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Educational Background of Social Studies Teachers and its Effects on Pupils' Academic Performance in Public Junior High Schools in Mfantseman Municipality

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Abstract: The main purpose of this study was to investigate the educational background of Social Studies teachers and how it relates with pupils' academic performance in Public Junior High Schools in Mfantseman Municipality. A descriptive survey design was used for the study and the sample for the study was made up of all the Social Studies teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality numbering 103. The purposive sampling method was used to select the respondents for the study. A seven item questionnaire was developed made up of close-end six (6) questions with one Likert scale. The result of the study showed that there is a problem associated with the teaching of Social Studies in the Municipality and the general academic performance of pupils over the last four years (2009-2012) was average. There is a weak positive relationship between educational background of social studies teachers and academic performance of their pupils in the Municipality.

Keywords: Pupils; Teacher; Public school; Social studies; Academic performance.

1. Background to the study

The educational background or qualification of teachers becomes pertinent in the whole enterprise of education and for that matter the social studies teacher. Basically, educational background or qualification of social studies teachers entail all the forms of prior schooling that has been successfully completed which qualifies them with a certified certificate to teach. This background starts right from the basic level, to the secondary level and the tertiary level which includes college of education where they are finally certified to teach.

Educational background of Social Studies teachers over the years with regard to their preparation has been with problems (Agyemang-Fokuoh, 1994). Thus, the frequent change in certification and the number of years spent while being trained as a teacher is inconsistent. For instance, teacher certification started as Post Middle Certificate through to Certificate "B", Certificate "A", Advance Certificate and Diploma. This was either two, three or four years of teacher education.

Also, the change of name from Teacher Training College to College of Education and curriculum in preparation of the teacher is another contributing factor. With these, student teachers are expected to be well equipped so that they can help students in the classroom to pass their examinations with better grades at the Basic Education Certificate level.

For learners to achieve such high academic standards in education, it depends largely on the educational background or qualification of the Social Studies teacher to help learners with various forms of assessment strategies to attain such academic performance standards. But the frequent change in certification, duration of schooling and the school curriculum has affected the quality of their educational background thereby affecting the quality of results produced at the BECE level over the last couple of years (Agyemang-Fokuoh, 1994). Due to this, most Social Studies teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality from the Colleges of Education; who are teaching the subject lack the basic preparation skills to teach it well.

The issue of poor academic performance of learners in the subject has been of much concern to all stakeholders in the Municipality. The problem is so much that it has led to the widely acclaimed fallen standard of education in the Municipality. The standard of academic performance of learners in the BECE seems to depend on the higher educational qualifications of the Social Studies teacher. To Agharuwhe and Nkechi (2009), effective teachers with higher educational qualifications produce better performing students. It is, therefore, important to find out the educational background of Social Studies teachers and how these relate to the academic performance of learners at Public Junior High Schools in Mfantseman Municipality.

1.1. Statements of the Problem

The teacher is trained as a professional in a subject area of study with the right educational background qualification to achieve high academic performance of learners. In spite of this, most Social Studies teachers in the Public Junior High Schools in the Municipality appear not trained in the subject but are appointed by their headmasters due to lack of trained qualified teachers in the subject. Not all the thirty eight Colleges of Education in Ghana offer Social Studies, therefore pre-teachers posted from such colleges find it difficult to teach the subject when they are assigned to them by their headmasters.

Most of these teachers seem not to have access to internet facilities to conduct action research work in the subject. This makes them lack the basic skills to prepare to teach the subject. Again, limited reference materials and obsolete information in the textbooks make teaching of the subject difficult. There are also fewer periods allocated to the subject on the time table (Obotan, 2011). Importance is placed on other subjects more than Social Studies. Again, frequent change of certificate titles, duration of schooling and change of school names which affects curriculum inputs also affects academic performance of learners. Due to this; academic performance of learners under these teachers over the last four years appears to be average in the Municipality. The study therefore sought to find out the educational background of Social Studies teachers and how it relates to learners' academic performance.

1.2. Research Questions

The study was conducted to find answers to the following questions:

- 1) What are the educational backgrounds of Social Studies teachers in Pubic Junior High Schools in Mfantseman Municipality?
- 2) What are the problems associated with the teaching of Social Studies in the Public Junior High Schools in Mfantseman Municipality?
- 3) What is the general academic performance of learners at the BECE level over the last (2009-2012) four years in Public Junior High Schools in Mfantseman Municipality?

1.3. Null Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between educational background of Social Studies teachers and learners academic performance in Social Studies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Educational Background of Social Studies Teachers

Many teachers are not well informed about Social Studies as a subject because they often receive little pre-service and in-service professional development to prepare them adequately for teaching the subject (Asimeng-Boahene, 2003). Odada (1993) notes that there is confusion and lack of clarity about what Social Studies entails and many teachers lack not only specific training in Social Studies but also basic preparation to teach. Asimeng-Boahene (1995) found out that very few Social Studies teachers have Diploma and Degrees in Social Studies and are teaching the subject. He further noted that many Social Studies teachers do not attend workshops, receive in-service training or attend Social Studies conferences. The courses taken during teacher training do not sufficiently prepare the potential Social Studies teacher in content knowledge (Asimeng-Boahene, 1995) so that colleges churned out teachers who are not well trained to teach the subject. He further stressed that Social Studies teachers currently serve in positions could be classified as splendid misery or dignified slavery. To him, it is splendid because the teachers operate in contradictory roles and in unenviable teaching conditions.

Also, it is dignified slavery because they teach with little administrative support in unfavourable political climates, implementing test-driven curricula without adequate professional training and instructional materials. Even though, the purpose of the 3 year Diploma in Basic Education at the Colleges of Education is to train a generalist teacher in content and pedagogy, most teachers who teach Social Studies at the Public Junior High level appears not trained in Social Studies. According to Djan (2011) out of the thirty eight (38) Colleges of Education in Ghana, eleven (11) do not offer Social Studies because they offer Technical and French subjects. This pre-supposes that, teachers from such colleges do not offer Social Studies, thereby creating problems if offered the subject to teach without the trained Social Studies teacher available. He further explained that it appears that most Social Studies teachers in the Municipality are holders of Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE), or West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), General Certificate Examination Ordinary Level (GCE 'O' Level), General Examination Certificate Advance Level (GCE 'A' Level) who are not trained while the other holders of Teachers Certificate 'A', Diploma Degree and are trained. Judging from the discussions espoused above, it is evidently clear that more than 50% of prospective Social Studies teachers with educational background qualifications in English, Geography, History, Economics, and Government are compromised. Also learners with low qualifications who are selected as Social Studies teachers tend to be demotivated in understanding the approach to the new Social Studies in schools (Udofot, 1988). There is therefore the need to adequately train Social Studies teachers in order to develop the subject.

2.2. Problems Faced by Social Studies Teachers

Like any other subject, Social Studies teachers are faced with some problems or challenges in the delivering of their duties. Most Social Studies teachers at the basic schools are not trained in Social Studies especially the French and Technical education students from the Colleges of Education. These teachers are given the subject to handle, due to lack of trained teachers in the field (Obotan, 2011). Again he lamented that periods allocated for the subject were few on the time table. Aggarwal (1982) explains that Social Studies Education is perceived to be an easy subject in that any person can teach it and learners can learn at their chosen time and perform well in examination. He further adds that, the subject is not treated as an integrated unit of study but as an aspect of Social Science such as History, Geography and Economics. Learners do not put into practice what they have learnt in the society which affects their moral uprightness and discipline. To the Ministry of Education Science and Sports (2007) there is less number of periods allocated to the subject on the time table and sometimes large class size affects teaching and learning negatively.

There are no well planned programmes initiated by policy makers and professional trainers to complement the initial teacher preparation programme to continue to provide educational development for Social Studies teachers throughout their career path but rather an ad hoc nature of Continuing Professional Development (CPD), Cobbold and Dare (2009) (cited in Amedahe, 2008). Also the National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS] (1994) does not regulate the "Gate Keeping Function" well thereby allowing non professionals into the field to teach the subject. Some Social Studies teachers do not have the requisite content and pedagogical knowledge to teach the subject thereby denying learners to effectively grasp the themes and understand the concepts to be able to solve the societal problems which affects pupils' level of motivation. Shulman (1986) confirms this fact when he realized that there was a mission link in the body of knowledge for teaching of subjects. There are inadequate resources such as resource persons, resource centres and reference materials in the effective delivery of the subject.

Again, lack of co-operation from the community members to help teachers identify useful resources in the community to use in teaching affects teaching. Due to the ad hoc nature of continuing professional development programmes most of the teachers are "Sterile and Dead" thereby lack the basic knowledge to impact into learners and finds it difficult to teach the subject. From the problems, it is evident that, the development of the subject is at a slow pace due to the fact that the "Gate Keeping Function" is not well regulated thereby making teachers of the subject not performing up to expectation.

Another problem identified by Schug *et al.* (1984) was that, older learners do not feel Social Studies is important in preparing them for the future. To Haladyna and Shaughnessy (1982) learners' poor attitude was directly influenced by the attitudes of teachers themselves because of the way the materials are presented in the curriculum. Hawkins (1997) also confirms the assertion raised by Haladyna and Shaughnessy (1982) that many teachers struggling with Social Studies had a poor attitude that was influenced by curriculum guidelines and the way they strangled opportunities to effectively teach the material. The above writers share similar view of poor attitude on the part of learners and teachers and how the curriculum materials are structured. This ultimately reflects in learners negative manner and retention of ideas and concepts minimal (Wade, 2002). Again, Wade (2002) explains that, bland and boring textbooks negatively affects teachers attitude.

To Christensen *et al.* (2001) the subject is affected by administration, state mandates and standardized testing. Echoing this idea was the fact that many teachers and administrators felt the more pressing need of developing Reading and Mathematics skills for testing purposes took time from the Social Studies Curriculum (Mills, 1988). From the above, the problems teachers face is complex in nature in that curriculum developers and administrators do not work together to solve the problems confronted by the subject. To address the problems faced by Social Studies teachers it is expedient for the stakeholders in the field to formulate rules as to how the subject can be developed. The "Gate Keeping Function" is not well regulated thereby making the teachers of the subject not performing to expectation.

2.3. General Academic Performance of Pupils in Social Studies Education

Quantitative analysis indicates that measures of teacher preparation and certification are by far the strongest correlates of student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Goe (2007) also supports this assertion in that his research review provides a snapshot of the current state of research on teacher quality and practices that hold the greatest promise for improving learners' outcomes. Teachers' major subject of specialization marginally improves learners' achievements (Goldhaber and Brewer, 1996). Hanushek *et al.* (2005) rather in a sharp contrast found no impact. They are of the view that graduate (Master's) degrees negatively impact learners achievement. Teachers' test score in their major area of specialization (Social Studies), to Cavalluzzo (2004) found no impact of undergraduate institutions (College of Education) on the academic achievement of learners in Social Studies. With regard to initial teacher preparation programme, mentoring, induction and professional development, there is high significant impact on learners' achievement in Social Studies (Goe, 2007). Teaching experience according (Rockoff, 2004) up to two years positively contribute to high achievement by learners. Schacter and Thum (2004) observed that content and pedagogical knowledge was part of a composite of teacher practices that positively imparted learners' achievement.

Teacher qualification variables have positive impact on learners' achievement academically. Goe (2007) again, explained that, teacher collaboration thus Social Capital where teachers share information, vision and trust among colleagues positively improve instructional quality, likewise teacher efficacy and high expectations. On teacher practices, Goe (2007) explains that practices such as the use of group assignments, project works, feedbacks, whole

class instruction alignment of instructional content with assessments, cognitive engagements, interactive practices submission of work on time by learners and quality assignments strongly help learners achieve high academic standards. He claims that, overall studies have consistently indicated that the majority of variations in teachers' effectiveness of raising learners' achievement scores was due to "Unobserved" variables. Goe (2007) examination of teacher quality focuses on four categories of teacher quality indicators. These indicators include teacher qualifications; which are credentials, knowledge and experiences that teachers bring to bear on learners' achievement such as course work, certificate and internships, teacher characteristics; are the attitudes and attributes that teachers possess in the form of collegiality. Teachers practices; include the ways in which they interact with learners and the strategies they use to accomplish specific teaching task like brainstorming, providing intellectual challenges, and teachers effectiveness which is the "Value-Added" assessment of the degree to which teachers who already in the classroom contribute to their students' learning, as indicated by higher-than-predicted increases in students achievement scores. From the above discussed opinions, the impact of teachers on learners is quite different in the Municipality. It is clear that the effects of teachers from Colleges of Education appear to have low impact on the academic achievements of pupils in Public Junior High Schools specifically in the Mfantseman Municipality over the last four years (Dadzie, 2011).

3. Methodology

This section covers the Research Design, Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure, Instrument, Data Collection Procedure and Data Analysis.

3.1. Research Design

The study employed a descriptive survey design. Maxim (1987) stresses "the purpose of descriptive survey is to describe physical and social phenomena primarily through observation" (p.168). To Amedahe (2010) it deals with interpreting the relationship among variables and describing their relationships. He went further to add that, it seeks to find answers to questions through the analysis of relationships between or among variables. Descriptive research in my opinion involves the collection of data on a phenomena and scientifically finding answers to the phenomena to make informed decisions. The researcher used this method because it was found to be most credible means of studying a phenomenon and also devoid of biases.

3.2. Population

The target population for the study was made up of all Social Studies teachers in the Public Junior High Schools of Mfantseman Municipality. The researcher chooses the Social Studies teachers in the Municipality because he has been teaching in the Municipality for the past eleven years and currently heading one of the Public Junior High Schools in the Municipality. In all, 103 Social Studies teachers constituted the population of the study.

3.3. Sample and Sampling Procedure

The census sampling technique was used to sample all the 103 Social Studies teachers in the Municipality. All the 103 teachers were used as respondents in the study due to their small size.

3.4. Instrument

The main instrument used for the study was questionnaire. It was developed based on the literature review and research questions. The questionnaire for the respondents was made up of 7 items. The items consisted of close-end six (6) and one Likert Scale. Section A contained the biographic data of respondents. Section B contained the educational background and teaching experience of the teachers. Section C consisted of the problems associated with teaching of the subject expressed on a five point Likert Scale of strongly disagree SD, disagree D, uncertain U, agree A, and strongly agree SA. Section D looked at the percentage score at the BECE and general performance of pupils.

3.5. Data Collection Procedure

A letter introducing the researcher to the various schools for the conduct of the research was obtained from the Institute of Education, University of Cape Coast. The questionnaires were administered to the Social Studies teachers at a forum organized by the Municipality for teachers on their welfare by the welfare association on circuit bases. An announcement was made that all Social Studies teachers should meet a researcher at the end of the programme. The researcher explained the rationale behind the research to the respondents and distributed the questionnaires to them. Teachers who were able to finish answering their questionnaires were collected. Those who could not finish completing their forms, the researcher made a follow-up to their schools and collected the answered questionnaires. Teachers who could not attend the forum, the researcher identified them on the list of schools in the Municipality and went to administer the questionnaires to them in their schools. It took the researcher four weeks to complete the administration of the questionnaires. All the 103 questionnaires were retrieved. This represented a 100% return rate.

3.6. Data Analysis

The descriptive nature of the study made the researcher to use both inferential and descriptive statistical tools in the data analysis. The data was put into tables of frequencies and percentages using the Statistical Products Services Solutions (SPSS). The biographic data, sex and age distributions, teaching experience and research questions were analyzed using the frequencies and percentages with the SPSS.

The percentage score marks for the various schools from their BECE results from (2009-2012) in social studies were obtained and computed. A preliminary analysis was done to show the percentage score distribution of marks of pupils and the mean distribution were computed and the grand mean determined using the SPSS out of it. The results were used to test a formulated hypothesis.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Educational Background of Social Studies Teachers

Table 1 represents the educational background of Social Studies teachers.

Table-1. Frequency Distribution of Respondents by their Educational Background

Qualifications	N	%
SSCE/WASSCE	14	13.6
CERT 'A'	12	11.7
DIPLOMA	43	41.7
FIRST DEGREE	34	33.0
Total	103	100.0

Table 1 is a presentation of respondents according to their educational background. It indicates that Social Studies teachers in the Municipality possess different educational qualifications. Those with Diploma constitute the dominant group of 43(41.7%). Holders of First Degree form the second largest group of 34(33.0%). Table 3 also shows that cert 'A' Holders are 12 in number representing (11.7%) while 14 (13.6%) are SSCE/WASSCE. It can be seen that majority of the Social Studies teachers are diploma and first degree holders while those with cert 'A' and SSCE/WASSCE are the least who are non professionals in the Municipality.

4.2. Problems Associated with the Teaching of Social Studies

Table 2 presents the results on problems associated with the teaching of Social Studies.

Table-2. Problems associated with the Teaching of Social Studies

Statement	Strongly Disagree N %	Disagree N %	Uncertain N %	Agree N %	Strongly Agree N %
My school is having a few reference material	19(18.4)	9(3.7)	-	44(42.7)	31(30.1)
The period on the time table for teaching the subject is not adequate.	6(5.8)	34(33.0)	-	36(35.0)	27(26.2)
Large class size affects my teaching negatively.	11(10.7)	33(32.0)	-	35(34.0)	24(23.3)
Teachers do not motivate pupils to learn the subject.	32(31.3)	71(68.90)	-	-	-
I find it difficult to teach some of the topics in the subject.	17(16.5)	67(65.0)	1(1.0)	18(17.5)	-
Few teachers can teach the subject.	4(3.9)	4(3.9)	-	58(56.3)	37(35.9)
INSET programmes in Social Studies are not regular.	3(2.9)	17(16.5)	-	51(49.5)	32(31.1)
Grand Mean				20.17	

Table 2 shows that 28(22.1%) disagree that their school is having a few reference material available for teaching the subject while 75(72.8%) agree. This confirms the assertion that there is lack of resources such as personnel, centers and materials for effective teaching of the subject (Shulman, 1986). On the number of periods allocated for the teaching of the subject 40(38.8%) of the respondents said the periods are not adequate while 63(61.2%) thinks it is enough. This debunks the issue raised by Ministry of Education Science and Sports (2007) that the number of periods allocated for the subject on the time table is not adequate. Again, 44(42.7%) of the respondents disagree that large class size affects their teaching negatively while 59(57.3%) agree. All the 103(100.0%) respondents disagree

that they do not motivate pupils to learn the subject because it develops them to become active participants in solving the problems of society (Jasim, 2008).

To find out if respondents do find it difficult to teach some of the topics, 84(81.5%) disagree while 18(17.5%) agree. This confirms the fact that more than 50% of the respondents are professional teachers therefore they can teach the subject. On the teaching of the subject, 95(92.2%) agree that few teachers can teach the subject while 8(7.8%) disagree. This confirms the assertion raised by Shulman (1986) that most teachers lack the in-depth content and pedagogical knowledge of the subject thereby unable to teach it. There are no regular INSET programmes on social studies 20(19.4%) disagree while 83(80.4%) agree. This confirms the assertion that there are no regular programmes but rather an ad hoc nature of CPD (Cobbold and Dare, 2009) (cited in Amedahe (2008)). From the grand mean of 20.17 it shows that there are problems associated with the teaching of social studies in the Municipality

4.3. General Academic Performance of Pupils over Four Years

The result on the general academic performance of pupils from the sampled Junior High Schools is presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Table-3. Frequency Distribution of Percentage Score of pupils in social studies for four years

Score Range	2009 N %	2010 N %	2011 N %	2012 N %
90-100	6(5.8%)	5(4.8%)	12(11.6%)	14(13.5)
80-89	3(2.9%)	4(3.8%)	5(4.8%)	6(5.9%)
70-79	4(3.8%)	12(11.6%)	7(6.7%)	7(6.8%)
60-69	9(8.7%)	8(7.79%)	3(2.9%)	6(5.9%)
55-59	17(16.6%)	2(1.9%)	5(4.8%)	2(1.9%)
50-54	13(12.6%)	1(0.9%)	5(4.8%)	5(4.9%)
40-49	15(14.6%)	33(32.1%)	25(24.3%)	36(35.0%)
35-39	10(9.7%)	18(17.6%)	14(13.6%)	12(11.6%)
0-39	26(25.3%)	20(19.6%)	27(26.2%)	15(14.5%)
Total	103(100)	103(100)	103(100)	103(100)

Table 3 shows that the number of pupils that passed above the 50 mark are less than 50.4% while those below the 50 mark are more than 50.4% in 2009,2010,2011 and 2012 respectively.

Table 4 represents the mean scores which were computed from the percentage scores of pupils for the last four years (2009-2012).

Table-4. Mean Distribution of Scores for the last four years (2009-2012)

Year	Mean	Standard Deviation
2009	48.22	21.252
2010	48.45	21.899
2011	50.09	23.823
2012	53.95	23.190
Grand Mean		50.1

It can be seen from Table 4 that in 2009 (48.22) and 2010 (48.45) the mean scores were below average while in 2011 it was average (50.09) and in 2012 it was slightly above average (53.95). The grand mean is 50.1. Based on the discussions on Tables 3 and 4, it is clear that the general performance of pupils in the Municipality was average over the last four years. Relationship between Educational Background of Social Studies Teachers and Pupils' Academic Performance. Table 5 shows the results of the relationship between educational background of social studies teachers and academic performance of pupils. The Spearman' rank correlation coefficient was used to find the relationship between the educational background of social studies teachers and pupils academic performance in social studies. The Spearman' rank correlation was used because teachers' educational background is a categorical data.

Table-5. Relationship between Educational Background and Academic Performance

		Educational background/qualification	Total score
Educational background/qualification	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.054
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.589
	N	103	103
Total score	Correlation Coefficient	.054	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.589	.
	N	103	103

R= .054, P= .589

As shown in Table 5, there is a weak positive relationship between educational background of social studies teachers and academic performance of pupils ($r=.054$, $p=.589$). Even though majority of the social studies teachers are professionals, with higher qualifications it could not influence the performance of pupils over the last four years (2009-2012). I therefore fail to reject the null hypothesis; hence academic performance of pupils is independent of educational background of social studies teachers from (2009-2012) in the Mfantseman Municipality.

5. Conclusions

Even though majority of the social studies teachers are professionals with higher qualifications, it is not related to good academic performance of pupils at the basic education certificate examinations over the last four years (2009-2012).

It is recommended that the pupil teachers of Social Studies should up-grade themselves to become professionals to improve on their teaching experience and the academic performance of pupils. There should also be regular INSET programmes for teachers to enhance their pedagogical skills. Again, other reference materials should be sought by teachers for effective teaching. On the part of students, teachers should organize regular standardized test for them to practice before writing their final basic school examination.

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