



Teacher Attributes and Quality of Social Studies Instruction in Ghanaian Colleges of Education

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Abstract: This study investigated teacher attributes and the quality of Social Studies instruction in Ghanaian Colleges of Education using the mixed methods approach. The study sampled 38 out of 190 teacher educators from 38 teacher training institutions to participate in the study by filling a questionnaire and engaging in the interview schedule. While interview data was thematically analyzed, quantitative data from the questionnaire was presented using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations. The study established that teacher educators possessed the required knowledge and skills and were competent to handle the social studies subject. Their academic and professional qualifications were linked with the quality of instruction. The study recommends that a variety of professional development programs for social studies educators to increase competence and improve their skills for teaching. Teacher educators should be encouraged to go for further studies as part of their professional development which will improve their quality of delivery.

Keywords: Social studies Education; social studies educator; teacher attributes.

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Introduction

Quality education depends on well-educated and competent teachers who can deliver appropriate content to learners (Siraj et al., 2019). For this reason, professionalizing the teaching workforce by raising teachers' qualifications is the central goal of educational policy reforms (Madani, 2019). With respect to a worldwide perspective, the mission to address today's enduring societal problems has typically awakened social studies' overall

framework. Social studies has caused tremendous influences on people's attitudes (Anazodo & Ezenwile, 2012). According to Adeyemi and Adeyinka (2003), African countries need to find means to modify their educational systems to meet demands of current challenges that face nations.

After the education system was reorganized in 1987, Social Studies became a crucial component of the Ghanaian education (Acquah-Doughan, 2015). However, it is not clear if the discipline has achieved

its learning objective of fostering effective social conscience that can serve as a buffer against social vices (Ayaaba, 2020). Instruction in social studies is required to be engaging, which means that it should be full of activities that help students develop proper attitudes and values needed to perform appropriately in social settings.

Importantly, qualifications, experience, knowledge and practical application of a variety of teaching techniques in the classroom are essential features for achievement of intended learning objectives. Social Studies is a core discipline in Colleges of Education in Ghana. The efficacy of social studies instruction is mostly dependent on the instructors who are responsible for enforcing the curriculum (Lunenberget al., 2014).

Henceforth, it is important that social sciences educators possess required credentials to effectively teach the subject so that its core goals can be achieved. According to Kanda (2012), the primary objectives of teaching social studies include to help students develop an authoritative understanding of their society and to take their obligations seriously as citizens. With respect to the qualities of a teacher, Yidana and Lawal (2015) argued that teacher educators need to have the understanding of the subject matter for them to teach effectively. They should be able to clearly understand contemporary issues so as to effectively facilitate the teaching and learning of social studies. They must bear the responsibility for the learners' wellbeing and they must help learners to develop required abilities and moral values that are so important in society. Effective teaching encompasses techniques of portraying and articulating the subject that make it understandable. Tutors must comprehend how concepts relate to many academic subjects as well as to daily life (Shulman, 2000). To achieve effective teaching, teachers' knowledge of both the subject and the pedagogy is very vital.

It is also critical for Social Studies teachers to have knowledge of instructional materials and their uses. These include using instructional technology for planning instruction and for assessment. Adeyemi (2000) argued that teachers must use a variety of instructional resources and appropriate evaluation methods in order to make Social Studies teaching and learning meaningful and exciting. Mathew (2012) pointed out that teachers' use of

instructional resources enhances learning by increasing students' participation in class activities.

According to Bandura (1997), teachers' beliefs in their instructional efficacy determines how they structure academic activities and conduct the evaluation. Teachers who have a high sense of instructional efficacy devote more classroom time for academic activities. Teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in their professional competencies may influence how they approach learning problems.

Teachers who are confident in their abilities are more likely to try out and succeed with novel teaching methods. Zee and Koomen (2016) came to a conclusion that personal self-efficacy beliefs are the most essential cause of human behavior. This suggests that a teacher's belief in his/her professional qualities is a potential determinant of his/her behavior, attitude, values, interest and motivation in handling needs of learners. It is against this backdrop that the study sought to investigate teacher attributes and quality of social studies education in the Ghanaian colleges of education. The study was guided by the following research questions: (1) what are educational qualifications and experience of Social Studies educators in Ghanaian Colleges of Education? (2) What are qualities of social studies instruction and learning in colleges of education in Ghana? (3) What is the relationship between teacher qualification and quality of Social Studies education in Ghanaian Colleges of Education?

Methodology

Design

The study employed the mixed methods approach. Mixed methods approach is defined as one in which the inquirer or the researcher collects and analyses data, integrates the findings and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative data in a single study (Ngulube et al., 2009)

Population and Sampling

There were 38 public colleges of education in Ghana with 190 teacher educators for social sciences during the time of data collection. From those, 38 teacher educators (20%) were randomly sampled to participate in the study by filling a questionnaire and engaging into the interview schedule.

Validity and Reliability

Face validity of the questionnaire was ensured by giving the instrument to selected PhD scholars in the Department of Social Studies, College of Education

at UNISA and selected Social Studies teacher educators in Ghana for review. Construct validity was ensured through critically developing items in the questionnaire within the established theoretical framework. The researchers also adopted the internal validity check through ensuring agreements between different parts of the data, matching patterns of results. Reliability was ensured through data triangulation, the use of more than one instrument for data collection.

Statistical Treatment of Data

While interview data was thematically analyzed, quantitative data from the questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations.

Ethical Consideration

Prior to data collection, respondents were given consent forms to fill. The researchers permitted participants to withdraw at any time during the data collection period. A statement of consent was given to participants to sign as evidence of their willingness to participate in the study. As a way of

preventing plagiarism, all ideas, writings and drawings were referenced and acknowledged.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents results of the study based on three research questions that guided the study.

Research question 1: What are educational qualifications and experience of Social Studies educators in Ghanaian Colleges of Education?

Table 1 reveals that most (95%) of Social Studies teacher educators possessed master's or doctorate degrees while the remaining 5% possessed bachelors' degrees. Furthermore, 92% had social sciences as a major subject in their teaching credentials while only 8% had not. Finally, 53% of selected educators had 11 to 15 years of experience, 29% had 16 to 20 years and 2% had 1 to 3 years of experience in teaching social studies. Therefore, the majority of educators under investigation had at least 16 years of teaching social sciences subjects, and so were so experienced in teaching the subject.

Table 1: Qualifications and experience of social studies educators

| Variable | Variable Category | f | % |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Educational Qualifications | Bachelor's Degree | 2 | 5 |
| | Master's Degree | 35 | 92.4 |
| | Doctorate Degree | 1 | 2.6 |
| | Total | 38 | 100 |
| Social Studies major course | Yes | 35 | 92 |
| | No | 3 | 8 |
| Number of years teaching | 1-3 | 1 | 2 |
| | 4-6 | 0 | 0 |
| | 7-10 | 6 | 16 |
| | 11-15 | 20 | 53 |
| | 16-20 | 11 | 29 |

Table 2: Quality of Social Studies instruction Ghanaian Colleges of Education (n = 38)

| Statement | High | Medium | Low |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------|----------|-----|
| Interest in teaching Social Studies | 27 (71%) | 11 (29%) | 0 |
| Performance rating in teaching Social Studies | 25 (66%) | 13 (34%) | 0 |
| Quality of learning Social Studies | 24 (63%) | 14 (37%) | 0 |
| Quality of Social Studies instruction | 21 (55%) | 17 (45%) | 0 |

This signifies that teacher educators who taught Social Studies at Colleges of Education in Ghana are well qualified. This presupposes that they had in-depth knowledge of the Social Studies Curriculum. This further suggests that they had the requisite and desirable knowledge, skills and competencies to support the teaching of the Social Studies. Rogan and Grayson's (2003) findings commended these

results when they stated that a critical factor that can support the implementation of new ideas and practices in schools pertains to teacher's background, training, qualification, level of confidence and commitment to teaching. Some studies showed a positive effect of advanced degrees on the quality of teaching and learning (Betts et al., 2003; Wayne & Youngs, 2003).

Therefore, educators under investigation were highly qualified to teach social sciences subjects.

Research question 2: What is the quality of social studies instruction and learning in colleges of education in Ghana?

Data presented for the second research question, as observed in table 2, revealed the quality of Social Studies instruction in Ghanaian Colleges of Education as perceived by educators.

The table shows that the majority (71%) of the teacher educators indicated high interest while only 29% indicated medium interest in teaching social sciences. The majority (66%) further indicated high performance rating in teaching social studies while only 34% indicated medium performance. The majority (63%) further indicated high quality of social studies learning while 37% indicated medium quality. Finally, the majority (55%) indicated high quality of social studies instruction while 45% indicated medium quality.

To establish further about the quality of social studies instruction, interview data was sought. One educator revealed that the quality of Social Studies instruction is high because educators used the team teaching approach whereby the weaknesses of one educator was supplemented by the strength of the

other educators. One more educator revealed that social studies instruction in the college is of high quality because of accessibility to teaching and learning materials and engagement in outdoor activities. Furthermore, educators admitted that they are good at designing assessment tools to elicit desired responses from learners during the process of teaching, thus interaction is enhanced. Therefore, team teaching, accessibility to teaching and learning materials and educators' ability to design assessment tools added value to the quality of the social studies teaching and learning.

Research question 3: What is the relationship between teacher qualification and quality of Social Studies education in Ghanaian Colleges of Education?

The third research question sought to establish the relationship between teacher qualification and quality of Social Studies education in Ghanaian Colleges of Education. This research question called for testing of the null hypothesis which stated: *There is no significant relationship between teacher qualification and quality of Social Studies education in Ghanaian Colleges of Education.* The null hypothesis was tested through Pearson Correlations as indicated in table 3.

Table 3: Teacher Educators' Qualification and Quality of Instruction

| Variables | Educational qualification | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|--------|
| | Pearson Correlation | 1 |
| Quality of tuition | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |
| | N | 38 |
| | Pearson Correlation | .688** |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In table 3, we see the correlation (r) of .688 with the p-value of .000 which is lesser than the critical value, suggesting that the null hypothesis should be rejected. Therefore, there is a significant positive and moderate relationship between teacher qualification and the quality of Social Studies instruction. Since the relationship is positive, it is implied that the higher the teachers' qualification, the higher the quality of instruction. Therefore, teachers' qualification is a determinant of effective instruction in the social studies subject. Higher teaching qualification is a critical factor that can support quality instruction. These findings are in

harmony with Rogan and Grayson's (2003) who conducted a similar study and revealed that teachers' qualification is a critical factor that can support or hinder the implementation of curriculum in learning institutions. The established high qualification and competency of teachers in this study contributed to the good quality of instruction.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that the teacher educators possessed required knowledge and skills and were competent to handle the social studies subject. Their academic and professional qualifications are

linked with their quality of instruction. Therefore, it is important to ensure that social studies educators are highly qualified for them to be effective in teaching. There should therefore be a variety of professional development programs for social studies educators to increase competence and improve their skills for teaching. The Ministry of Education and National Council on Tertiary Education should provide continuous professional development programs for the teacher trainers. The educators should further be encouraged to go for further studies as part of their professional development which will improve their quality of delivery.

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