare citizens who are better informed, effective, well-equipped, and willing to participate in a democratic society. This view suggests that Social Studies and its rationale for teaching and learning at senior High Schools emphasizes the development of accepted attitudes, values, understanding, and skills that would guide students to make positive contributions to solving challenges facing the nation leading to national growth. (Kankam, 2016).

Furthermore, the aim and rationale of Social Studies is to assist students in better comprehending and coping with the ever-changing economic, political, social, and other aspects of life, enabling them to effectively confront the difficulties and possibilities of living in a world of rapid change (Lawal & Oyeleye, 2003).

The Subject with its rationale brings societal change, and ensures that receivers have meaningful interactions with their physical and social contexts. Social Studies promotes citizenship education, instils a feeling of social consciousness and social responsibility, the values of honesty, cooperation, and nationalism, and develops the necessary abilities to address personal and societal difficulties (Ezegbe et al., 2012). Social Studies and its rationale for teaching and learning in Ghana's Senior High Schools is supposed to prepare and develop the youth to become good citizens who are well-informed about the culture, values, skills, and positive attitudes that can make them meaningful contributors to national development.

According to Quartey (1984), the main problem with utilizing Social Studies to its full potential lies in the classroom teacher. Kankam (2013) argues that Social Studies and its rationale assist learners in constructing robust social understanding and taking seriously the responsibilities of democratic citizenship, which are the fundamental goals of teaching the subject.

In considering the general overview and the rationale of Social Studies, the subject aims to prepare the youth in school to become good citizens who can make a positive impact on the development of Ghana. This statement suggests why the Ghana Education Service (GES) teaching syllabus for Social Studies and its rationale for teaching and learning the subject at the Senior High School (2010) describes the subject as preparing the individual to fit into society and as

a citizen education. Kankam (2013) posits that citizenship education implies educating individuals to become efficient members of their immediate and the general human community, developing a commitment to work effectively with diverse people, and accepting differences in cultures and values to address social and developmental needs or issues. By addressing the research objectives, this study can contribute to the development of a more effective Social Studies teaching and learning that addresses the current social, economic, and political challenges in Ghana, promotes active citizenship, and encourages social responsibility among students.

As reckoned by Kubiako et al. (2012), the identification of the perception of school subjects is a critical part of educational research. Hence, this study sought to fill this research gap by identifying the perception of teachers on the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies in the New Juabeng Municipality.

Blege (2001) provides a summary of what good citizenship is envisioned in sociology. He writes. A good citizen is a person who shows concern for the social issues around him and the wider society. It is an undeniable fact that the goal of Social Studies is to produce good citizens who are capable and willing to solve their personal as well as societal problems. The above statement by Blege reiterates the fact that the subject is capable of producing good citizens who would be concerned with issues around them and their society.

The study sought to investigate how the teachers perceived the rationale for teaching and learning the subject and to ascertain the influence of their perception on their teaching the subject in the New Juabeng Municipality.

### **1.1 Statement of the problem**

The rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies at the Senior High School is to equip the learner with relevant knowledge on the problems of their society, its values, culture and its hopes for the future to bring about development. The rationale in sum, is supposed to produce good and responsible citizens (CRDD, 2010). Negative attitude among the youth in Senior High Schools seems to be becoming alarming these days. The questions that come to mind are: are the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies in Ghanaian schools being achieved as required by the Ghana Education Service? The study seeks to explore how the Social Studies teachers perceived the rationale for teaching and learning the subject at the Senior High schools in the Municipality.

### **1.2 Research questions**

The study was guided by the following questions

1. How do the Social Studies teachers perceive the rationale for teaching and learning the subject at the Senior High Schools in the New Juabeng Municipality?
2. How does the teachers' perception of the rationale influence their teaching of the subject in the area?

## **2. Literature**

### **2.1 Emergence of Social Studies education in Ghana**

Historically, some scholars argue that Social Studies should be included in the educational system in the Ghanaian school curriculum because of its importance worldwide. This inclusion would give students a solid foundation in various subjects, especially those they won't pursue further (Stern & Stern, 2010). These advocates attest that Social Studies education has an important influence on the students' lives, especially after school. Stern and Stern (2010) maintain that Social Studies encourages students to form opinions and helps students support their arguments with evidence. Social Studies allows students to develop ideas, fostering critical analysis and understanding of the connections among facts, values, and judgements. The content of Social Studies provides many possibilities for rational discussion among students in the classroom.

The development of rationale debate in classrooms serves as preparation grounds for students to contribute to national debate when such students assume a unique position in the future. The rationale discussion also enables students to learn content knowledge and helps them to develop critical thinking skills (Parker, 2015). Social Studies education is a well-rounded subject that combines many disciplines into a single issue. The study of Social Studies helps students to:

- i. compare and contrast how race, class, and gender have played a role in society over time;
- ii. establish a backdrop for the world we live in and their role within it;
- iii. educate students that they are a part of a larger social group that requires a structure to function correctly;
- iv. research global economic trends to understand better global issues and
- v. be compassionate and tolerant of people from all over the world (CRDD 2010).

Social Studies in Ghana prepares students to develop knowledge for examination purposes and trains students to teach citizenship responsibilities and eventually contribute effectively to the socio-economic development of Ghana.

Until the New Educational Reform Programme (NERP) implementation in the 1980s, the development of Social Studies in Ghanaian schools has been very unsteady. In the 1940s, Teacher Training Colleges in Ghana, now Colleges of Education, began teaching Social Studies as part of their curriculum before NERP was implemented (Kankam, 2016). The teaching of Social Studies had first experimented with in three training colleges in Ghana, particularly Achimota Training College-Accra, now Accra College of Education-Accra, Presbyterian Training College-Akropong, now Presbyterian College of Education-Akropong and Wesley Training College-Kumasi now Wesley College of Education-Kumasi. Social Studies training provided to trained instructors at the University of Gold Coast's Institute of Education aided these investigations. Those experiments were short-lived according to Kankam (2016), due to negative perceptions and attitudes toward the Social Studies programme following the resumption of teaching traditional separate subjects like history and geography in Colleges of Education in the early part of 1959. The study of the many disciplines most likely began because Social Studies graduates from teacher training colleges had little experience teaching the subject effectively.

However, they had been alternatively at ease coping with the issue within the different methods. It also enabled them to enhance their grades in these subject areas in school certificate exams. Other personalities in academia or the Ghana educational system frowned on Social Studies education (Kankam, 2016). Their academic and professional experiences or history of the sparkling graduate could not aid the teaching of the subject. According to Tamakloe (1988), the growth of Social Studies education began to revitalise at teacher training institutes in the late 1960s. The return of graduates and non-graduate teachers from Wales and Bristol to look at "Environmental Studies and Social Studies" was one of the factors that accounted for this new turn of events. By 1971, approximately fourteen of these graduates and non-graduate teachers were posted to instructional establishments to spearhead the development of the Social Studies programme that they had developed. Others were dispatched to local and district education offices to serve as topic organisers and coordinators for the programme.

The CRDD assisted in creating environmental studies instruction for primary schools, which began in 1969. Those programmes were to replace existing ones called centres of interest. The British Council organised refresher courses for these educators trained overseas, contributing to the revival of Social Studies education. The purpose of this change was to upgrade their expertise so that they might effectively spread the gospel. These publications presented others with the possibility to spotlight the teaching of Social Studies by invitation. The established order of experimental Junior Secondary Schools, now the Junior High Schools system, in 1976, with Social Studies forming a part of its core subjects or curriculum, accelerated the development of the subject in Ghana. According to Tamakloe (2008), instructors for the programme were educated at teacher training institutions following three batches of Social Studies. A shortage of junior secondary schools in the early 2000s led to a surplus of Social Studies teachers. The middle schools operating alongside the few experimental junior secondary schools did not offer Social Studies to absorb the rest of the educated Social Studies teachers in the middle schools. As a result, there was a teacher shortage. Kankam (2016) describes an attempt to introduce Social Studies as one plagued by a "chequered history" because of some of those challenges mentioned by Tamakloe (1988).

The 1987 New Educational Reform Programme (NERP), which turned to start in the 1980s, had a splendid impact on the full implementation of Social Studies education in Ghana. Social Studies had been removed from the primary school curricula across the country by these specially trained facilitators. Before the NERP, Social Studies as a subject was not available in all parts of the nation (Ghana). In 1987, it was included as a required subject in the curricula and textbooks for junior secondary schools. The New Education Reform Programme dropped Social Studies from the high school curriculum between 1987 and 1998. Social Studies education has been restricted to junior secondary schools (now junior high schools) and training education colleges, as Bekoe and Eshun (2013) stated. To aid the development of Social Studies in Ghana, some textbooks (Ghana Social Studies Series) were produced for the primary schools.

The preceding discussions endorse that the launching of NERP seems the development of Social Studies is making headway. Courses in Social Studies were available in every senior high school and university. For example, the University of Education, Winneba, offers Social Studies programmes like Bachelor of Arts Education (B.A. Ed. in Social Studies), a Master of Education in Social Studies and Masters and Doctoral Degrees in Philosophy in Social Studies (Ayaaba, 2011).

## ***2.2 Teachers' perception and its influence on their teaching of the subject***

To talk about teachers' perception of the rationale for teaching Social Studies at Senior High Schools and the influence of their perception on their teaching of the subject to bring about students' achievements, several studies were carried out by experts. Olawepo (1984) conducted research on Teachers' perception of the effectiveness of the methods of teaching Social Studies in Ekiti State, Nigeria. This study sampled the perception of secondary school teachers on the effectiveness of various methods used to teach Social Studies in secondary schools. It also examined the methods that facilitate learning more, the method commonly used by male and female teachers and also by qualified and non-qualified teachers.

The study revealed that teachers perceived problem-solving as the best method and Note-dictation as the least effective method of teaching Social Studies to enhance students' achievement in the subject. The research ascertained the perception of the teachers on the effectiveness of their methods of teaching Social Studies but the context and methods used by the researcher were too narrow. The context of his research covers teachers' perceptions, and the method used was quantitative. My research in context also covers teachers' perceptions of teaching and learning the subject. But his method employed was quantitative while mine was qualitative to be able to cover a wider aspect of the problem. To add to the above, the population for the research was 320 teachers. This may not provide an in-depth investigation into the problem. My study only covers 24 teachers to enable me to delve deeper into the problem.

Bursa and Erson (2016) in Turkey conducted another study on Social Studies Teachers' perceptions and experiences of Social Justice. They aimed to understand social studies teachers' perceptions and experiences of social justice. The researchers employed a phenomenological research design selected in accordance with maximum variation sampling. They recruited 10 teachers as the sample size. They collected data by conducting semi-structured interviews with the teachers and classroom observation.

The study found that teachers perceived the concept of social justice in terms of equality, justice, discrimination, human rights, respect, and tolerance. The strength of their research was the instrument used. The interview may help them to get insight into the problem. Their study added classroom observation. My research did not include classroom observation but speaking to the teachers directly gave me in-depth information on the problem. My research employed interviews to enable me to cover a wider aspect of the problem.

Social Studies teachers' perception and practice of Educating Citizens in democracy in upper classes in Primary Schools in Botswana was a research conducted by Mhlaul (2010). The purpose of her study was to explore the social studies teachers' conceptualizations, experiences, ideas, beliefs and practices of developing citizens in a democracy in upper classes in primary schools in Botswana. The study adopted a qualitative research approach and employed the naturalistic paradigm.

The findings of her study have revealed a gloomy picture of citizenship education as perceived, interpreted and enacted within primary schools investigated hence leading to the conclusion that citizenship education remains an illusion rather than a reality. The qualitative method employed by the researcher enabled her to unearth the problem and recommend a solution but the weakness of her research was the contextual covering of only the primary schoolteachers. To the understanding of my research, the success of a research magnitude must be done on mature individuals. It is upon the above that my study covers the Social Studies teachers at the Senior High Schools to get adequate and dependable information from the teachers on the issue.

Another study by Yesiltas (2016) on An Analysis of Social Studies Teachers' perception levels regarding Web Pedagogical Content Knowledge in Turkey. The purpose of his study was to analyze social studies teachers' perceptual levels regarding Web pedagogical content knowledge. The population of the study covers social studies teachers in Turkey while the sample of the study covers 601 social studies teachers who were randomly selected from 75 cities of Turkey in 2015. The results indicate that social studies teachers' perceptions regarding Web pedagogical content knowledge are high. The above research as a strength was able to expose the Web pedagogical content knowledge of

the Social Studies Teachers. It is a strength because the 21<sup>st</sup> century Social Studies teacher requires Web pedagogical knowledge to be able to effectively teach the subject. The weakness of the study was the content covered. The research only covers the knowledge of the teachers. Also, the methodology used in his research was quantitative. This makes the coverage of the issue too narrow. My research covers knowledge, attitudes, values and skills which makes Social Studies a holistic subject

### **3. Methods**

A total of 24 teachers were selected to participate in this qualitative study. The simple random sampling through the lottery method was used to select 24 teachers out of 60. This was done to give the 60 Social Studies teachers an equal chance of being selected. Sixty (60) pieces of paper were obtained of which twenty-four (24) were written “Yes” and thirty-six (36) “No”. The papers were mixed up in a container and given to the teachers to pick. Those who picked the Yes were selected for the study.

#### ***3.1 Ethical considerations***

As this study utilized human participants, and in the interest of maintaining the integrity of the research, the researcher made every effort to ensure that certain ethical issues were strictly addressed with respect to the privacy as well as the security of the participants. These issues were identified in advance so as to prevent problems that could arise during the research process. Among the significant issues that were considered included consent, confidentiality and data protection. Thus, prior to commencing with the research, permission was obtained from each participant, who participated in the study. The names of the participants were secured. The objective, purpose and significance of the study were all relayed to the participants before initiating the research process. All data collected from the participants were kept in a secure location.

### **4. Data analysis**

This research presented the major findings from the interviews with the twenty-four teacher participants. The following are the major conclusions that emerged from the study.

#### ***4.1 The rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies in the Senior High Schools in Ghana***

The first finding that emerged from the interview was about the “rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies in the Senior High Schools in Ghana,” This speaks to the intended purpose of senior high school Social Studies in Ghana.

The following sub-findings (sub-themes) from the interview suggest how Social Studies prepares individuals to fit into society. Below is a table of the themes and sub-themes that came out of the interview with the teachers (See Table 1).

**Table 1.** Themes and sub-themes of data collected during the interviews

Themes	Sub-themes
The rationale for teaching Social Studies	The subject studies societal problems
	Social Studies prepares the individual to fit into the society
	Social Studies equips students about their culture
	Multi-disciplinary and takes its sources from the social sciences
Teachers' Perception of the rationale For teaching the Subject	Teachers views on whether the rationale of teaching the subject is good or bad
Teachers' perception of the effectiveness of the rationale	Teachers' views on the effectiveness of the rationale of teaching and learning Social Studies at the senior high school
	Regular and punctual in class
Teachers' perceived influence on the rationale for teaching and learning the subject	Advanced Preparation Towards Social Studies Lessons
	Use of teaching and learning resources in Social Studies lessons
	Methods and techniques of teaching Social Studies

#### 4.1.1 *The subject studies the problem of society*

The responses indicate that social studies as a subject trains students with the knowledge and competence to deal with societal problems. They hold the view that the rationale of the subject is good as when the subject is taught well, students acquire relevant knowledge, positive attitudes, values and skills needed to solve their personal as well as societal problems.

For instance, one of the respondents (TP. 1) mentioned that:

*To my understanding, the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies is to prepare them to solve their personal as well as societal problems. I think the subject equips the students with skills to solve their personal as well as societal problems. The subject is designed in such a way that the problems of the society will be taught to the learners. On knowing the problems, they would now attempt to solve them. The subject makes them proper and complete human beings by instilling in the learners the needed attitudes and values that can help them in their future lives for them to become well-behaved members of society. To my understanding, the subject has been added to the school curriculum to help produce participatory future leaders who will not think of stealing the monies meant for development. He added that, Social Studies as a rationale is to produce students who are critical thinkers who will always think outside the box to come out with new ideas to help solve societal problems.*

To add to the above, another teacher respondent (TP. 8) said that:

*If Social Studies is to be taken more seriously through effective teaching and learning, the subject will assist the young ones in school acquire the necessary knowledge and skills that can contribute to their ability to solve personal and societal problems for national growth. I'm saying this because the content of Social Studies is to enable the young ones to solve problems in their society and fact. I must say that the content is made up of the various challenges facing our society today and in the future. So the content exposes the learners to the numerous problems of society and various ways of dealing with them. I must conclude that Social Studies should be seen and taken as a life-living subject. So no one can dispute that the subject is helping students know the problems of society. Knowledge they say is power, therefore, knowing the problems will enable students to help solve them.*

The rationale discussion also enables students to learn content knowledge and helps them to develop critical thinking skills (Parker, 2015). All these respondents focused on developing positive attitudes and values in the

individual because they cherished Social Studies in senior high school. The participants also indicated that Social Studies significantly impact the students' attitude development in school and outside school. This view confirms the observations of CRDD (2010) about the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies as a subject that prepares an individual to acquire positive attitudes and values towards individual and societal issues and makes them become more responsible citizens capable and willing to contribute to societal advancement.

#### **4.1.2 Social Studies prepares the individual to fit into society**

On the issue of the subject preparing the individual to fit into society, the teacher respondents agree that Social Studies equips the students with knowledge, attitudes, values and skills to be able to be participatory, concerned, reflective, competent, critical thinking and patriotic to their society and nation at large. Some of their responses are indicated below.

One of the teacher respondents (TR. 13) has this to say:

*The rationale of Social Studies is to prepare the students for citizenship education. That is to say that the subject equips the students with knowledge, attitudes, values and skills to be able to be participatory, concerned, reflective, competent and patriotic to their society and nation at large. This makes them good citizens who will be capable and willing to contribute to the development of their society and Ghana as a whole. In sum, I think the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies is to prepare the students to fit into society. To fit into society to my understanding implies having adequate knowledge of society.*

Again teacher respondent (TR. 24) indicated that:

*I have the conviction that Social Studies as a rationale prepares the individual learner to fit into society. This is because the subject helps the learner to develop academic skills such as observation, investigation and participation in social affairs. All these go a long way to help him or her live positively in the society in which the learner finds him or herself. The above to me as a teacher would enable the learners to fit into society. Fitting into society to my understanding implies the ability of future leaders to become responsible citizens.*

On the contrary, one of the Teacher Respondents (TR. 5) said:

*I don't believe the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies is to prepare the individual learners to fit into society. This is because the subject has been in the system for some time now but the behavior and attitudes of the present and past students do not indicate they were prepared to fit into society. Indiscipline and moral decadence among students of late indicate they are not prepared to fit into society. There are even some of the Social Studies teachers who themselves are worse off in terms of indiscipline than the students. This and many more make me believe that the subject does not prepare the individual to fit into the Society.*

#### **4.1.3 Social Studies equips students with knowledge of their culture**

When the question on whether the rationale of Social Studies is to equip the students with knowledge of their culture or not, the teacher respondents agree that the subject equips the students with knowledge of the culture of Ghana and other people of the world. They indicated that Social studies teach the students the way of life of the people, their festivals, staple food, and dressing just to mention but a few. These and many others equip them with the knowledge of their culture. They have the following to say:

One of the teacher respondents (TR. 23) has this to say:

*To my understanding, the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies is about cultural studies. The subject equips the students with knowledge of the culture of Ghana and other people of the world. Social studies teach the students the way of life of the people, their festivals, staple food, and dressing just to mention but a few. These help the students to live a life that is in line with the culture of their people. The above*



*prepares the students to become responsible adults when they grow. It is also to prepare them to take up the roles of leadership in societal institutions.*

Again, another teacher respondent (R. 24) indicated that:

*To the best of my understanding, the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies is to equip students with relevant knowledge, positive attitudes, values and skills for their personal development and the development of society. This is to help them interact positively with the social and the physical environment. The students are to be equipped with the skills to solve the problems facing the social and physical environment (and be able to help solve those problems) in their country and beyond. The knowledge of the physical and social environment would help them know their*

On the contrary, one of the Respondents (TR. 10) has this to say:

*I don't think the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies is to equip the learners with knowledge about their culture. This is because the subject has been in the system for some time now, but the learners in school and out of school do not show attitudes and behaviours that indicate that they have adequate knowledge about their culture. The culture of Ghana depicts decency in terms of behavior, dress and speech. But the youth of today who have gone through school do not exhibit such attitudes and behaviours. Most of them don't respect the elderly, they don't dress well and they don't show any sign of knowledge about their culture.*

#### **4.1.4 Multi-disciplinary and takes its sources from the social sciences**

On the rationale of Social Studies being a multi-disciplinary and taking its sources from the social sciences, the respondents agree that the subject takes facts, ideas, principles, concepts and generalizations from the social sciences such as history, geography, economics, sociology just to mention but a few, to equip the students with knowledge, attitudes, values and skills to be responsible citizens. Below is what they have to say:

One of the teacher respondents (TR. 10) indicated that:

*I think the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies in Ghanaian schools is the reason for its inclusion in the school curriculum. To my understanding, it is a subject that helps students to acquire and draw knowledge from the social sciences such as geography, economics, history sociology, government and the rest to understand the problems of their society and to help solve the problems. The subject is an integration of facts, ideas, principles and concepts from these social science subjects. I think students gain knowledge from these social sciences to enable them to understand their society better, in terms of its problems and values. Gaining knowledge from these subjects puts students in a strong position to become responsible citizens capable of contributing to societal growth.*

Another teacher Respondent (TR. 13) also said:

*I believe in the fact that the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies, is that the subject is Multi-discipline because the subject takes its content and methods from different disciplines to form the subject. The above to my understanding is to equip the learners with a variety of knowledge, attitudes, values and skills from the various social sciences to enable them to be responsible citizens. The above to me makes the learning of the subject very unique from other subjects.*

On the contrary, one of the teachers (TR. 4) has this to say:

*To the best of my knowledge, the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies is not a multi-disciplinary one as people are saying. This is because the subject is not proving enough of that. Social Studies teachers*

*including myself and learners continue to teach and learn the subject in the opposite of the multi-disciplinary manner. A multi-disciplinary subject must be seen to be taught and studied in that manner. The subject is rather taught and studied to only cover knowledge in the expense of attitude, values and skills. Even there are some biases in the syllabus when it comes to the content contributions from the social sciences. There is more content from some areas such as geography and history than other subjects. For a subject to be tagged multi-disciplinary, it must have a fair and balanced contribution to its content and the teaching and learning must also balance the goal of the subject in terms of knowledge, attitudes, values and skills.*

#### **4.2 Teachers' perception of the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies in the Senior High Schools in Ghana**

The Social Studies teachers perceive the subject to be good and they also believe that to enable the youth in school to become more reflective individuals, they needed knowledge and skills from the Social Studies subject to become responsible citizens. Its stakeholders have understood Social Studies as a subject that functions as the acquisition of knowledge and skills that may promote positive attitudes and values, which can change the learners to become additionally disciplined and solve personal and social issues (Quartey, 2003).

This is what they have to say:

One of the teacher respondents (TR. 3) said that:

*I perceive Social Studies to be good and if it is taken more seriously through effective teaching and learning, the subject will assist the young ones in school acquire the necessary knowledge and skills that can contribute to their ability to solve personal and societal problems for national growth. I'm saying this because the rationale of Social Studies is to enable the young ones to solve problems in their society and in fact, I must conclude that Social Studies should be seen and taken as a life-living subject. I perceive Social Studies to be citizenship education.*

Similarly, another teacher respondent (TR. 16) also said that:

*I perceive the subject to be good. In fact what makes me like the subject is the relevant nature of Social Studies education, which aims to prepare the learners to think critically to make them problem solvers. The key issue in Social Studies education is the preparation of the young ones in school to develop critical thinking skills that will enable them to become open-minded, make a complete analysis of issues and solve problems. The content of Social Studies provides many possibilities for rational discussion among students in the classroom. The development of rational discussion in classrooms serves as preparation grounds for students to contribute to national debate when such students assume a special position in the future.*

Contrary to the above, some of the teacher respondents indicated that they perceived the rationale of teaching and learning Social Studies to be a subject that can be taught for students to gain knowledge to be able to pass their examinations. It is a subject that is not difficult to teach and learn. He sees the subject to be the one that helps students to gain knowledge of the world around them to be able to pass examinations. Below is what he said.

One of the teacher respondents (TR. 9) has this to say:

*I perceive the rationale of teaching and learning Social Studies to be a subject that can be taught for students to gain knowledge to be able to pass their examinations. It is a subject that is not difficult to teach and learn. I also see the subject to be the one that helps students gain knowledge of the world around them to be able to pass examinations. The subject to me is not difficult to teach and learn. It is a subject that helps students to pass with ease. Students easily score A1 and B2 in the examination every now and then. So I perceive the subject to help students gain knowledge and good grades for further studies. I think the rationale for teaching and learning the subject is effective. We can observe positive attitudes in our students due to the rationale of the subject.*

The above statement contradicts what Quartey (1985) indicated that Social Studies equip the student with the tools necessary to solve his or her personal as well as societal problems. The tools according to Quartey, are relevant knowledge, positive attitudes, values and skills. The subject is understood in the view of Quartey to equip the student with relevant knowledge, positive attitudes, values and skills to be able to solve his or her personal and societal problems. It is not a subject that prepares students with the knowledge to pass examinations easily but to prepare them holistically to fit into society.

#### **4.2.1 Effectiveness of the rationale**

When the question on the effectiveness of the rationale was posed, the teacher respondents indicated that the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies is effective because the subject has produced students with positive attitudes and values over the years. They have the following to say:

One of the teacher respondents (TR. 3) said:

*I think the rationale for teaching and learning the subject is very effective. Students are exhibiting the knowledge, attitudes, values and skills required by a Social Studies learner. There is several evidence to show that the rationale is positively changing the attitudes of our students. The aims, objectives and nature of the subject are actually equipping our students with the relevant knowledge, positive attitudes, values and skills needed to solve their personal as well as societal problems in the near future.*

Another teacher respondent (TR.16) has this to say:

*The rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies is very effective. Students are putting up positive attitudes, relevant knowledge, values and skills required by a Social Studies student. I think although there may be some of the students who may still be putting up irresponsible behavior, I can boldly say the majority of the students have changed from their bad behavior to acceptable behaviours due to the teaching and learning of Social Studies.*

The above comments are in line with Quartey's (1985) when he said Social Studies equip the learner with relevant knowledge, positive attitudes, values and skills needed to solve his or her personal and societal problems. These also support the argument put forward by Nwalado and Oboro (2014) that Social Studies equips the learner to develop knowledge and skills through generalisations, creativity, and independent thinking. According to Jiboku (1980), Social Studies is the study of how to become a responsible citizen in a free society by developing the skills, information, attitudes, and values that are necessary to do so.

### **4.3 The influence of teachers' perception of the rationale on their teaching of Social Studies**

#### **4.3.1 Regular and punctual in class**

On issues concerning the influence of teachers' perception of the rationale on their teaching of Social Studies, some of the data revealed how some of the teachers handled the subjects. The teacher respondents believed that the rationale for teaching Social Studies motivates them to put in their best to teach to produce responsible citizens for their nation. The following extracts show what some Social Studies teachers do in class.

One of the teacher respondents (TR. 22) said:

*I believe that punctuality and regularity are one of the values emphasised by the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies at senior high schools in Ghana. I am always punctual and regular in my class to help students acquire the relevant knowledge, positive attitudes, values and skills emphasised by the rationale for teaching the subject in the senior high school syllabus. As a Social Studies teacher, I think I have to live a life worthy of emulation to my students. My attitudes and behaviour must conform to what I teach the students.*

Similarly, another teacher respondent (TR. 24) indicated that:

*I believe that teachers must be regular and punctual in class to help students acquire the knowledge for which they are in school. Social Studies is a subject that covers the social and physical environment. This makes it very broad in scope. Therefore one must always be on time and in class to be able to complete the syllabus and to equip students with the knowledge, attitudes and skills required by the rationale for teaching and learning the subject. That is what I always do.*

#### **4.3.2 Advanced preparation towards Social Studies lessons**

When the issues of the influence of the teachers' perception of the rationale of teaching and learning Social Studies have on their advance preparation towards the teaching of the subjects, most of them indicated that they are always motivated by the rationale of the subject to do effective advance preparations before they enter the class to teach. Below are what they have to say

The first teacher Respondent (TR. 2) has this to say:

*To my understanding, the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies at the Senior High School is to produce good and responsible citizens who will be capable and willing to contribute to the development of the nation Ghana. Due to the above, I believe that Social Studies has the biggest responsibility to make the rationale of the subject a reality therefore there was the need for the teacher to prepare in advance to meet the demand of the subject. This makes me attend in-service training, seminars and workshops as a first-line action to always be current and abreast with the modern methods, techniques and strategies of teaching the subject to achieve the rationale of the subject. Secondly, I always prepare adequately in terms of writing my lesson scheme of work and notes in advance before going to the class to teach. I also make sure that I gather adequate information and teaching and learning resources that would enable me to teach the subject effectively for students to also learn effectively to achieve the rationale of the subject.*

#### **4.3.3 Use of teaching and learning resources in Social Studies lessons**

When the question on the perceived influence of the perception of the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies have on their use of teaching and learning of the subject, the teacher respondents indicated that they are motivated by the rationale of the subject to employ teaching and learning resources in their teaching and learning of the subject. They have the following to say:

The first respondent (TR. 1) has this to say:

*To my understanding, the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies at the senior high school demands the use of teaching and learning resources to bring about effective learning of the subject. Due to this, I always go to class with varied teaching and learning resources to enhance the understanding of my learners. For a teacher to equip students with relevant knowledge, positive attitudes, values and skills, one must arm him or herself adequately with resources to be able to get learners to comprehend what is taught. Due to this I always work with either audio, visual or audio-visual materials to make my lessons very effective to the students. This is the only way I can achieve the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies in my class.*

This participant strongly argued that planning of instructional programme for Social Studies calls for the inclusion of many and different resources such as approved textbooks, time for Social Studies lessons, resource person, excursion or field trips, class size, among many others. A teaching-learning resource, according to Tamakloe et al. (2005), "is any form of material that a teacher uses to facilitate the learning, understanding or acquisition of knowledge, concepts, principles or skills by his students" (p. 63)

#### **4.3.4 Methods and techniques of teaching Social Studies**

On the influence of the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies on their methods and techniques of teaching and learning the subject, the teacher respondents indicated that they are motivated by the rationale for

teaching and learning the subject to employ the appropriate methods and techniques of teaching the subject to produce responsible citizens. They have this to say:

One of the teacher respondents (TR. 7) indicated that:

*The Subject of Social Studies deals with the physical and social environment, so I mostly send my students out of the classroom to have a firsthand experience with most of the things they learn in the classroom. I believe this will enhance their understanding of whatever I teach them. I employ everything I can do to help the students do effective learning. This to me is the only way to produce good citizens for our dear nation. There is motivation on the part of students anytime they are sent outside to see what they have been talking about in the classroom. So I always vary my methods of teaching to help students achieve the rationale for teaching and learning the subject.*

This argument supports the earlier observations made by Tamakloe et al. (2005) when they maintain that a resource person's invitation helps break the monotony in which the students continually hear the same person- their teacher.

## 5. Findings

The findings are presented below;

How do Social Studies teachers perceive the rationale for teaching and learning the subject at the Senior High Schools in the New Juaben Municipality?

### 5.1 Social Studies as a tool for studying and addressing societal problems

From the interviews, some of the participants described the rationale for teaching Social Studies as an essential component of the Social Studies Curriculum that directs the subject towards acknowledging the problems of society and endeavours to equip students with the skills, knowledge, and attitude needed to address these issues. Therefore, the rationale for the subject is good.

A young teacher with a Master's degree in Social Studies education expressed his opinion by saying that:

*"To my understanding, the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies is to prepare them to solve their personal as well as societal problems. I think the subject equips the students with skills to solve their personal as well as societal problems. The subject is designed in such a way that the problems of the society will be taught to the learners. On knowing the problems, they would now attempt to solve them. The subject makes them proper and complete human beings by instilling in the learners the needed attitudes and values that can help them in their future lives for them to become well-behaved members of society. To my understanding, the subject has been added to the school curriculum to help produce participatory future leaders who will not think of stealing the monies meant for development. He added that the social Studies rationale is to produce students who are critical thinkers who will always think outside the box to come out with new ideas to help solve societal problems". (Said by TP1).*

### 5.2 Social Studies prepares the individual to fit into society

In support of these conceptualizations, the data from the interviews, however, revealed that some of the participants hold the perception that the rationale of Social Studies can be linked to cultural and moral education. They mentioned that, based on the rationale of the subject, Social Studies equips the students with knowledge, attitudes, values and skills to be able to be participatory, concerned, reflective, competent, critical thinking and patriotic to their society and nation at large. Here are some of the statements made by the participants.

*In sum, I think the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies is to prepare the students to fit into society. To fit into the society to my understanding implies to have adequate knowledge of the society". (TP13)*

*“The rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies is to help change bad behaviours in the learners and instil discipline and respect into them. The subject is to help students know the differences between good and bad behaviour and attitudes to help them appreciate good behaviours and stay away from bad deeds. The subject is carefully planned to expose students to the consequences of bad behaviours in society. This enables them to always avoid the bad behaviours”.* (TP19)

### **5.3 Multi-disciplinary and takes its sources from the social sciences**

On the rationale of Social Studies being a multi-disciplinary and taking its sources from the social sciences, some of the participants perceived this rationale as that which drives Social Studies to act as a cohesive element that puts together ideas, concepts, and principles from the social science that are needed for citizenship education. Below are what some of the participants said;

“I think the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies in Ghanaian schools is the reason for its inclusion in the school curriculum. To my understanding, it is a subject that helps students to acquire and draw knowledge from the social sciences such as geography, economics, history sociology, government and the rest to understand the problems of their society and to help solve the problems. The subject is an integration of facts, ideas, principles and concepts from these social science subjects. I think students gain knowledge from these social sciences to enable them to understand their society better, in terms of its problems and values. Gaining knowledge from these subjects puts students in a strong position to become responsible citizens capable of contributing to societal growth (R10)”.

### **5.4 How does the teachers’ perception of the rationale influence their teaching of the subject in the area?**

The research Question 2 explores how teachers’ perceptions of the rationale of Social Studies influence their teaching methodologies and classroom interactions. The results obtained are presented under different themes.

#### **5.4.1 Regular and punctual in class**

On issues concerning the influence of teachers’ perception of the rationale for teaching Social Studies. The participants believed that the rationale of Social Studies motivated them to put in their best to teach to produce responsible citizens for their nation. The following extracts show what some Social Studies teachers do in class.

One of the teacher respondents (TR. 22) said:

*“I believe that punctuality and regularity are one of the values emphasised by the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies at the senior high schools in Ghana. I am always punctual and regular in my class to help students acquire the relevant knowledge, positive attitudes, values and skills emphasised by the rationale for teaching the subject in the senior high school syllabus. As a Social Studies teacher, I think I have to live a life worthy of emulation to my students. My attitudes and behaviour must conform to what I teach the students”.*

#### **5.4.2 Preparation towards Social Studies lessons**

When the issues of the influence of the teacher’s perception of the rationale of teaching and learning Social Studies have on their preparation towards the teaching of the subject, most of them indicated that they are always motivated by the rationale of the subject to do effective advance preparations before they enter the class to teach. Below are what they have to say:

One of the teacher respondents (TR. 19) said:

*“I indicated earlier that the rationale for teaching Social Studies is very relevant to society. Due to that I always do what it takes to do effective teaching during my lessons. I do a lot of preparation before going to the class to teach. I make sure I gather enough information needed to do effective teaching of the subject”.*

*before I go to the classroom to teach. I always make sure all my learners benefit from my class. My teaching and learning materials are always available for use in my lessons”.*

#### **5.4.3 Use of teaching and learning resources in Social Studies lessons**

When the question on the perceived influence of the perception of the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies have on their use of teaching and learning resources of the subject, the teacher respondents indicated that they are motivated by the rationale of the subject to employ teaching and learning resources in their teaching and learning of the subject. They had the following to say:

The first respondent (TR. 1) had this to say:

*“To my understanding, the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies at the senior high school demands the use of teaching and learning resources to bring about effective learning of the subject. Due to this, I always go to class with varied teaching and learning resources to enhance the understanding of my learners. For a teacher to equip students with relevant knowledge, positive attitudes, values and skills, one must arm himself or herself adequately with resources to be able to get learners to comprehend what is taught. Due to this I always work with either audio, visual or audio-visual materials to make my lessons very effective to the students. This is the only way I can achieve the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies in my class”.*

#### **5.4.4 Methods and techniques of teaching Social Studies**

On the influence of the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies on their methods and techniques of teaching and learning the subject, the teacher respondents indicated that they are motivated by the rationale for teaching and learning the subject to employ the appropriate methods and techniques of teaching the subject to produce responsible citizens. They had this to say:

One of the teacher respondents (TR. 7) indicated that:

*“The Subject Social Studies deals with the physical and social environment, so I mostly send my students out of the classroom to have a first-hand experience with most of the things they learn in the classroom. I believe this will enhance their understanding of whatever I teach them. I employ everything I can do to help the students do effective learning. This to me is the only way to produce good citizens for our dear nation. There is motivation on the part of students anytime they are sent outside to see what they have been talking about in the classroom. So I always vary my methods of teaching to help students achieve the rationale for teaching and learning the subject”.*

## **6. Conclusion**

On the issue of teachers’ perception of the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies at the Senior High School, the results indicated that the majority of the teachers perceived the subject to be good. They agreed with the saying that the subject equips the learners with skills to be able to solve their personal as well as their societal problems. The above is in line with the Curriculum Research and Development (CRDD, 2010) indicated in the Senior High School Syllabus where they indicated that Social Studies studies the problems of society and prepares the learner to tackle and solve their personal as well as societal problems.

On the influence of the teachers’ perception of the rationale for teaching and learning Social Studies at the Senior High Schools in Ghana, the findings indicate that since the majority of them perceive the rationale for teaching and learning the subject to be good, they are positively influenced to teach the subject as the rationale requires. For instance, they are always regular in class to teach, they prepare adequately before going to class for Social Studies lessons, they make sure they employ teaching and learning resources in their Social Studies lessons to enhance learners’ understanding and they equally use the appropriate methods, techniques and strategies in their Social Studies lessons.

## 6.1 Recommendations

For effective Social Studies education in senior high schools, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, when developing the Common Core Social Studies curriculum should continue to emphasize the integral role of the rationale of Social Studies in the curriculum.

Moreover, the Ghana Education Service and heads of senior high schools should create regular professional development opportunities for Social Studies teachers. This training should focus on deepening teachers' understanding of the rationale of teaching Social Studies and equip them with effective and engaging instructional practices.

Teachers teaching Social Studies at the SHS should teach the subject along the rationale for teaching and learning the subject.

## Conflict of interest

The author declares no competing financial interest.

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