

# OBSERVED LEARNING OUTCOMES OF THE 2010 SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION: VIEWS FROM ASANTE AKIM NORTH DISTRICT, GHANA

## ABSTRACT

This study assessed the alignment between learners' intended and actual outcomes in implementing the 2010 Senior High School (SHS) Social Studies curriculum. It used Stake's Countenance Evaluation Model to determine whether or not the subject has achieved its objectives. The research was conducted in the Asante Akim North District of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. This involved all Social Studies teachers and students in the district. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed, with a sample size of 120 participants, including 100 students and 20 teachers. The study utilised a mixed-method approach with a concurrent triangulation design. Data collection instruments include questionnaires, interview guides, focus group discussion guides and documentary analysis. Quantitative data were processed, organised, and analysed to conclude, with findings presented in tables and percentages, accompanied by verbal interpretations for clarity. Qualitative responses were categorised into themes, and direct quotes were sometimes used to support the findings. The study revealed that learners had been inculcated with the relevant skills, knowledge, values and positive attitudes to prevent and solve their problems; however, students portrayed an inability to extend this knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes to solve societal issues. From the findings, the study recommended that the district education directorate should organise in-service training for teachers teaching Social Studies to re-orient on the goals and general objectives of the subject. This will help teachers focus on teaching the subject by stressing the goals and general objectives so students can understand Social Studies' essence.

**Keywords:** Antecedents, Transactions, Observed Outcomes, Learners, Curriculum Implementation, Social Studies, Curriculum

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The origins of Social Studies can be traced back to the United States. According to Obebe, Social Studies emerged in the U.S. around 1896, when the Historical Association of America recognised the need to help students understand the challenges faced by immigrants arriving in the New World from Europe [1]. Saxe also argues that the development of Social Studies in its current form can be traced back to its early foundations in the social sciences, which were aimed at addressing social welfare and preparing future citizens [2]. Blege highlights that the social unrest and violence in the 1960s in America played a significant role in introducing social studies. He suggests that the youth in America were increasingly becoming unruly, with rising group violence and delinquents [3]. In response, educational leaders in the U.S. advocated including Social Studies to tackle these issues and cultivate responsible, engaged citizens. This underscores that Social Studies was initially introduced as a subject focused on citizenship education. Quartey, for his part, posited that, in America, Social Studies was centred on acquainting the youth with the skills needed to function effectively in society as democratic citizens [4]. Hence, the subject was structured to allow American Youth to internalise democratic values and live as responsible and informed citizens. He again asserted, "Social Studies in Britain focused on equipping the youth to become well-trained and adjusted adults in an industrialised society" [4].

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The National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) emphasises that “the primary goal of Social Studies is to equip young people with the skills to make informed and thoughtful decisions for the public good as active citizens in a culturally diverse, democratic society within an interconnected world.” Similarly, Social Studies education aims to develop students into competent, reflective, engaged, and responsible citizens who can contribute to the progress of their communities and the nation while addressing moral decline in society [5]. To achieve this, the country needs more knowledgeable, skilled, and professionally dedicated teachers who can effectively apply theory in practice, addressing the challenges faced by the nation and the world [6, 7, 8]. This assertion is in tandem with writers: “Social Studies aims to prepare citizens who can make reflective decisions and engage efficaciously in the civic life of their immediate communities and the nation at large” [9, 10, 11].

In Africa, the Social Studies programme was introduced in 1968 after the Mombasa Conference in Kenya. However, scholars like Obebe posit that Social Studies started in the 1950s in some West African countries like Ghana and Nigeria [1]. All notwithstanding, the purpose of introducing Social Studies in Africa was threefold: to promote national integration, deal with problems of rapid economic growth and encourage composure and initiative based on understanding one’s worth and the critical self-esteem of man [12]. This, in a nutshell, would make children become well-informed and reasoned citizens, eager and skilled in contributing to national growth.

In the case of Ghana, the scenario was similar. The Social Studies programme was introduced to prepare students with the necessary skills, knowledge, values, positive attitudes, and values to address societal issues. It is argued that Social Studies offers a framework for examining society, helping us understand its structure and problems while seeking solutions to those societal challenges. Therefore, the subject was introduced in the country with the philosophy of solving Ghana’s problems, which are persistent and contemporary, when it was incorporated into the Ghanaian School Curricula in 1987 and later as a core subject in 1997. This implies a “Social Studies curriculum that provides an opportunity for meaningful learning; a call for Social Studies curriculum reform to create a room for student-centred learning to improve learning outcomes of students in line with SDG 4” [13].

Kumari lamented that teaching Social Studies has been severely impacted by poor instruction, particularly at the elementary level [14]. He further noted that it is often believed that anyone can teach Social Studies, requiring only a textbook and the ability to read an observation that remains true in many Senior High Schools today. The teaching of Social Studies is primarily confined to the classroom, with many teachers lacking teaching and learning materials, which contradicts the subject’s very essence [14].

When Social Studies was introduced into the Ghanaian school curriculum in 1987 and became a core subject in 1997, it was hoped that the country’s challenges would be addressed. However, social issues such as corruption, indiscipline, armed robbery, indecent dressing, drug abuse, political intolerance, sexual violence, poor sanitation, examination malpractices, and the destruction of water bodies through illegal mining (galamsey) have significantly worsened. This raises the question: Has Social Studies failed to achieve its goals, has it underperformed, or is it meeting its objectives? This question can be best answered through pragmatic evidence by evaluating the implementation of the 2010 SHS Social Studies curriculum [15]. Therefore, this study aims to provide empirical data on achieving learners’ intended and observed outcomes in implementing the 2010 Social Studies curriculum in the senior high schools in Asante Akim North District of Ghana.

Kirman argued that Social Studies is not merely about memorising facts for later recall; instead, it should aim to shape responsible individuals who can cope with change, make sound decisions, act as informed consumers and controllers of science and technology, appreciate human diversity, and uphold human dignity [16]. Consequently, the subject seeks to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, positive attitudes, and values to tackle personal and societal challenges. The rationale for teaching Social Studies at the Senior High School level is to prepare students to integrate into society by providing them with knowledge of their culture, societal issues, values and hopes for the future. To achieve this, the 2010 Social Studies Teaching Syllabus outlines the following general objectives for the subject:

“Develop the ability to adapt to the developing and ever-changing Ghanaian society; Acquire positive attitudes and values towards individual and societal issues; Develop critical and analytical skills in assessing issues for objective decision-making; Develop national consciousness and unity; Use enquiry and problem-solving skills for solving personal and societal problems; and Become responsible citizens capable of contributing to societal advancement” [15, 17].

This suggests that teaching Social Studies at the SHS level should focus on achieving these objectives. It is expected that students who complete the Social Studies programme at this level will develop and internalise the necessary knowledge, positive attitudes, values, and skills to address both their challenges and those of their communities, ultimately fulfilling the goal of Social Studies to produce informed, reasoned, and engaged citizens [18]. Nevertheless, there appears to be a rise in social problems, such as noncompliance among youth who are essentially products of the Social Studies curriculum and apathy, corruption, disloyalty and greed in the country. These issues raise doubts about whether or not the subject is fulfilling its intended purpose [19].

Despite this, limited research has been conducted on the subject's impact on learners since its introduction in Ghanaian education in basic schools and later in SHS in 1998. Therefore, a study focused on evaluating the attainment of Social Studies goals and objectives is needed to address the gap in the literature and determine whether implementing the curriculum in Ghana effectively leads to achieving its intended outcomes.

This study aimed to evaluate the implementation of the 2010 Social Studies curriculum at the Senior High School level and provide empirical evidence on the attainment or otherwise of its goals and objectives in the Asante Akim North District of Ghana.

The study's objective was to assess the congruence between the observable outcomes of Social Studies in learners in senior high schools in the Asante Akim North District and the intended outcomes in the curriculum/syllabus. To achieve this purpose, this research question guided the study: To what extent are the observable outcomes in the learning of Social Studies, as exhibited by the learners, congruent with the intended outcomes in the syllabus?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

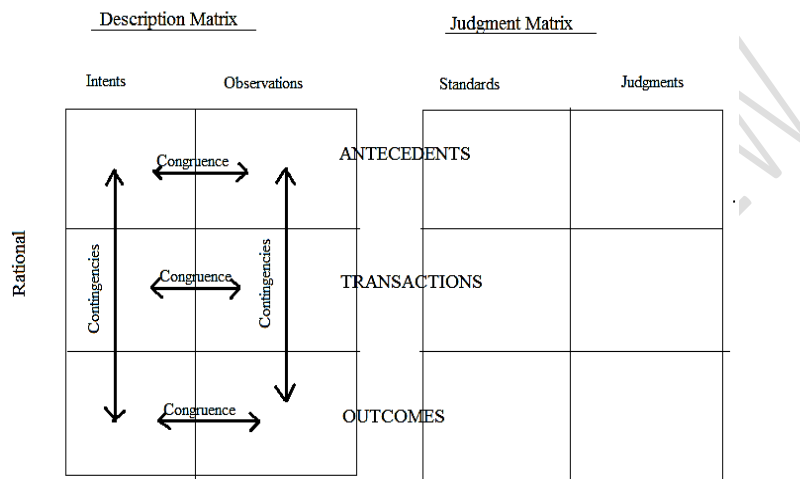
### 2.1 Stake's Countenance Model

To address the research problem, purpose, and research question, Stake's Countenance Model of curriculum evaluation of 1967 was utilised [20]. This model outlines “three phases of curriculum evaluation: the antecedent phase, the transactions phase, and the outcome phase. The antecedent phase examines the conditions before the curriculum is implemented, such as the characteristics of teachers and students, curriculum content, and instructional materials,

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all of which are linked to the desired outcomes”[20, 21]. The transactions phase focuses on the implementation process, including factors like communication flow, time management, the sequence of activities, and the social climate, all of which affect the programme’s or curriculum’s impact. Lastly, the outcome phase evaluates the programme's or curriculum's effects, such as students’ achievements, attitudes, and demonstrated skills [20, 21].

Stake’s model emphasises two fundamental operations: descriptions and judgments. Descriptions are categorised based on whether they refer to what was intended or what was observed. On the other hand, judgments are divided into two types: those based on the standards used to make decisions and those reflecting the actual judgments made. This is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Stake’s Countenance Model** [20, 22]

Stake’s Countenance Model is essential for this research because it provides reliable evidence of whether or not the Social Studies curriculum is achieving its goals. From Stake, examining the intended teaching and learning outcomes is essential to evaluate an educational programme. (Although, if preferred, many antecedent conditions and teaching interactions can be framed in behaviourist terms.) How intentions are expressed is not a determining factor for inclusion in the evaluation[20]. Intentions can be broad goals set by the program designer (Mager, 1962), and these goals may be expressed in various forms: taxonomic, mechanistic, humanistic, or even scriptural. Any combination of goal statements can contribute to the evaluation process.[23].

Selecting the appropriate measurement techniques is a clear responsibility, but choosing which characteristics to observe is just as crucial and represents a distinctive contribution of the evaluator. An evaluation cannot be considered complete without a statement of the program’s rationale. This rationale must be addressed separately, as shown in Figure 1. Every program has an underlying rationale, although it is often implicit. The rationale provides the philosophical foundation and core objectives of the programme. The rationale forms a basis for evaluating the program's intentions. The evaluator needs to assess whether the plan developed by the educator logically aligns with the programme’s core objectives[20]. Additionally, the rationale is vital for selecting appropriate reference groups who will later assess different aspects of the programme. This reference group consists of Social Studies educators and learners.

Obtaining a clear rationale can be challenging. Many effective instructors may struggle to articulate a coherent educational rationale. They may say something that aligns more with the listener's expectations rather than providing a clear explanation when pressed. It is crucial that the rationale be expressed in the educator's language, one they are comfortable with and command. Suggestions from the evaluator may interfere with this process, potentially becoming accepted simply because they are appealing rather than because they reflect the true intent of the educator's purpose.

Using this model, the evaluator begins by examining the intentions behind the curriculum, including the planned conditions and behaviours, as well as the anticipated and feared outcomes. The next step involves analysing the information in the descriptive matrix to assess the alignment between the intended goals and the observed results. In this context, observations describe environmental events and their consequences [24].

The evaluator then moves across the chart, applying relevant standards to the descriptive data to form judgments. Additionally, the evaluator examines the relationships, or contingencies, between the antecedent conditions, the transactions, and the outcome variables. According to Stake, and Worthen and Sanders, outcomes depend on both the transactions and the antecedent conditions. These researchers adopted this model to make accurate and informed judgments about the Social Studies curriculum [24, 22]

Bharvad further emphasises that this model recognises that multiple standards come into play depending on the educational setting, the instructor, and the students involved [25]. The model's focus on the logical contingency between antecedents, transactions, and outcomes is significant. The evaluator's judgments are based on the degree of congruence between the intended and observed aspects of the curriculum [25].

## **2.5 The Attainment of Learning Outcomes by Learners**

Citizenship education unearths learners to make unique thrusts and approaches ideal for the appropriate task to effectively deliver changes in their communities. This calls for civic efficacy or the eagerness and preparedness to assume citizenship responsibilities [26, 27]. The researchers agree with this assertion and argue further that "for Social Studies to achieve its key goal of citizenship education in Ghana effectively, several essential changes must be made in how the subject is conceptualised, taught, and assessed, among other areas, to overcome the numerous challenges hindering its teaching in Senior High Schools. The Social Studies teaching syllabus outlines that the subject aims to prepare individuals by providing them with knowledge about their society's culture, way of life, problems, values, and aspirations for the future" [17]. The researchers agree with the curriculum developers on the part that deals with the preparation of the learners to solve problems and the inculcation of values but sharply disagree with equipping learners with knowledge about their culture because Social Studies does not equip learners with mere knowledge about all their culture but distillate knowledge about some relevant aspects of their culture as some aspects like *Trokosi* system has outlived its importance and value in the Ghanaian society hence, its knowledge is of no use to students [10, 28, 29].

Social Studies educators should be well-versed in the rationale and philosophy of the discipline to ensure effective teaching and learning in the classroom [8]. A writer supported this assertion that "Social Studies is seen as a positive attitude building subject through time and space, the Ghanaian school curriculum should be enhanced with the current happenings in the society to help develop the 21st-century youth who will be well resourced to selflessly

help the country to its developmental path”[30]. Therefore, “the teaching and assessment of the subject should address students’ ability to develop civic competence to solve their personal and societal problems”[31].

It is believed that Social Studies can be seen as a subject that aims to develop a critical and balanced awareness in students. While their point holds merit, it is essential to clarify that Social Studies is unequivocally focused on citizenship education, which makes their characterisation incomplete. Social Studies has firmly established itself as a subject dedicated to teaching citizenship. This means the subject should be viewed primarily as citizenship education, designed to foster students’ interest in becoming well-rounded individuals [7].

Other scholars argue that Social Studies should be approached as a holistic subject, aiming to promote behavioural changes in students rather than merely conveying facts from various social sciences. According to Eshun and Mensah, Social Studies teachers should emphasise teaching skills rather than focus solely on factual content [31]. “The primary role of the Social Studies teacher is to nurture students’ knowledge, positive attitudes, values, and problem-solving skills”[32]. Ogunbare notes that “the modern Social Studies programme emphasises how to think, rather than what to think,” underscoring the importance of developing critical thinking and social attitudes [33].

Similarly, Martorella suggests that “the enduring goal of Social Studies is to produce reflective, competent, concerned, and participatory citizens who are both willing and able to contribute positively to the progress of democratic life in their societies” [34]. This aligns with Banks, who emphasises that the primary goal of Social Studies is to prepare citizens capable of making thoughtful decisions and actively participating in civic life at both the community and national levels [35]. Saxe asserts “that the core of the Social Studies curriculum has always been centred around socialisation and citizenship education” [2]. Dynneson and Gross also maintain that Social Studies is designed to socialise students for future citizenship roles. While the aspect of citizenship education aligns well with the goals of Social Studies, the idea of socialisation is somewhat inconsistent [36]. Today, Social Studies focuses less on passing down society’s values and more on critically examining their relevance in modern contexts. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that Social Studies still contains elements of socialisation, as it imparts the skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes necessary for individuals to integrate into society [10, 37].

As a result, an essential aspect of “citizenship education in a multicultural democratic society such as Ghana is to equip students with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes needed to make thoughtful decisions that contribute to making society more democratic, compassionate, fair, and just” [38]. Building on these perspectives, Risinger notes, “For all the arguments, convention speeches and journal articles, it seems clear that citizenship education lies at the heart of Social Studies. Social Studies teaches children their roles and responsibilities, particularly social and civic affairs. It helps students develop critical thinking abilities, prepares them to participate competently and productively as concerned citizens and teaches them to address societal and global concerns using literature, technology and other identifiable community resources”[38]. Teaching relevant concepts in Social Studies is meant “to prepare students to be concerned and participatory citizens willing to help solve personal and societal problems”[7]. This implies that Social Studies teachers acquaint themselves with the desired goals and objectives of the subject.

Additionally, Aggarwal emphasises that Social Studies is an integral part of the broader school curriculum, helping students understand and appreciate human relationships, the environment, and society while fostering a commitment to participate in the democratic

processes that sustain and transform society[39]. In other words, the Social Studies curriculum provides a well-rounded education that equips individuals to effectively fit into society and contribute to its social, political, and economic progress [40, 7].

Writers supported this and claimed that “Social Studies teachers have positive attitudes towards the teaching and learning of concepts, the other teachers should be helped to be up-to-date with the nature of concepts in the subject and the techniques and methodology that will promote effective teaching and learning. It is an indisputable fact that if Social Studies is to help promote attitudinal change in Ghanaian society. For Social Studies to make an impact at the Senior High School levels in Ghana, teachers should be encouraged to develop positive attitudes towards the teaching and learning the subject, and have professional competencies to teach the subject well”[7].

Hence, “the ultimate goal of Social Studies as a discipline is the development of socio-civic and personal behaviour”[41, 42]. Other writers also stress that, despite the varying views expressed by different authorities about the objectives of Social Studies, all the objectives point to the same thing: citizenship training. Social Studies education aims to teach positive attitudes among learners so that they will become good citizens who would join hands in moving the nation forward[10, 43, 44].The researchers agree with this assertion but bemoan whether the instructional designs, methods and strategies teachers use during Social Studies instruction, the school environment and existing conditions during implementation will help realise this lofty goal.

Studies revealed that “the main goal of a Social Studies Programme should be to help students develop the ability to make decisions so that they can resolve personal problems and contribute to policy-making processes”[8, 26, 45]. This envisages “Social Studies is expected to help students acquire skills and values needed to deal with and shape the future by developing a positive perspective that will allow construction, planning, creativity, and innovation”[27, 28, 29].

Adding the voice to the ultimate goal of Social Studies as the development of active and responsible citizens aligns with the perspective in Ghana. Ayaaba concurs with this view, stating that the main objective of Social Studies is to train young people to make informed and reasoned decisions for the greater good of society [40]. Many scholars have pointed out that the Social Studies programme equips students with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to think critically and actively contribute to the well-being of their nations [39, 34, 46]. Pryor, Ghartey, Kutor, and Kankam claim that the systematic study of Social Studies is crucial for improving human relationships within social and physical environments[47]. Therefore, the importance and social value of Social Studies within Ghana’s school curriculum cannot be overstated [48]. In conclusion, a well-designed Social Studies programme aims to help students develop analytical thinking and problem-solving skills. Through the subject, learners should acquire fundamental skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, and calculation and the ability to observe, critically analyse, and make reasoned decisions. The subject should also foster students' ability to address questions like "What ought to be?" and "What can I do about it?".

Social Studies focuses on society’s challenges. It prepares individuals to integrate into society by equipping them with knowledge of their culture, societal norms, values, problems, and future aspirations. The subject is multi-disciplinary, drawing from History, Geography, Economics, Psychology, Sociology, and Civic Education. Relevant principles, ideas, and knowledge from the abovementioned disciplines are fused into the subject's identity [17].

As a subject, Social Studies helps students better understand their society, explore how it functions, and develop the critical and developmental mindset necessary to transform society. This demonstrates that Social Studies in Ghana is primarily viewed as citizenship education. Blege argued that citizenship education in the school context is an instructional programme designed to prepare youth to become responsible and active citizens [3]. This involves systematically orienting students to be ready for adult citizenship roles. To achieve this goal, the 2010 SHS Social Studies curriculum is structured to help learners: “Develop the ability to adapt to the developing and ever-changing Ghanaian society; Acquire positive attitudes and values towards individual and societal issues; Develop critical and analytical skills in assessing issues for objective decision-making; Develop national consciousness and unity; Use enquiry and problem-solving skills to solve personal and societal problems; and Become responsible citizens capable and willing to contribute to societal advancement” [17].

However, whether these lofty goals and ideals have been attained is a million questions this study seeks to answer. A scan through the literature [26, 49, 50] suggests that Social Studies as a subject in Ghana has not realised its goals. It is argued that for Social Studies to achieve its long-term goal of citizenship education, several fundamental changes must be made regarding how the subject is perceived, conceptualised, taught, and assessed in SHSs in Ghana [26]. They contend that while developing responsible citizens is the overarching aim of Social Studies, achieving this goal is far from straightforward. As Van Sledright notes, despite a general agreement on the primary goal of Social Studies, there has been ongoing debate about the relationship between Social Studies and citizenship education [51]. From this perspective, three key factors are how the subject is perceived and conceptualised, how it is implemented, and how students are assessed. These are significant reasons why Social Studies has struggled to meet its objectives.

The concept of citizenship itself is highly contested, with various approaches offering different interpretations of citizenship education. For instance, Dynneson and Gross (pp. 231-232) outline several conceptualisations, including “(a) citizenship as persuasion and indoctrination, (b) citizenship through the study of current events and contemporary issues, (c) citizenship as the study of history, civics, geography, and related social sciences, (d) citizenship as civic participation and action, (e) citizenship as scientific thinking, (f) citizenship as humanistic development, (g) citizenship as preparation for global interdependence, and (h) citizenship as a jurisprudence process” [36].

This diversity of views is reflected in Ghana, where there are different interpretations of Social Studies at critical universities such as the University of Education, Winneba, and the University of Cape Coast. Since its introduction, Social Studies in Ghana has lacked a clear focus, as these two prominent universities continue to debate its true nature. While the University of Education, Winneba, regards the subject as Citizenship Education, the University of Cape Coast views it as an amalgamation of the Social Sciences [49]. Scholars confirm this, stating that studies have shown significant differences in how the two teacher-training universities conceptualise Social Studies [26]. They further explain that “while the University of Education, Winneba, trains Social Studies teachers through reflective inquiry and humanistic development, the University of Cape Coast prepares teachers using a social science model.” The researchers cannot agree any better and went on to say that the Social Studies Syllabi for the Basic Schools and the SHS are based on the University of Education’s Concept, whilst the Social Studies Syllabi for the JHS and Colleges of Education are based on the University of Cape Coast Concept.

A study conducted by Bekoe and Eshun (p.44) “on Social Studies curriculum feeding and implementation challenges in Ghana revealed that “Teacher Training Institutions subscribe to and use a particular conception of Social Studies curriculum for the production of Social Studies education graduates”[49]. The implication here is that teachers may come to conceptualise the subject differently, which may affect the attainment of the Social Studies Goal. Again, Bekoe and Eshun (p.44) assert that “different modes of delivering Social Studies may influence students regarding the meaning of Social Studies, its contents, and why it is worth studying.” They further argue that “confusing arrays of conceptual perspectives concerning the aims, nature and content of Social Studies and that cultivation of a clearer conception of the subject in Ghana has become very necessary”[49].

Until the current disagreement is resolved, it will be challenging for Social Studies to achieve its objectives. Therefore, evaluating the implementation of the Social Studies curriculum in the district will help highlight how this issue affects the subject's overall goal. Another obstacle to successfully implementing the Social Studies curriculum is the teaching approach. A writer noted that teachers repeatedly rely on a single teaching style, limiting students' exposure to various instructional techniques [52]. Ellis, Fouts, and Glenn observed that teachers frequently depend on textbooks, lectures, worksheets, and traditional tests as the primary methods of instruction[53]. However, research shows students are more engaged when diverse teaching methods are used [54, 55]. A significant challenge to delivering effective citizenship education is the heavy reliance on textbooks in Social Studies instruction [26]. It is also important to note that “in Ghana, the Senior High School Social Studies syllabus primarily focuses on lower-level activities”[26]. Writers revealed that “the knowledge acquired by students in Social Studies lessons is transmitted in the classroom setting and essentially through the “two-by-four” pedagogy. This “two-by-four” pedagogy has to do with the Social Studies teacher confining the teaching and learning of Social Studies to only the two ends of the textbook and the four walls of the classroom with no opportunity given to the learners to explore their environment in the form of field trips and the use of community resources” [26]. This will negatively affect the effective teaching and assessment of Social Studies concepts. Addressing the critical needs of learners means linking content with the learners' relevant previous knowledge. This also calls for selecting appropriate content and teaching resources and using proper evaluation techniques. The expectation is that any teacher who incorporates these ideals into their lesson planning will make a good start[42]. This suggests that teachers teaching Social Studies should familiarise themselves with contemporary methods and strategies that enhance the delivery of concepts in the subject area[55]. Social Studies teachers have yet to fully engage students in active learning, criticising the continued use of the expository method, which has contributed to the ineffective implementation of the Social Studies curriculum. As a result, students fail to develop a strong understanding of the knowledge, values, attitudes, and skills intended by the curriculum. This raises the question of how textbooks can effectively support citizenship education. Brophy and Alleman (p. 27) briefly captured the issue, noting that today's Social Studies textbooks cover a wide range of topics, but often superficially, leading to lessons that focus mainly on memorising fragmented information [57].

In Ghana, Social Studies assessment typically focuses on the cognitive domain, with questions often requiring students to recall and regurgitate information. To effectively deliver citizenship education ideals, it is crucial to reassess how students are tested by teachers and the external examination body, the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) [26]. A review of various WAEC questions reveals that current assessment practices test only a limited range of competencies. One significant issue is that Social Studies curriculum activities and teaching methods often overlook the crucial role of appropriate attitudes and values in promoting worthwhile understanding and addressing societal issues. However,

teachers (both qualified and unqualified) ‘*teach to test*’ instead of ‘*teach to affect*’; thus, teachers coach their students to write and pass exams at the expense of equipping and inculcating in them the needed skills, appropriate attitudes and values to solve societal issues.

The art of teaching students to pass exams without recourse to deepening their understanding and the aims of the introduction of Social Studies is not helping to realise the subject's curriculum goals effectively. Bekoe, Eshun, and Bordoh (p. 28) highlighted that “due to the rushed nature of formative assessment and grading, teachers often focus on the cognitive domain while neglecting the equally important affective and psychomotor domains” [58].

Another challenge is the perception students and educators have of Social Studies. Kizlik made a similar observation, stating, “Social Studies courses are often regarded as relatively unimportant, whether in elementary, middle, or high school” [59]. This perception, shared by many educators, leads to the needed attention that should have been given to the subject as a medium of inculcating rightful ideals in learners. However, in terms of students' intellectual development, no other subject offers as much potential. The researchers believe the same can be said of Ghana since there is a misconception that Social Studies is not considered a requirement for tertiary education, especially in Nursing training colleges; also of all the core subjects in Ghana, Social Studies has the least periods in a week which presupposes the less important amongst the core subjects. Over time, Social Studies has developed a reputation among educators, guardians, and learners as a subject for “weaker” or less intellectually disposed students. Many learners perceive Social Studies as an easy subject to pass, which results in them paying little attention to it. Additionally, many school principals believe that any teacher, regardless of specialisation, can teach Social Studies. As a result, some Senior High Schools in the country have had. Kumari reinforced this as he asserts that “the teaching of Social Studies has suffered very much from poor teaching, especially at the elementary stage” [14]. He further said that “it is generally held that anyone could teach Social Studies. All that is needed is a textbook and the ability to read it. The teacher's task was merely to see that pupils knew facts presented in the book” He bemoans again that this attitude towards teaching Social Studies still exists as Social Studies class is frequently given to Physical Education or Music teachers so that they may complete the schedule. The researcher argues that if teachers who handle the subject in our Senior High Schools don't know the “Goal” of Social Studies, how will they teach the students to attain the Social Studies goal? This can only be ascertained after an evaluation of the implementation of the Social Studies curriculum has been carried out.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

A mixed-method approach was used in this study, and a concurrent triangulation design was adopted. The study was framed within the pragmatic research paradigm, emphasising that knowledge arises from actions, situations, and consequences rather than pre-existing conditions. Pragmatists focus on practical applications, “what works”, and solutions to real-world problems [60]. The researcher chose the mixed method approach because it aligns with evaluative research, which involves gathering data to determine whether something, such as a curriculum or educational material, should be accepted, changed, or eliminated [61]. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the research problem and helps to validate the collected data to ensure reliable findings. In this case, the concurrent triangulation design was selected because it uses two methods to confirm, cross-validate, or corroborate results within a single study.

The study was conducted in Agogo in the Asante Akim North District of Ashanti Region, with the district capital in. The district is home to three public senior high schools. These are the Agogo State College and Collins SHS, both at Agogo. Owerriaman SHTS is located at Domeabra and about two kilometres from Agogo. Due to the limited number of Senior High Schools in the district, Wesley Senior High School, located in the nearby Asante Akim Central District, was also included in the study.

The study's population consisted of all Senior High School Social Studies teachers and final-year students from the selected schools in the Asante Akim North District. The breakdown of the schools and their corresponding social studies teachers chosen for the study is as follows: Agogo State College, 7; Collins SHS, 6; Owerriaman SHTS, 6; and Wesley High School, 3, totalling 22 teachers. The selected schools had 2318 final-year students: Agogo State College, 720; Collins SHS, 886; Owerriaman SHTS, 417; and Wesley High School, 295.

The study sample comprised 120 participants, including 100 students and 20 Asante Akim North District teachers. Of the 100 students, 54 were females, and 46 were males, selected from four major programmes offered at the three Senior High Schools: General Arts, Home Economics, Visual Arts, and General Science. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed for the study. The district was chosen using convenience sampling, which involves selecting the most accessible individuals as participants and continuing the process until the desired sample size is reached. This approach was used to ensure easy access to the required information and to make the research process more efficient and manageable [62].

A hundred students were sampled from the four schools selected for the study. Twenty-six students were chosen from Agogo State College and Collins Senior High, respectively, with each school comprising 16 females and ten males. Twenty-four students were selected from Owerriaman SHTS, with ten females and 14 males. At the same time, twenty-four students were chosen from Wesley Senior High, with 12 females and 12 males. The distributions for the hundred students were 54 females and 46 males.

Twenty teachers were sampled from the four schools selected for the study. Six teachers were chosen from Agogo State College, Collins SHS, and Owerriaman SHTS. They were made up of five males and one female, respectively. Two teachers from Wesley Senior High were selected. This was made up of one female and one male. The distributions for the twenty teachers were 16 males and four females.

The purposive sampling technique was employed to select teachers and students for the study. Purposive sampling involves the researcher choosing participants based on their judgment of how typical or representative they are of the studied characteristics [62]. This method ensured that the researchers obtained the most relevant and accurate information. A stratified sampling technique was applied to select the sample, followed by simple random sampling within each stratum before administering the questionnaires. This approach was used to ensure that the data collected was representative of the broader population.

A hundred students were sampled from four programmes. Thirty students were selected from the General Arts programme, comprised of 18 and 12 males. Thirty students were selected from the Home Economics programme, comprising 20 and 10 males. Twenty students each were selected from the General Science and Visual Arts programmes. Each programme was made up of 8 and 12 males.

The primary instruments used in the study were questionnaires, interviews (focus groups and semi-structured interview guides), an observation checklist, and documentary analysis. These four instruments allowed the researchers to triangulate the data and assess the consistency of

**Comment [u5]: For any study to acceptable as scientific or empirical, the research instruments must exhibit an appreciable measure of reliability. Thus, there is need to state the reliability rating of the questionnaire.**

the findings across different methods. Eshun supported this approach, stating, "Triangulation in research is used to test for consistency of findings obtained through different instruments" [40]. Therefore, using multiple instruments was crucial to validating the information gathered.

For the quantitative data analysis, completed questionnaires were numbered and coded. The collected data were then entered into the Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) software, where descriptive statistics, such as percentages, frequencies, means, and standard deviations, were calculated to represent the perceptions of Social Studies teachers and students regarding the curriculum's antecedents. For clarity, the results were presented using tables and percentages. Responses were categorised and explained in themes based on the research questions for the qualitative data. In some cases, direct quotes from participants were used to support the findings. As Koul notes, "responses from participants in the form of direct quotations reveal the level of emotions of respondents, how they have organised their world, their thoughts and experiences about certain happenings, and their perceptions" [63]

Ethically, participants were not forced to participate in the research. Their consent was fully sought, and they could exit as they wished. Also, participants' anonymity and confidentiality were highly assured. The purpose of the research was further discussed with them, and they were assured that it was for empirical research purposes.

#### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the data analysis conducted for the study and discusses these findings in relation to existing literature. The analysed data is displayed in tables with corresponding interpretations. Key topics explored include the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants, the alignment between the intended antecedents, transactions, and outcomes of the Social Studies curriculum, and the actual outcomes as revealed by the study's findings.

##### 4.1 Background Characteristics of the Respondents

This section primarily focuses on the distribution of respondents by gender and age. The background characteristics of the participants were analysed using frequency and percentage distributions. The results are displayed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Demographic information of the students' respondents**

Class	Variables	Options	Frequency	Percent
Form 3	Gender	Male	46	46.0
		Female	54	54.0
Total			<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Age		Less than 15 years	1	1.0
		15 – 19 years	86	86.0
		20 – 24 years	13	13.0
Total			<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Fieldwork, 2023.**

**Comment [u6]: These research questions ought to have been stated in the introductory stage of the manuscript.**

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the students. According to the data, out of 100 students, 54 (54%) were female, and 46 (46%) were male, indicating that most respondents were female. The table also shows that most students (86%) were between 15 and 19 years old. It also shows that 13% of the students were aged 20 to 24, while 1% were under 15. Furthermore, all 100 students (100%) reported being in Form 3, meaning all the participants were final-year students.

#### 4.2 Presentation of Findings

The study aimed to evaluate the Senior High Social Studies Curriculum. This section presents and discusses the study's results to achieve/answer the stated objectives/questions posed for the study. The researcher employed both qualitative and quantitative methods for the data collection. Results from the quantitative data were analysed using tables, percentages, and means, while the qualitative data responses were described and explained in the form of themes and percentages. Some responses have been quoted verbatim to authenticate claims made. The discussion includes the interpretation of the findings about previous findings.

##### 4.2.1 Congruence between Intended and Observed Outcomes of Learners in the Implementation of the 2010 SHS Social Studies Curriculum

**Research Question:** What observable outcomes are learners exhibiting as compared to the intended outcomes in the Social Studies Syllabus in the Asante Akim North District?

The rationale for this research question was to identify the observable outcomes the learners exhibit as compared to the intended outcomes in the Social Studies Syllabus in the Asante Akim North District. A scan through the 2010 Social Studies Syllabus revealed that the rationale for teaching Social Studies at the SHS level which is the intended outcome, is to prepare the individual to fit into society by equipping him/her with knowledge about the culture and ways of life of their society, its problems, its values and its hopes for the future. According to the Curriculum and Research Development Division (2010, ii), the syllabus is designed 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 to solve personal and societal problems and* (6) *Become responsible citizens capable and willing to contribute to societal advancement*” [17].

To get substantial and authentic results on the observable outcomes from the curriculum recipients (students), eight items with a four-point Likert scale response were used to elicit data on the issue at hand, while a focused group discussion was used to authenticate the findings from the Likert scale. The results of the Likert scale are depicted in Table 2.

**Table 2: Application of Social Studies knowledge**

Items	Application of Social Studies knowledge	Not at all	Somehow	Well	Very well	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	I have been taken good care of my school's properties	9	13	37	41	25.00	16.3293
2	Social Studies has reformed me from my negative attitudes	1	8	29	62	25.00	27.3861
3	Social Studies has helped	5	19	20	56	25.00	21.7715

	me to solve most of my problems						
4	I have been organising clean-up exercises in my community during vacations	58	19	7	16	25.00	22.5832
5	I tolerate other people's views even if I disagree with them	38	33	18	11	25.00	12.6227
6	I hate people who steal state money to enrich themselves	6	4	12	78	25.00	35.4964
7	I have been fuelling conflict in my dormitory, school and community	70	9	6	15	25.00	30.2324
8	I support galamsey activities even though they destroy the environment	79	12	2	6	25.00	36.3994
<b>Mean of means</b>						<b>25.00</b>	<b>25.3526</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

Table 2 shows that the respondents ( $M = 25$ ,  $SD = .163293$ ) agreed that they do well to take good care of the school's properties, as testified by 78 respondents. Also, 91 respondents confirmed that Social Studies had reformed them from negative attitudes (Mean = 25,  $SD = 27.3861$ ). In addition, the findings from the study indicate that 75 respondents affirm that social studies has helped them solve most of their issues ( $M = 25$ ,  $SD = 21.7715$ ). These findings from the study indicate that quite a large number of the respondents could apply intended curriculum knowledge to their daily life activities. Findings from the focus group discussion confirmed the above as all 11(100%) participants gave various scenarios where they have used Social Studies knowledge to solve their problems.

For instance, one of the participants (O1) said:

*“Social Studies has inculcated in me some values like respect, truth, and hard work through the study of socialisation, which has helped me relate well to my friends and parents.”*

Another said

*“Social Studies has helped me to relate well with others. At first, I did not tolerate the views of others, but now, I can cope.”*

One also said:

*“It has taught me to know the good things about my culture and also respect other cultures.”*

Another participant said

*“Social Studies has helped me a lot; I would like to say Social Studies has helped me to solve my problems. For instance, Social Studies has made me stay away from bad peer group influences”.*

One concluded by saying:

*“Social Studies has helped me to take good care of myself during menstruation and also to prevent unwanted pregnancies”* through the study of the topic of Adolescence Reproductive Health.

The above findings indicate that students have been able to prevent and solve personal problems using the knowledge acquired from Social Studies education, which confirms the assertion made by the CRDD that “the subject aimed at equipping the learner with the relevant knowledge, skills, positive attitudes and values to deal with personal and societal problems” [17]. It is further supported by Ogundare when he posits that “the modern Social Studies programme emphasises the promotion of how to think over what to think” [33]. He further opines that Social Studies is aimed at social attitude formation.

However, it is surprising that 77 respondents confirmed that they do not organise clean-up exercises in their communities during vacation ( $M = 25$ ,  $SD = 22.5832$ ). This implies that they could not apply their knowledge from Social Studies to solve society's issues. The focus group discussion results confirmed this as only 2 out of the 11 participants, representing 16.7%, said they had previously organised clean-up exercises in their communities. These findings challenge the claim made by Martorella that the long-term objective of Social Studies is to cultivate reflective, competent, engaged, and participatory citizens who are both willing and able to contribute positively to advancing democratic life in their societies [34]. This view aligns with Banks, who emphasises that the primary goal of Social Studies is to equip citizens with the ability to make thoughtful decisions and actively engage in the civic life of their communities and the nation [35].

Both Banks and Martorella think that Social Studies students should use their knowledge to help themselves and society by solving both personal and societal problems; hence, students' inability to contribute to solving societal issues is worrying development and will impede the realisation of the subject goal as this can be seen in our daily lives where citizens will clear their compounds [35, 34]. Still, the streets will be bushy or drive in luxurious cars will refuse to contribute towards the construction of proper drainage systems and drive on bad roads with half eroded due to poor drainage.

In addition, Table 2 indicates that 70 (70%) of the respondents affirmed that they have not been fuelling conflict in their dormitories, schools and community. This is indicative of the fact the students are conscious of promoting peace and unity in their community; hence, *they have become conscious of national unity*, while 79 respondents also indicated they do not support galamsey activities even though it provides employment and income to the people since it destroys the environment. These findings suggest that most students have developed critical and analytical skills that enable them to assess issues effectively, make informed decisions, and take on the role of responsible citizens in their communities.

The findings from the focus group discussion confirmed the above as all 11 (100%) participants gave their reasons for not fuelling conflict in their communities and not supporting galamsey activities, especially those done in our water bodies. All the participants were happy that the government was fighting this menace. This aligns with Banks' (1990) statement that "Social Studies is a key component of the elementary and high school curriculum, with the primary responsibility of equipping students with the knowledge, skills,

attitudes, and values necessary to engage in the civic life of their local communities, nation, and the world" [35]. On the same wavelength, Eshun believed that these students would not depart from this positive attitude of not supporting wrongdoing in their communities in the future.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The outcome was that learners in the district developed a spirit of national consciousness. Students know the main goal but not the subject's six general objectives. Again, learners have been inculcated with the relevant knowledge, skills, positive attitudes, and values to prevent and solve their problems; however, they portrayed an inability to extend this knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes failed to extend it to their communities to solve societal issues. It was also found that while students have developed critical and analytical skills for evaluating issues to make objective decisions, they have not yet fully become responsible citizens who are capable and willing to contribute to society's progress.

Based on the findings, the district education directorate should organise in-service training for Social Studies teachers to reorient them on the subject's goals and general objectives. Stressing these goals and objectives will help teachers focus on teaching the subject and help students understand its essence.

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