

Evaluation of Social Studies Curriculum Objectives in Relation to its Course Contents Instruction in Colleges of Education in Ghana

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Abstract

This study, conducted in Colleges of Education in Ghana, reveals a significant relationship between selected content of social studies curriculum objectives and its content instruction. The researcher used purposive sampling to select twelve (12) social studies tutors, ten (10) subject specialists and four (4) curriculum experts from the Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) of the Ministry of Education, and a multi-stage sampling technique (proportionate stratified and simple random sampling methods) to select 480 teacher trainees from four (4) Colleges of Education. The data collected via self-developed questionnaire (Cronbach's alpha = 0.83) and semi-structured interview guides were analysed quantitatively using descriptive statistics (percentages and frequencies) and qualitatively through thematic and content analysis which were reported in narratives. The relationship between selected content of social studies and curriculum objectives were in the following areas: methods of inquiry and reflective inquiry are taught; the goals of social studies have been characterized by transmission of the cultural heritage of the society, and social studies was organized and taught in an integrative and interdisciplinary fashion. There is the need for the Ministry of Education, CRDD, universities and Colleges of Education in Ghana to review the content of the current social studies curriculum or syllabus of Colleges of Education to make it more integrated.

Keywords: Social studies, curriculum, integrated approach, reflective inquiry

Introduction

Social studies curriculum objectives for Colleges of Education in Ghana, like that of education in general, seek to develop the total personality of the individual learner: cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. This suggests that curriculum, content and methods for teaching a subject are very important as they help to achieve the purpose for which a course of study is undertaken. Although many Social Studies tutors in Colleges of Education outline and plan lessons with cognitive, psychomotor, and affective objectives or outcomes, there are a mismatch content instruction sometimes fail to indicate how these will be taught and evaluated. So, how can social studies tutors ensure congruence between selected content instruction and social studies curriculum objectives. This paper argues that the best designed programme in education will fail to have the intended impact and results if there is incongruence or a mismatch between course content instruction and curriculum objectives. This calls for a review of the social studies curriculum objectives and content instruction in colleges of education in Ghana.

Statement of the problem

Although every curriculum is supposed to be evaluated after every ten (10) years, the social studies curriculums for colleges of education in Ghana has been in operation for over fifteen years without any significant review and change. The severity of the problem is that there is little evidence that teacher education programmes are adequately preparing teachers to plan social studies curriculum with deep thinking and social emotional learning consciously imbedded within content (Folsom, 2009). Filling the gap by adopting the process evaluation model of social studies curriculum evaluation of colleges of education in Ghana is reflective of the magnitude of the problem.

Theoretical framework

This study adopted Stufflebeam’s (2003) context, input, process, product (CIPP) model of curriculum evaluation to guide the process evaluation of the social studies curriculum of colleges of education in Ghana. Stufflebeam’s CIPP model is all about taking an informed decision on curriculum implemented. If an implemented curriculum is not living up to the expected objective and goals, alternative means available can be used to make modifications necessary to attain the expected objectives and goals. The CIPP underpins this study because the model seems to appeal to educational leaders, and it emphasizes the importance of producing evaluative data for decision making. The Stufflebeam model provides a means for generating data relating to four stages of programme operation: *context evaluation*, which continuously assesses needs and problems in the context to help decision makers determine goals and objectives; *input evaluation*, which assesses alternative means for achieving those goals to help decision makers choose optimal means; *process evaluation*, which monitors the processes both to ensure that the means are actually being implemented and to make the necessary modifications; and *product evaluation*, which compares actual ends with intended ends and leads to a series of recycling decisions. During each of these four stages, specific steps are taken: the kinds of decisions are identified; the kinds of data needed to make those decisions are identified; those data are collected; the criteria for determining quality are established; and the data are analyzed on the basis of those criteria. The CIPP model is shown in Figure 1 as conceptual framework of this paper.

Conceptual framework

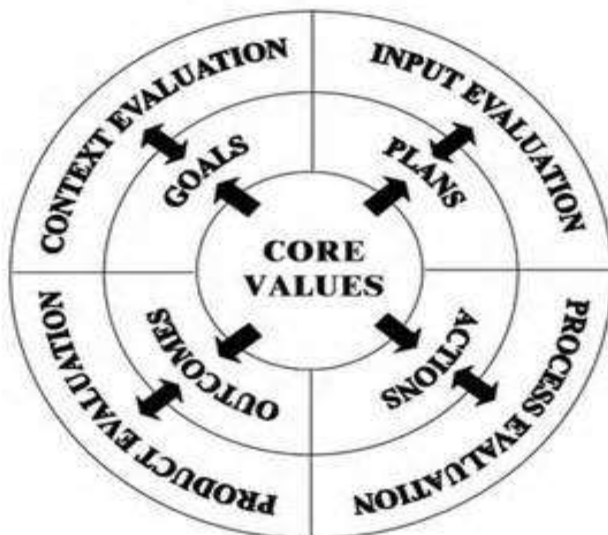


Fig 1: Conceptual framework.

Source: Adopted from Stufflebeam (2003), CIPP model of curriculum process evaluation.

Curriculum process evaluation aims to monitor, document and assess programme activities. Process evaluation methods include monitoring the project procedural barriers and unanticipated defect, identifying needed in-process project adjustment, obtaining additional information for corrective programmatic changes, documenting

the project implementation process, and regularly interacting with and observing the activities of project participants (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007). Process evaluation techniques include on-site observation, participant interviews, rating scales, questionnaires, records analysis, photographic records, case studies of participants, focus group, self-reflection session with staff members, and tracking of expenditures.

Understanding the concept of curriculum and curriculum evaluation

There is no fixed definition of curriculum (Sahlberg, 2011). This paper adopts the definition of McKernan (2008) who views curriculum as what is “concerned with what is planned, implemented, taught, learned, evaluated and researched in schools and at all levels of education” (p. 4). This definition of curriculum is seen to be more as a process rather than just a product. Curriculum evaluation is a many-sided concept (Kelly, 2009; Eisner, 2002). Stufflebeam (2000) argues that curriculum evaluation refers to the processes used to weigh the relative merits of those educational alternatives which at any given time are deemed to fall within the domain of curriculum practice. In this process, evaluation is seen simply as measuring of teaching in terms of pupils learning. It is a process involving ongoing activities aimed at gathering timely information about the quality of a programme. Therefore, it is a process of judging, putting a value or assessing the worth of the learning experiences.

Objectives of Social Studies Curriculum and its content instruction in the Colleges of Education in Ghana

Social Studies is conceived as an integrated study of man and the outcome of his interaction with the environment (Esu & Inyang-Abia, 2009). Ololobou (2010) sees Social Studies as integrated study of man as he battles for survival in reciprocal relationship between man and the environment, and it aims at shaping man to fit well in his environment. The introduction of social studies in Ghana was as a product of the educational conference of Mombasa (Blege, 2001). Notwithstanding, there are “confusing arrays of conceptual perspectives concerning the aims, nature and content of social studies and that cultivation of a clearer conception of the subject in Ghana has become very necessary” as observed by Bekoe and Eshun (2013b: 93). This suggests that evaluation of social studies curriculum and students’ learning in social studies needs to be taken seriously. There is therefore an urgent compelling need for comprehensive overhauling of social studies teacher education process; as condition for viable effective implementation of social studies curricula.

Social Studies Curriculum course aims to provide an understanding of the development of community life in the context of time, space, economic, and political will to establish social harmony, progress, and have a rational thought in decision-making. According to Bekoe & Eshun (2013a), the objective of the Social Studies curriculum of Colleges of Education is to enable students:

- To link the disciplines of Social Studies of everyday life of individuals and communities; enhance understanding of the social system through the culture and values to create a multi-ethnic society of national integration; link the country with a history of nation building; examine environmental incidents relating to the social and economic development of society; explain basic economic principles and economic activities associated with social development and nation building; acquire relevant knowledge and skills; develop relevant attitudes and values; participate in civic activities; apply knowledge of environmental education in life; and cultivate a spirit of patriotism (p. 44).

Relationship between content selected and Social Studies curriculum objectives: The concept of contents in Social Studies Education, according to Adekeye (2008), is “the knowledge, ideas, concepts, generalizations, skills, attitudes, methods, structure, procedures, values and principles which the learner is exposed to and guided to learn. Contents are derived from various sources or disciplines. When contents are selected, suitable experiences are designed on the basis of their relevance to the content. Social Studies Education as an interdisciplinary study derives its source of contents from social sciences, the humanities, the physical sciences as well as some non-conventional disciplines, including law-related education, environment education, career education and human relations education. Other sources of Social Studies education contents are the society or community, books and other published materials, government documents, policy statements, circulars of

pronouncements, resource places, oral tradition, oral or local history (Mezieobi, 1998). This implies that Social Studies education curriculum content must be based within a social context or milieu.

There has been scholarly argument over the relationship between the selected content and curriculum objectives of Social Studies for some time now. Bekoe and Eshun (2013) assert that different modes of delivering Social Studies may tend to influence students as to what the meaning of Social Studies is, its contents and why it is worth studying. The debate is between the use of subject-centered curricula and integrated study of the Social Studies.

Although social science typically refers only to academic disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, geography, economics, and political science, the term Social Studies includes the aforementioned social sciences as well as humanities. At the elementary grade level, Social Studies is typically organized and taught in an integrative and interdisciplinary fashion, but by the high school level and college level Social Studies teaching and learning are organized by courses in the academic disciplines. Social Studies as an interdisciplinary subject combines the integrated study of humanities and the social sciences. The relationship between the subject content and curriculum objectives is limited by the quality of Social Studies education programme implementers, including teachers. In Ghana, for example, Social Studies faculties in secondary schools, colleges of education, and university are composed of historians, anthropologists, sociologists, and other social scientists.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was evaluation of social studies curriculum objectives and its contents instruction in the colleges of education in Ghana.

Objective

This study examined the relationship between content selected and curriculum objectives of social studies curriculum.

Research question

The following research question guide this study: "What is the relationship between the content selected and the objectives of the social studies curriculum?"

Methodology

The research design

This research adopted quantitative and qualitative paradigms using the descriptive design.

Population, sample size, sampling techniques and procedures

The target population for this study was 961 social studies teacher-trainees and 12 social studies tutors from four colleges of education: Accra and Ada Colleges of Education, Akropong Presbyterian College and Presbyterian Women's College of Aburi as well as ten (10) subject specialists and four (4) curriculum experts from the CRDD of the Ministry of Education in Ghana. A multi-stage sampling approach, using proportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques was used to sample 480 teacher trainees for the study, and this represented 50% of the study population. The aim was to sample for representativeness and heterogeneity. This ensured fair representation of students from the colleges and by sex groups. Purposive sampling, using the maximum variation or maximum diversity approach, was used to select twelve (12) social studies tutors by gender, academic qualification and teaching experience. This ensured representativeness and eliminated sampling bias. Ten (10) subject specialists and four (4) curriculum experts from CRDD were also purposively sampled for the study.

Research methods and instrumentation

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The data collection techniques for this study were administration of questionnaire and face-to-face interview. Thus, questionnaire and semi-structured interview guide were used as data collection tools to gather data for the study. The questionnaire which contained a four-point Likert-type items were used to collect data from the students. The semi-structured interview guide was used to collect data from the tutors, subject specialists and curriculum experts. They contained items on the demographic data, and achievement of the objectives of the social studies curriculum of colleges of education.

Data collection and analysis procedures

For face validation, the instruments were given to colleague social studies tutors to scrutinize them. Regarding content validation, the instruments were given to experts in the areas of social studies education and curriculum as well as the research supervisor for review. In order to ensure reliability of the research instrument, it was pilot tested on five (5) social studies tutors and 60 social studies teacher trainees from Wesley College of Education, Kumasi. The response from the pilot test was subjected to Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis using Statistical Product for Service Solution (SPSS) version 21 which yielded a reliability coefficient (r) of 0.83. This indicated that the instrument was reliable as noted by Tavakol, Mohagheghi, and Dennick (2008) who stated that the acceptable values of alpha, ranges from 0.70 to 0.95.

Data presentation and analysis

The data is presented and analysed under two basic themes. These are: demographic characteristics, achievement of the objectives of social studies curriculum of colleges of education in Ghana.

Demographic information

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable	Variable category	Freq	%
Number of sample teacher trainees per institution	Accra College of Education	155	32.3
	Ada College of Education	52	10.8
	Presbyterian College of Education	175	36.5
	Presbyterian Women's College	98	20.4
Sex distribution of students	Male	225	46.9
	Female	255	53.1
Age (in yrs) distribution of Students	15-20	40	8.3
	21-25	205	42.7
	26-30	205	42.7
	31-35	20	4.2
	36-40	10	2.1
Number of subject specialists, curriculum experts & social studies Tutors	Subject specialists	10	100
	Curriculum experts	4	100
	Social studies tutors	12	100
Academic qualification of Tutors	BA	1	8.3
	B.Ed	2	16.7
	M.Ed	6	50.0
	MPhil	3	25.0
Teaching experience 9 (in yrs.)	0-4	0	0
	5-9	6	50
	10 and above	6	50

Source: Fieldwork data (2016).

Most (75%) of the social studies tutors in the selected colleges of education in Ghana had higher academic and professional degrees (masters degree). Hence, they supposedly had in-depth knowledge of the subject content. This suggests that they had the requisite and desirable knowledge, skills and competencies to support the implementation of the social studies curriculum. Over 50% of the tutors relatively had much experience in teaching social studies since most of them had been teaching for over 5 years; hence they would be able to provide information on the process of curriculum evaluation. This finding on good academic, professional and teaching qualifications and experiences of the tutors are critical factors that can support the implementation of social studies curriculum in Ghana. It is widely accepted that the quality of any school cannot be higher than the quality of teachers in the school and that the quality of teachers in the schools is also dependent upon high quality teacher education and professional development opportunities in every country. Rogan and Grayson's (2003), findings in their study support this result when they stated that a critical factor that can support or hinder the implementation of new ideas and practices in a school pertains to the teacher's own background, training, qualification and level of confidence, and their commitment to teaching.

Relationship between contents selected and social studies curriculum objectives

This theme explored the research question: *What is the relationship between the content selected and the objectives of the social studies curriculum?* The data which is positively skewed reveals that there was a significant relationship between content selected of social studies and curriculum objectives as indicated by 70% to 85% of the the teacher-trainees, and most of the social studies tutors, subject specialists and curriculum experts.

Table 2. Relationship between content selected and curriculum objectives

(n = 480)

Statement	Responses				
		SA	A	D	SD
Social studies is typically organized and taught in an integrative and interdisciplinary fashion	Freq	240	100	90	50
	%	50.0	20.8	18.8	10.4
The goals of social studies have been characterized by transmission of the cultural heritage of the society	Freq	160	200	80	40
	%	33.3	41.7	16.7	8.3
Methods of inquiry and reflective inquiry are taught	Freq	240	170	50	20
	%	50.0	35.4	10.4	4.2
The social studies curriculum focused on personal development and informed social criticism	Freq	220	100	90	70
	%	45.8	20.8	18.8	14.6
The social studies coursework had little effect on the beliefs and values concerning teaching	Freq	120	20	120	220
	%	25.0	4.2	25.0	45.8

Source: Fieldwork data (2016)

Key: SA – Strongly Agree; A – Agree; D – Disagree; SD – Strongly Disagree

The quantitative data indicated that there was a relationship between content selected of social studies and curriculum objectives with regard to the methods of inquiry and reflective inquiry that are taught as affirmed by 85.4% of the teacher-trainees; the goals of social studies as characterized by transmission of the cultural heritage of the society as confirmed by 75.0% of the teacher-trainees. There was high response rate (70.8%) affirming that social studies was organized and taught in an integrative and interdisciplinary fashion, except low affirmative response social studies coursework had little effect on the beliefs and values concerning teaching (29.2%). In an interview, some of the social studies tutors, subject specialists and curriculum experts commented as below:

There is a relationship between content selected of social studies and curriculum objectives, but this relationship is also limited by the level of the educational strata that is the schools and levels to which the content prescription is designed for and by the quality of social studies education programme implementers. (Subject specialist)

It is rather unfortunate that we are in an era where quality of instructors constitutes quality education, but most of our instructors and curriculum implementers in our educational institutions, faculties and schools do not have adequate knowledge and skills in designing and implementing a curriculum. (Curriculum expert)

As I am talking to you now, I cannot remember the last time a workshop on curriculum development and implementation programme has been organized for tutors. Look, teacher trainees need to be taught and trained by qualified and committed tutors who need to upgrade their knowledge. Well! We will reach there one day. (Social studies tutor)

The finding of this study that there is a relationship between content selected of social studies and curriculum objectives affirms the views of Mezieobi (2008) who established that the syllabus or curriculum of social studies education is more flexible and accommodates new trends or changes, problems or aspirations in the world or in a society that bears relevance to social studies education. The implication of this is that the scope of social studies education is continuously enlarging to accommodate the rapidity of knowledge explosion and knowledge implosion. Notwithstanding, Mezieobi (2008) explains that the relationship between the subject content and curriculum is limited by the quality of social studies education programme implementers.

Keyfinding

The main finding of this study shows a significant relationship between the selected content of social studies and curriculum objectives in the following areas: methods of inquiry and reflective inquiry are taught; the goals of social studies have been characterized by transmission of the cultural heritage of the society, and social studies was organized and taught in an integrative and interdisciplinary fashion.

Conclusion

Even though the study revealed a relationship between content selected of social studies and curriculum objectives, this relationship was limited by the level of the educational strata that is the schools and levels to which the content prescription is designed for and by the quality of social studies education programme implementers.

Recommendations

In view of the above findings, the study makes the following recommendations:

- i. The CRDD of the Ministry of Education in Ghana should review the content of the current social studies syllabus of colleges of education, and arrange it in such a way that will make it suitable to both teachers and students. Similarly, the Ministry of Education should consider the writing of new set of textbooks that will be based on the integrated social studies curriculum.

Limitations of the study

A limiting factor of this study was that a few respondents did not complete all the items in the questionnaire. Again, the interview data yielded a few distorted responses due to personal bias, anger, anxiety, politics, and the emotional state of the interviewee and interviewer at the time of the interview. This made the researcher to subject the responses to erroneous recall. This might likely affect the validity and reliability of the results of this study.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHER TRAINEES

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1. Name of institution
2. Sex: Male [] Female []
3. Age: 15-20 years [] 21-25 years [] 26-30 years [] 31-35 years [] 36-40 years [] 41 years and above []
4. Academic Qualification: BA [] B.ED [] M.ED [] M.Phil [] Others, specify
5. Teaching experience: 0-4 years [] 5-9 years [] 10 years and above []

SECTION B: EXTENT TO WHICH THE OBJECTIVES OF THE SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM OF THE COLLEGES OF EDUCATION ARE BEING ACHIEVED

Please kindly respond to the following questions based on the extent to which the objectives of the Social Studies curriculum of the Colleges of Education in Ghana are being achieved. Use the following scale; Scale: 1= strongly agree SA, 2= Agree A, 3= disagree D and 4= strongly disagree, SD

Achievement of objectives of the social studies curriculum of colleges of education	SA	A	D	SD
1. Teachers are able to guide students to answer questions and participate in class discussion				
2. The requisite innovative instructional pedagogies are inculcated in teacher trainees				
3. Tutors incorporate students’ learning experiences, challenges, tasks encountered, confronting difficulties in assimilating topics and concepts for instruction				

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4. Teacher trainees are able to transfer from what is learned in coursework to the classroom				
5. Teacher trainees teach Social Studies using engaging, thinking-rich methods				
6. Teachers are able to develop and deliver lessons that focused on the Social Studies objectives and assessments				

APPENDIXB

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TUTORS, SUBJECT SPECIALISTS AND CURRICULUM EXPERTS

1. What academic qualifications do teachers of social studies possess for teaching of the subject?
2. To what extent are the objectives of the social studies curriculum of the colleges of education being achieved?