

# An Appraisal of Senior High School Teachers' Knowledge of the Objectives and the Integrated Approach of Social Studies in the Kumasi Metropolis

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**Abstract:** The integrated curriculum has been identified as one of the most effective approaches for the attainment of Social Studies objectives. The attainment of the objectives of Social Studies to a large extent depends on teachers' knowledge and practical application of wide instructional techniques and methods that enable learners to acquire values and attitudes needed to contribute to their societies. This study was therefore, to appraise Social Studies teachers' in the Kumasi Metropolis in the Ashanti Region of Ghana knowledge of the objectives and the integrated approach as a method of teaching Social Studies. A case study design with qualitative methodology was adopted for the study. A sample size of twenty (20) Social Studies teachers was purposively sampled. The data were gathered using an interview guide. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data qualitatively. The results of the study indicated that in most cases, Social Studies teachers in Senior High Schools understand the integrated approach as a method of teaching Social Studies and as a multidisciplinary approach. The study recommended that regular in-service training on new methodologies, assessment techniques, and approaches such as the integrated approach should be organized for Social Studies teachers to keep them abreast of modern approaches for the fulfillment of learners' and societal needs. It also recommended that only trained Social Studies teachers should be allowed to teach Social Studies in Senior High Schools.

**Keywords:** Integrated Approach, Instructional Resources, Teaching Methods, Teaching Techniques

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## 1. Introduction

Education prepares the young ones for life after completing school. If this is the case, then teachers should always be willing to engage learners fully in pedagogical principles that will lead to lifelong learning experiences. It is based on this thinking that nations such as the United State of America, Britain, Australia, and Germany introduced Integrated Social Studies in their educational system which has aided their youth to acquire democratic values and lived as responsible youth [1, 2].

The integrated curriculum has been identified as one of the most effective approaches to academic achievement and lifelong learning [3]. Educators are concerned with

integration in the pedagogical aspect; the method of relating varieties of subject matter to units of study or problem situations. As early as 1938, John Dewey called for educational reforms where subjects would no longer be learned in isolation from one another. The integrated approach with its interdisciplinary activities is capable of assisting learners to develop good character, citizenship, creativity, higher order thinking, and problem-solving skills [3]. The integrated approach was adopted as a method of teaching Social Studies in Africa at the Mombasa Conference of 1968 as a remedy to challenges posed by the separate subject-centered approach inherited from the colonial masters. The traditional separate subjects' approach of teaching with its teacher-transmitted approach of teaching

was inherited from the colonial masters, which was not helpful to the citizens with their own historical, geographical, and political traditions [4]. This approach to the teaching of Social Studies was, therefore, adopted in Africa including Ghana because it is more effective in learners' learning achievements as compared to the single subject approach [3, 4]. Traditional academic settings have tended to emphasize reflective observation and concept formation through the use of teacher-transmission techniques of teaching to the detriment of integrated techniques which are characterized by practical actions and immediate concrete experiences. The traditional-subject approach coupled with the nature of our classrooms has compelled many teachers to limit themselves to the classroom, making teaching teacher-centered [5].

The attainment of the objectives of Social Studies depends on teachers' knowledge and practical application of wide instructional techniques [6]. A study conducted on Social Studies teachers' instructional practices, revealed that Social Studies lessons are expected to involve activities that enable learners to acquire values and attitudes needed to contribute to their societies [6]. Social Studies in Senior High Schools need to take a critical look at the techniques used in teaching the subject in line with [6]. However, currently, there seems to be no empirical research on the knowledge of the integrated approach by Senior High School Social Studies teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis. It is because of this that this study intended to appraise the knowledge of Social Studies teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis about the objectives of Social Studies and also knowledge of the integrated approach to teaching and learning Social Studies in the Kumasi Metropolis of the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

### ***1.1. Statement of the Problem***

Ghanaian cherished values and attitudinal standards are falling; with a high incidence of corruption, indecent dressing, homosexuality, lukewarm attitude towards government property, and poor disposal of waste, among others [7, 8]. Meanwhile, Social Studies has been in the Ghanaian school curriculum since the 1987 Educational Reforms. The current negative happenings among learners in Senior High Schools seem to be indicating that Social Studies teachers are employing inappropriate instructional techniques to teach the subject. This is because any instructional method employed by teachers that removes the learners' part of the triadic relationship in and out the classroom would fail to prepare learners adequately for reflective citizenship. Although much has been said about the varied instructional techniques available to Social Studies teachers to use to achieve the objectives of the subject [9, 7, 6]. But, very little is known about the knowledge of social studies teachers in Senior High Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis in the Ashanti Region of Ghana about the objectives of Social Studies and also their knowledge about the integrated approach as one of the instructional method of Social Studies practiced to achieve the objectives of the subject.

### ***1.2. Research Questions***

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1) What do Social Studies teachers of the Kumasi Metropolis know about the objectives of Social Studies?
- 2) What do teachers of Social Studies in the Kumasi Metropolis know about the Integrated Approach in Social Studies?

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

This study is based on the socio-cultural perspectives of learning (social constructivism) [10]. Vygotsky asserted that human mental activity is a case of social experiences; thus, an understanding of human thinking and knowledge depends on an understanding of social experience and forces of the cognitive process which emanates from social interaction. Social constructivism is based on specific assumptions about reality, knowledge, and learning is also collaborated by [11]. In this context, the integrated approach as a method of teaching Social Studies focuses on group projects or cooperative learning and out-of-door activities, among others. With this, the learner, intermingle with the activities of the group as well as the physical environment which enable him/her to learn and develop problem-solving skills as postulated by the social constructivists' theory. The integrated approach as an instructional technique of Social Studies is recommended as appropriate for teaching Social Studies; because it replicates the kind of cooperative activity that characterizes most adult social, economic, and political life [12]. The use of the integrated approach in teaching as underpinned by social constructivism ensures that learners are put at the center of the teaching and learning process and teachers are introduced as facilitators and not as teachers [13].

## **3. Review of Related Literature**

### ***3.1. Teachers' Knowledge of the Objectives of Social Studies***

Just as scholars of Social Studies have diverse views about what the subject is, so also people have different perceptions about its objectives [14]. The Social Studies programme trains the young ones to be concerned, committed, competent and good citizens [15]. Social Studies is seen as citizenship education geared towards achieving five objectives which are: the adaptation of the learner to the changing environment, the development of national consciousness and unity among learners, the development of positive attitudes, values, and skills in learners, the development of good citizens who are willing and capable to contribute towards national development, and the ability of learners to make rational decisions in solving problems facing their societies. The knowledge of Social Studies objectives by teachers cannot be over-emphasized as it establishes that lesson objectives make the teacher more confident, focused, conscious of time, and more decisive in terms of materials and teaching methods.

### 3.2. Teachers' Knowledge of the Integrated Approach in Social Studies

The word, "integration" means the act of combining two or more things to work together. An integrated approach in terms of curriculum design is defined as "a method of study in which children broadly explore knowledge in various subjects related to certain aspects of the environment". The concept of integration of curriculum as an instructional approach incorporates key content from two or more fields: with well-defined educational goals and which use problem-based learning to involve and challenge learners [16, 17]. This mode of presentation allows for clarity, wider perception, deeper understanding, and application of concepts learned. An integrated curriculum is a curriculum approach that purposefully draws together knowledge, perspectives, and methods of inquiry from more than one discipline to develop a more powerful understanding of a problem; by inference, this definition uncovers the shortcomings of the single- subject approach; thus, no single subject can address learners' multiple needs [16]. An integrated curriculum provides learners with the opportunities to connect what they learn in class with real-life situations. This has been identified as the focus of integrated curriculum by scholars.

An integrated approach as a method in Social Studies is more likely to maintain focus on the instrumental purpose of education than the separate disciplines. The integrated approach used by Social Studies teachers provides opportunities for learners to acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are relevant for personal development and the growth of society. Using the integrated approach in teaching Social Studies allows learners to perceive the world or knowledge as one unit and naturally ask questions that cut across the artificial subject division. In this context, the Social Studies teacher's role is to provide an opportunity for learners to interact with real-life issues to gain experiences and acquire skills to deal with challenges of life holistically. Not only do the traditional disciplines being bridged by new disciplines such as economic history, social anthropology, and cultural geography, but also important new fields such as population studies, environmental studies, and Information Communication Technology (ICT) studies draw content from various disciplines.

Curriculum integration promotes active learner participation in teaching and learning. This is because it focuses on higher-level problem-solving skills, acquisition of relevant knowledge, and a deeper understanding of the connections across subjects [18-20]. Effective use of the integrated approach in teaching Social Studies requires wide consultations and collaboration with teachers of the traditional disciplines and other emerging fields of study as well as members of the community. These collaborative meetings bring teachers and other experts together and provide a platform for professional learning communities and discussions that will provide pedagogy and accelerate professional growth [3]. Integration increases feelings of connection among teachers as well as team spirit among learners [21]. The integrated Social Studies curriculum facilitates the ability to acquire skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving and analytical capacity.

### 3.3. Approaches to Curriculum Integration

Different ways of curriculum integration have been identified with their implications for teaching and learning. Curriculum approaches can be categorized into three; namely: a multidisciplinary approach, an inter-disciplinary approach, and a trans-disciplinary approach [22]. Multidisciplinary integration (intra-disciplinary approach) focuses on the disciplines [22]. Drake and Burns explain that teachers or instructors who employ a multidisciplinary approach organize standards from the discipline around a theme. Figure 1 for instance, being an illustration of a multidisciplinary approach displays connections that exist among different Social Science subjects with a common theme (Ghana). Students learning about the theme "Ghana" can study the "geography of Ghana", "economy of Ghana", "sociology of Ghana" "government of Ghana" etc. as sub-topics (circles) but connected to the central circle (Ghana) as shown in Figure 1. It can be seen that the individual subjects do not lose their identity. With this approach, the curriculum is designed in such a way that knowledge, facts, concepts, generalizations, and principles from more than one discipline which are related are amalgamated for a better understanding of a phenomenon. Multidisciplinary integration is considered by many as the least rigorous among the various types (See figure 1).

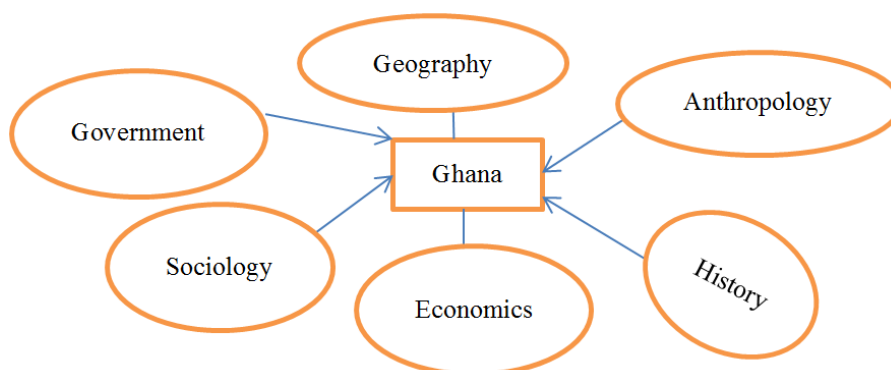
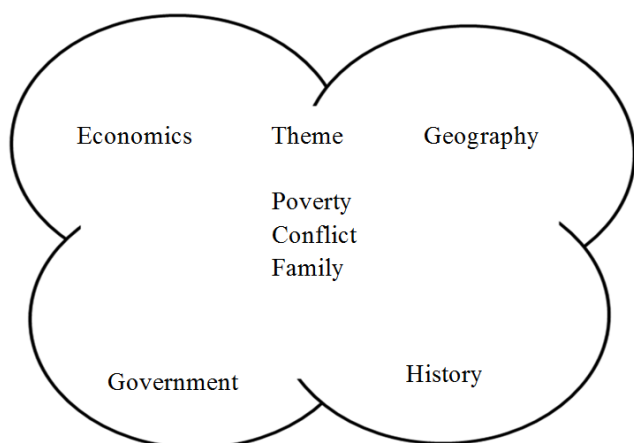


Figure 1. Multidisciplinary Integration (Adapted from Drake and Burns, 2004).

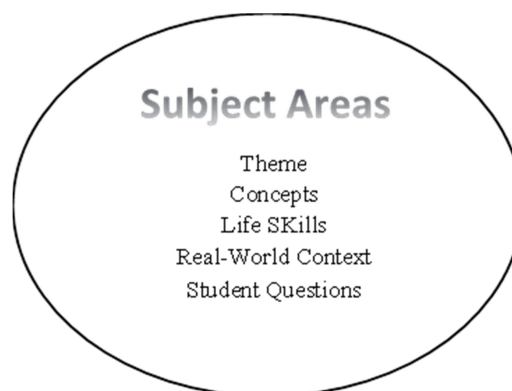
With the interdisciplinary integration, Drake and Burns opine that instructors organize the curriculum around common learning across disciplines. The individual disciplines that constitute the subject lose their logical identity as separate recognizable study areas and become a greater extent blended into a new and broader field of study. This implies that concepts, ideas, facts, and generalizations are drawn from different disciplines and synthesized into a new body of knowledge. With this, an interdisciplinary curriculum as shown in Figure 2 may be a good attempt at unifying themes (poverty, conflict, and family) from various circles (geography, economics, government, and history) to study the issues without noticing much of the identity of these subjects than a multidisciplinary curriculum. The current junior high school and senior high school syllabi of Ghana are typical types of interdisciplinary curricula.



**Figure 2.** Interdisciplinary Integration (Adapted from Drake and Burns, 2004).

With the trans-disciplinary approach to integration, instructors or teachers organize curriculum around students' questions and concerns (see Figure 3). The individual subjects (circles) completely lose their identity into broad learning experiences and social issues (new circle) which never made any attempt at recognizing any subject. Students, therefore, develop life skills as they apply interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary skills in a real-life context [22]. According to Drake and Burns, two routes lead to trans-disciplinary integration, namely project-based learning and negotiating the curriculum. Trans-disciplinary approach to integration is considered by many as the most radical form of curriculum integration while interdisciplinary integration is concerned with the assemblage of ideas, concepts, and generalizations from various subject areas, trans-disciplinary integration ignores subject areas. Proponents of trans-disciplinary are of the view that knowledge is one whole and defies division into subject areas. They, therefore, argue that the curriculum should be organized around broad learning experiences and social issues such as HIV/AIDS, conflict and conflict resolution and challenges of democratic governance in Africa, poverty and poverty alleviation in Africa, bribery

and corruption, among others. Content is drawn from any source for the examination and resolution of these issues without reference to subject areas. Trans-disciplinary integration lends itself to the core curriculum such as the Social Studies and Integrated Science of the senior high schools in Ghana (See figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Trans-disciplinary Integration (Adapted from Drake and Burns, 2004).

## 4. Methodology

The qualitative research approach was used with the case study design. The case study design is noted for its complete and detailed or exhaustive follow-up and critical analysis of an event and an occurrence [23]. The case study design was appropriate for this study because it enabled the researcher to find out whether or not Senior High School teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis really know the objectives of Social Studies and also knowledge of the integrated approach as a method of teaching Social Studies. The target population for this study comprised all Senior High School social studies teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis. A sample size of twenty (20) Senior High School Social Studies teachers from seven (7) Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis was used. These were purposively selected. The Social Studies teachers were purposively sampled because they were the right people to give the information required for the study. An interview guide was used as an instrument for collecting data. Thematic analysis, tables, and simple percentages (in few cases) were used to analyze the data gathered.

## 5. Findings and Discussions

### 5.1. Teacher's Background

As shown in Table 1 out of twenty (20) teachers interviewed, one (1) teacher (5%) specialized in Social Science (Government), four (4) teachers (20%) studied Economics, three (3) teachers (15%) studied Geography, three (3) teachers (15%) studied History, six (6) teachers (30%) specialized in Social Studies, and three (3) teachers (15%) specialized in other subjects (Population and Family Life Education, Psychology and Publishing Studies). Out of

the twenty (20) teachers, thirteen (13) teachers (65%) were males and seven (7) teachers (35%) were females. Of the 20, three (3) (15%), ten (10) (50%), six (6) (30%), and one (1) (5%) had taught for below 4, 5-9, 10-14, and 15-19 years respectively. This revelation is an indication that Social

Studies in Senior High Schools in Kumasi metropolis is being taught by teachers with different subject specializations. This might have contributed to their little knowledge about the objectives of the subject and the integrated approach as a technique of teaching.

**Table 1.** Teachers' Background by Subject Specialisation, Gender, Highest Qualification, and Number of Years Taught.

Subject specialization	Gender			Qualification	Number of Years Taught			
	M F Total			Bachelor	Below 4	5- 9	10-14	15- 19
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	( %)
Social Science	1 (5)	0 (0)	1 (5)	1 (5)	0 (0)	1 (5)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Economics	1 (5)	3 (15)	4 (20)	4 (20)	0 (0)	2 (10)	2 (10)	0 (0)
Geography	2 (10)	1 (5)	3 (15)	3 (15)	0 (0)	1 (5)	2 (10)	0 (0)
History	3 (15)	0 (0)	3 (15)	3 (15)	0 (0)	2 (10)	0 (0)	(5)
Social Studies	4 (20)	2 (10)	6 (30)	6 (30)	1 (5)	3 (15)	2 (10)	0 (0)
Others	2 (10)	1 (5)	3 (15)	3 (15)	2 (10)	1 (5)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Total (%)	13 (65)	7 (35)	20 (100)	20 (100)	3 (15)	10 (50)	6 (30)	1 (5)

Source: Field Data, 2022.

## 5.2. Responding to Research Questions

*Research Question 1:* Teachers' Knowledge of the Objectives of Social Studies.

With regards to teachers' knowledge of the general objectives of Social Studies, teachers' responses to the interview question - *do you know the general objectives of Social Studies* revealed negative responses. Nineteen (19) of the interviewees responded that they were not aware of any general objective of Social Studies apart from its goal of citizenship education. For instance, three (3) of the respondents said: *"What I can say is that Social Studies is citizenship education"* the second respondent also said: *"For me I think is to prepare useful citizens who are ready to support the development of the country."* The third respondent said: *"I do not know the general objectives. What I know is that each topic or unit has its lessons objectives which are stated when writing lesson notes"* However, one (1) respondent was aware of the general objectives of Social Studies and said this: the discipline equips students with relevant knowledge, desirable attitudes, and critical thinking skills to make informed decisions to address challenges confronting them and society, inculcating in students, a sense of patriotism to contribute willingly towards national development, preparing students to develop national consciousness and integration. This is an indication that for most Senior High School Social studies teachers in the Ashante Region, anything goes in the classroom, with little regard to the objectives of the subject.

*Research Question 2:* Teachers' knowledge of the Integrated Approach in Social Studies.

Respondents responses to this question revealed that fifteen (15) of them understood the integrated approach as an amalgamation of Social Sciences. For example, there (3) of them said: *"Integrated approach is the combination of subjects like Geography, History, Economics, Political Science, among others in teaching Social Studies."* the second respondent said: *"Social Studies is an integrated*

*subject because it comprises various disciplines like Economics, Geography, History, and Anthropology."* The third respondent also explained that: *"Social Studies is an integrated subject in a sense that it employs any relevant knowledge in all fields of study which can be useful in solving a problem or treating a topic"* These responses from respondents might have been a result of the orientation they had in their training institutions. The remaining five (5) respondents understood the integrated approach as interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary. For instance, two (2) of them said: *"Integrated approach in Social Studies means Social Studies is inherently interdisciplinary"* Two (2) of these respondents also said: *"Integrated approach is the fusing of relevant content I mean facts, concepts, generalization from various disciplines to solve a problem."* These two (2) respondents added that: *"this approach involves the use of different learner-centered techniques in teaching."* For these respondents, an integrated approach goes beyond just a combination of Social Science disciplines but rather ensures that learning is organized around themes or problems for lifelong learning. This is an indication that generally, the teachers had a fair understanding of integration in Social Studies.

## 6. Discussion of Findings

*Research Question 1:* Teachers' Knowledge of the objectives of Social Studies.

Data gathered on research question one indicate that for the general objectives of Social Studies, almost all the teachers interviewed did not know of them except a few. However, with the instructional or lesson's objectives, almost all the teachers interviewed responded in the affirmative. The inability of Social Studies teachers to know the general objectives of the subject might have been the cause of the subjects not been able to achieve its intended purpose of producing informed, concerned, reflective and participatory citizens. This finding is in consonance with another finding that Social Studies teachers do not know what the general

objectives of the subject are and for that matter do not select content which addresses the attainment of the goals and objectives of Social Studies [24].

*Research Question 2:* Social Studies Teachers' knowledge of the Integrated Approach.

This theme explored teachers' understanding of the integrated approach in Social Studies. Teachers' responses to interview question - *How do you understand an integrated approach in Social Studies?* Most of the respondents defined an integrated approach as a mere combination of content from various Social Sciences such as History, Economics, Geography, Sociology, and Anthropology, among others, to teach topics in Social Studies. Few of the respondents, on the other hand, see an integrated approach in Social Studies as not a mere combination of Social Sciences but rather fusing completely facts, principles, concepts, and generalizations from various disciplines to solve personal and societal problems. These respondents, however, explained that an integrated approach also involves using different teaching techniques with more emphasis on a child-centered approach as well as instructional material to make learning meaningful to the student to make learning lifelong. The revelation confirms what has been reported that multidisciplinary integration focuses on the individual disciplines [22]. Many people have defined the integrated curriculum in such a way that the term is used in association with almost any approach that moves away beyond that of a strict separate subject. To some people, it involves the mere juxtaposition of various disciplines without any attempt at their actual synthesis. For instance, curriculum integration is often used to describe multidisciplinary arrangements in which themes are found inside an existing subject. The term, "integration" is used to describe attempts to reassemble fragmented pieces of disciplines of knowledge – such as creating Social Studies out of History and Geography and labeling approaches that emphasize thinking, writing, and valuing across subject areas.

Concerning the idea of Social Studies being an integrated subject, teachers' responses to the interview question - *In your view how do you understand the idea that Social Studies is an integrated subject?* were that Social Studies is an integrated subject in the sense that its content is derived from various Social Science disciplines and the Humanities. Respondents in addition said that Social Studies employs different kinds of teaching techniques as well as teaching and learning materials in the teaching and learning process making it an integrated subject. This finding aligns with revelations made that Social Studies derives its content from various sources and by nature it is inclusive, integrative, multidisciplinary, and interdisciplinary [16, 17, 14]. It, therefore, allows the inclusion of subjects from the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, and for that matter, the subject borrows concepts, principles, laws, perspectives, and generalizations from other disciplines to practice problem-solving and decision-making for developing citizenship skills on critical social issues.

## 7. Summary of Findings

Teachers' responses to the interview and what the researcher observed in their classroom revealed that teachers have adequate knowledge of the definition of Social Studies. Interview responses also showed that Senior High School Social Studies teachers have little knowledge about the general objectives of Social Studies. It has also been found that Social Studies teachers know the integrated approach as a method of teaching Social Studies. They explained the integration of Social Studies as the combination of Social Sciences and Humanities. Based on this, it can be said that teachers understand the integrated approach as a method for teaching Social Studies and as a multidisciplinary approach. It was also discovered through the interview responses that Social Studies teachers are aware that an integrated approach involves the use of varied teaching and assessment techniques as well as instructional resources.

## 8. Conclusions

The following conclusions are drawn based on the results obtained from the study:

- 1) Knowledge of Social Studies teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis' about the objectives of the subject fall short of an effective Social Studies teacher,
- 2) Knowledge of Social Studies teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis' about the integrated approach as a method of teaching is limited to mere combination or amalgamation of Social Sciences and a multi-disciplinary approach to integration.
- 3) Social Studies is handled by untrained teachers with little knowledge about the social studies objectives and the integrated approach of teaching the subject.

## 9. Recommendations

Based on the findings, and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

- 1) Knowledge of Social Studies teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis' about the objectives of the subject fall short of an effective Social Studies teacher. Hence it is recommended that regular in-service training should be organized by Social Studies experts for Social Studies teachers to be abreast of the objectives of the subject and updating of their pedagogical skills.
- 2) Since knowledge of Social Studies teachers' in the Kumasi Metropolis' about the integrated approach of teaching is limited to mere combination or amalgamation of Social Sciences and a multi-disciplinary approach to integration, it is recommended that the National Social Studies Association should be revitalized so that experts of the discipline can meet from time to time to review and assess the progress of Social Studies teaching and learning to offer cutting-edge recommendations on appropriate methodologies and techniques (integrated approach) for teaching and learning of the subject.



- 3) Since Social Studies is being handled by untrained teachers with little knowledge about the objectives and the integrated approach of teaching the subject. Therefore, it is recommended that only trained Social Studies teachers should be allowed to teach the subject in the Senior High Schools in Ghana since the discipline, per its definition, nature, scope, and philosophy is not Social Science for it to be handled by Geography, Economics, Government and Sociology teachers.

## Authors Contribution

Godfred Atta Adjei conceptualized the idea and Ibrahim Abudulai designed the study, analyzed the data, and prepared the manuscript with contributions from the co-authors Salifu Zibreal Sandawey and Najat Ahmed.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author's declare that they have no competing interests.

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