

Integrating 21st Century Skills into Teaching of Social Studies Among Public Junior High School Learners in Effutu Municipality

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the integration of 21st Century Skills into teaching of Social Studies among public junior high school learners in Effutu Municipality in Ghana. The study adopted Pedagogical Content Knowledge theory by Shuman (1987). The positivist paradigm was followed in the conduct of the study where quantitative data was collected and analysed. The Census sampling technique was used to select all the 50 Social Studies teachers even though 45 were correctly filled and therefore used for the study. Structured questionnaires were used as instruments for data collection. With the aid of the Version 20 of the Statistical Product for Service Solution (SPSS), descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency counts, simple percentages) and inferential statistical tools such as Ordinary Least Square multiple regression analysis was used to analyse the data. The findings of the study revealed that communication and collaboration as well as digital literacy skills had very good integration whereas creativity and innovation, cultural identity and global citizenship, personal development and leadership and critical thinking and problem-solving skills registered good integration. It further showed that 21st Century Skills mentioned above accounted for 63.8% variance in learners' academic performance. It was recommended that Ghana Education Service should initiate and encourage continuous professional development programmes for teachers in the Effutu Municipality to improve their integration of 21st Century skills and enhance teaching and learning.

Keywords: 21st Century Skills, Academic Performance, Integration and Junior High School Learners

INTRODUCTION

UNESCO promotes the integration of 21st Century Skills into educational frameworks with the view to ensure that everyone has the space to survive in the 21st Century. This led to the adoption of Sustainable Development Goal 4-the Education 2030 Agenda including target 4.7 which enjoins countries to ensure that learners are imbued with knowledge and skills for sustainable development, human rights, global citizenship and life-long learning (Global Education Cooperation Mechanism, Education 2030). In effect, education now transcends mere knowledge transmission to involve helping learners in the acquisition of skills relevant to function in a complicated, dynamic world (Ananiadou & Clara, 2009; Dede, 2010; Chauhan, 2023). This implies that teachers at all levels should seek to develop in their learners the 21st Century Skills as they learn the subject. Teachers give out children skills for the 21st Century life by giving them, a compass in world that is constantly changing. These enable learners to face the uncharted, work through challenging issues and foster a future that is full of limitless possibilities (Chauhan, 2023).

According to Chiodo and Byford (2006), students often consider Social Studies to be dull and boring. Not only do students perceive Social Studies to be dull, but they also fail to see the relevance of Social Studies to their everyday lives. The simple question to ask is why is this? Is it because the content is truly dull and boring? or is because the instructional methods or approaches utilized by the teacher do not encourage and inspire students to learn Social Studies? Scholars maintain that it is the teacher who is key to what Social Studies will be for the student. Most often than not, instructions in Social Studies tend to be dominated by the lecture, textbooks or worksheets and Social Studies does not inspire students to learn. According to Chauhan (2023), this deficiency can be overcome by integration of 21st Century skills into Social Studies. 21st Century Skills are tools that can universally be applied to enhance ways of thinking, learning, working and living in the world. It is a body of skills that teachers at all levels must endeavour to instill in learners. Critical Thinking and Problem Solving is one of the core skills that are acquired throughout the processes of teaching and learning. This skill assists in the development of learners' cognitive and reasoning abilities to enable them analyse and solve problems. These skills enable learners to draw on their own experiences to analyse situations and choose the most appropriate out of a number of possible situations. It requires that learners embrace the problem at hand, persevere and take responsibility for their own learning (Karabulut, 2012; Halmah et al., 2020).

Creativity and Innovation promotes entrepreneurial skills in learners through their ability to think of new ways of solving problems and developing techniques for addressing the problem at hand. It requires ingenuity of ideas, arts, technology and enterprise. Learners having this skill are also able to think independently and creatively (Evrans, 2017; Vidiastuti et al., 2022)

Communication and Collaboration promotes in the learners the skill to make use of languages, symbols and texts to exchange information about themselves and their life experiences. Learners actively participate in sharing ideas. They engage in dialogue with others by listening to and learning from them. They also respect and value the views of others (Smith, 2018; Huseyin, 2021)

Cultural Identity and Global Citizenship involves developing learners to put country and service foremost through an understanding of what it means to be active citizens. This is done by inculcating in learners a strong sense of social and economic awareness. Learners make use of knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes acquired to contribute effectively towards socioeconomic development of the country and on the global stage. Learners build skill to critically, identify and analyse creativity and global trends that enable them to contribute to the global community (Altugan, 2015; Banks et al., 2015)

Personal Development and Leadership involves improving self-awareness and building self-esteem. It also entails identifying and developing talents, fulfilling dreams and aspirations. Learners are able to learn from mistakes and failures of the past. They acquire skills to develop other people to meet their needs. It involves recognizing the importance of values such as honesty, empathy and seeking the well-being of others. Personal development and leadership enable learners to distinguish between right and wrong. This will help them to foster perseverance, resilience, and self-confidence. It helps learners acquire the skill of leadership self-regulation and responsibility necessary for life-long learning (Mulovhedzi & Joubert, 2022; Wang & Wang, 2023)

Digital Literacy develops learners to discover, acquire and communicate through ICT to support their learning. It also makes them use digital media responsibly (Ghanney & Mwinkaar, 2019; Kuru, 2019).

Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) embodies the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organised, represented and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction (Shulman, 1987). It included the

“most useful forms of representation of these ideas, the most powerful analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations and demonstrations in a word, the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others” (Shulman, 1987, p. 9). PCK involves knowing what teaching approaches fit the content and likewise, knowing how elements of the content can be arranged for better teaching. This knowledge is different from the knowledge of a disciplinary expert and also from the general pedagogical knowledge shared by teachers across disciplines. Shulman (1987) furthermore stated that PCK is a type of knowledge that is unique to teachers and in fact what teaching is about. It concerns the manner in which teachers relate their pedagogical knowledge (what they know about teaching) to their subject matter knowledge (what they know about what they teach), in the school context, for the teaching of specific pupils. It is the integration or the synthesis of teachers' pedagogical knowledge and their subject matter knowledge that comprises pedagogical content knowledge. For example, an experienced science teacher's knowledge of science is structured from a teaching perspective and is used as a basis for helping students to understand specific concepts.

The researcher extended Shulman's theory by applying it to the phenomenon of teachers incorporating 21st Century skills into the teaching of Social Studies. It is necessary to know that the knowledge of the teachers (CK and PK) which, if well integrated, will influence the classroom practice of the teachers and in effect aid in the attainment of the Social Studies aims and purposes. Shulman's hypothesis discussed above indicates that teachers of varying levels of form of expertise have two distinct calibres in Social Studies. Some may possess only one of Shulman's proposed two types of knowledge. However, a teacher who possesses only one of the two knowledge is insufficient in achieving the desired aim of producing citizens who are assets rather than liabilities to society. Thus, for teachers to teach and assess students holistically, they must possess all two types of knowledge emphasised in Shulman's theoretical framework (PCK) which this current study adopts.

21st Century teaching skills influence students' academic performance by empowering them to meet contemporary educational demands and prepare for future career challenges (Ghanney & Mwinkaar, 2019; Varona, 2020). The learning experience and academic performance of students can be considerably improved by incorporating 21st Century skills into teaching of Social Studies (Chauhan, 2023).

Academic performance is described as "performance on task with measures including comprehension, quality and accuracy of test answers, quality and accuracy of problem-solving, frequency and quantity of the desired outcome, time or rate to the solution, time on task, level of reasoning and critical thinking, creativity, recall and retention, and transfer of tasks" by Cary, Roseth, David, and Roger (2008, p. 29). Academic performance is defined by grades, marks, and scores of descriptive comments and refers to a successful accomplishment or performance in a certain subject area. Academic performance also includes how students manage their studies and how they handle or complete various assignments provided to them by their teachers throughout a set period, such as an academic year (Dimbisso, 2009).

There have been a lot of debates on various platforms and media as to the integration of 21st Century Skills into teaching of Social Studies and its impacts on academic performance of learners especially at the basic school levels. Parker et al., (2022) conducted a qualitative study of 21st Century Skills in Ghanaian basic school in Enchi, Aowin Municipal capital in the Western North region and Assin Fosu, the capital town of Assin Central in Ghana. The findings of their study revealed that 30.2 percent use 21st Century skills in teaching whereas 69.8 percent do not, an indication that majority of the teachers do not integrate the skills in their teaching. Essel et al., (2018) in their study on Basic Design and Information & Communication Technology (ICT) using a qualitative study revealed that 21st Century Skill set is deficient in Ghanaian

basic education. It appears most of the studies done did not look at the specific 21st century skills used by teachers and how this affects the academic performance of the learners. Apart from this, most of the studies conducted were qualitative in nature. This is a significant gap considering its implications in terms of practice and policy. This study employed quantitative approach and went a step further to look at the effect of the 21st Century skills on the academic performance of the learners.

It is anticipated that the study findings would help in providing contextual data to shed more light and contribute to the body of knowledge, expand literature and encourage continuous debate on how on 21st Century skills of Social Studies teachers impact on effective teaching of Social Studies. The findings would help Social Studies teachers to be efficient in their instructional approaches to attain the desired learning outcomes among the learners. The findings would inform policy makers and assist the Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) of Ghana Education Service and National Teaching Council (NTC) to ensure that appropriate 21st Century skills are enshrined in the Social Studies Curriculum.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What 21st Century Skills do Social Studies Teachers use among public junior high learners in Effutu Municipality?
2. What are the effects of 21st Century skills on the academic performance of public junior high learners in Effutu Municipality?

In the light of the RQ2, the under stated hypothesis was formulated:

Ho: There is no statistically significant effect of Social Studies teachers' integration of 21st Century skills on academic performance of public junior high learners in Effutu Municipality

Ha: There is a statistically significant effect of Social Studies teachers' integration of 21st Century skills on academic performance of public junior high learners in Effutu Municipality

METHODOLOGY

The positivist paradigm was suitable for the study as the researcher sought to describe the integration of 21st Century skills in the effective teaching of Social Studies and hence ascertained the impact of the 21st century on the academic performance of public junior high learners which require response on the use of statistical analysis. According to Ramanathan (2008), the main characteristics of positivist philosophical approaches are: the researcher or observer must be independent; human interests should be irrelevant; explanations must demonstrate causality; research progresses through hypotheses and deductions; concepts need to be operationalized so that they can be measured; units for analysis should be reduced to the simplest terms; generalization through statistical probability; sampling requires large samples.

The study employed quantitative approach. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), quantitative research is an empirical research approach that focuses on objective measurements and numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires or surveys. The research used questionnaire to gather information from Social Studies teachers in order to make meaningful conclusion and inferences without giving room for any external or internal human manipulation. This shows that there are other sources of information outside the researcher's views and opinions that may be used to understand the integration of 21st Century skills into teaching of Social Studies which involve elements such as measurement and numerical data.

The study employed descriptive research. It aims at defining a target population, condition or phenomenon commutatively, accurately and chronologically (McCombes,2019). This type of design places emphasis

on answering questions about what, when, where and how with no emphasis on why an artificial phenomenon exists. The study's design was deemed appropriate since it involves gathering information from population members in order to ascertain the population's current condition with respect to one or more variables.

The study focused on junior high Social Studies teachers within the Effutu Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana. There are 30 junior high schools in Effutu Municipality of the Central Region of Ghana and this number has been grouped into three circuits in the Municipality which were utilised in the setting. The Circuits are Winneba Central, West and East. The population for this study refers to all the social Studies teachers in junior high schools in the Effutu Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana. The target population for this study was all Social Studies teachers in the Effutu Municipality. The accessible population was all Social Studies teachers in public junior high schools in Effutu Municipality. Records at the Effutu Municipal Education office indicate that Social Studies teachers for at least one year stood at 50 as at the time of the study.

A Census sampling technique was employed to select Social Studies teachers in the Municipality. According to Gupta (2019), a census sampling is a type of sampling technique that considers all elements in the target population. According to Singh and Masuka (2014), census technique is suitable if the population is small (i.e 200 or less). The Census sampling was chosen premised on the fact that the population was not too large. The total number of Social Studies teachers in the municipality stood at 50, however, five of them had not been teaching Social Studies for a year and were not included in the study. The response rate was 90 percent. Kothari and Gang (2014) assessed that in descriptive research, a sample response rate of >80% is considered excellent. In effect, the response rate attained in this study was considered adequate.

Table 1: Sample Distribution by Social studies Teachers by Circuit

Winneba Central	Winneba West	Winneba East
22	10	13

The instruments used were structured (close-ended) questionnaire. It contained three sections, that is, 4-point likert scale questionnaire as an instrument in descriptive research was used to collect data from the sample in order to answer research questions posed and to make generalization as well. The responses to the items are Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Strongly Disagree (2) and (1) Disagree. The first section was about the bio-data of the respondents and the second section was about integration of the various 21st Century Skills and the third was about effect of 21st Century Skills on academic performance. The questionnaires were reviewed by colleague lecturers to incorporate the necessary suggestions. The items regarding the contents in the questionnaire were constructed based on the literature review. The instruments were pre-tested at the Gomoa West district using 15 Social Studies teachers. It was done at the place as it shared similar characteristics as the main study area (Effutu municipality). Data obtained from the pre-test were analysed using Cronbach's Alpha which was used to assess the reliability of the instrument. Cronbach alpha co-efficient of 0.78 met the reliability requirement. The researcher distributed the questionnaires to the respondents and engaged them to answer and return them in two weeks. The researcher made follow-up visits to the schools to collect the questionnaires. Letters were sent to the heads of the schools for permission to engage their teachers in the study.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data collected. The descriptive involve frequencies and percentage which helped address the bio-data of respondents and the responses on the Social Studies teachers integration of 21st Century skills which analysed the research question 1. Inferential Statistics such as Ordinary Least Square (OLS) and Multiple regression analysis were used to assess the effect of the 21st Century skills on the academic performance of learners in the Effutu Municipality.

Participants were notified that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw their participation at any time with or without giving any notice. Responses were treated with utmost confidentiality. Informed consents were obtained for all participants before collecting data from them.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic variables of the respondents analysed and described included sex, age, years of teaching experience and highest educational qualifications

Table 2: Demographic Variables

Variable	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	24	53.3
	Female	21	46.7
	Total	45	100.0
Age range	21-25 years	11	24.4
	26-30 years	15	33.3
	31-35 years	10	22.3
	36-40 years	6	13.3
	Above 40 years	3	6.7
	Total	45	100.0
Years of teaching experience	1-4	10	22.2
	5-9	12	26.7
	10-14	18	40.0
	15-19	3	6.7
	20 years and above	2	4.4
	Total	45	100.0
Highest educational qualification	Cert "A" Post Secondary	0	0.0
	Diploma in Basic Education	10	22.3
	Degree in Basic Education	27	60.0
	Degree in Social Studies Education	6	13.3
	Degree in Education Programme	2	4.4
	Total	45	100.0

The data as indicated in the Table 2 revealed that 24(53.3 %) of the teachers were males whiles 21(46.7%) were females. In terms of the age group, the data showed that 11(24.4) of the respondents were in the age group of 21-25 years, 15(33.3%) were in the age range of 26-30 years, 10(22.3%) were in the age group of 31-35 years and 6(13.3%) were in the age group of 36-40 years while the remaining 3(6.7%) were found

to be more than 40 years. Deducing from the table, as many as 42(93.3%) respondents had ages between 21-40 years implying that they had a good number of years to teach Social Studies in the Municipality. It is realized from the data that whereas 10(22.2%) of the respondents had between 1-4 years teaching experience in Social Studies in the Effutu Municipality, 12 (26.7%) respondents had between 5-9 years teaching experience and 18 (40%) respondents had between 10-14 years teaching experience. Again, 3(6.7%) of the respondents had been teaching Social Studies for 15 to 19 years while 2(4.4%) of them had been teaching for a minimum of 20 years. It can be ascertained that 40(88.9%) of the respondents had between 1-14 years of teaching experience, an indication that most of the teachers were experienced. With respect to educational qualifications, the results in Table 2 depicted that 10(22.3%) had obtained a Diploma Certificate in Basic Education, 27 (60%) had a Degree Certificate in Basic Education, 6(13.3%) had a degree Certificate in Social Studies Education, while 2(4.4%) had obtained a Degree Certificate in Education. The data suggest that the Social Studies teachers in the Municipality were professionals.

Analysis of Research Question 1

RQ1: What various 21st Century Skills do Social Studies teachers use in teaching the public junior high learners in Effutu Municipality?

The results are displayed in Table 3. From the data, it is realized that with an overall weighted mean of 3.49 and an overall standard deviation of 0.36, the 21st Century skills exhibited by Social Studies teachers in the Municipality was considered good. The various 21st Century skills are designated as Critical Thinking and Problem-solving skills (CP), Creativity and Innovation (CI), Communication and Collaboration (CC), Cultural Identity and Global Citizenship (CG), Personal Development and Leadership (PL) and Digital Literacy (DL).

Table 3: Social Studies Teachers’ Integration of 21st Century Skills

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
I help learners to participate in sharing ideas, listen to and learn from them (CC)	3.78	0.25	VG
I help learners to discover, acquire and communicate through ICT to support Learning (DL)	3.67	1.17	VG
I promote entrepreneurial skills through new way of solving problems (CI)	3.44	0.08	G
I help learners to put country and services foremost through active citizenship (CG)	3.36	0.36	G
I assist in improving self-awareness and building self-esteem and develop others to meet needs (PL)	3.42	0.03	G
I develop learners’ cognitive and reasoning abilities to enable them analyse and solve problems (CP)	3.44	0.08	G
Overall weighted mean and standard deviation	3.49	0.36	G

Source: Field Survey (2023): n=45, M=Mean Sd=Standard deviation 1=Interpretation, VG=Very Good and V=Good.

From the data in Table 3, the Social Studies teachers had very good integration of CC and DL. From the recorded mean values in relation to the standard deviation. It is also observed that Social Studies teachers had good integration of CI, CG, PI and CP.

Discussion of the findings in Table 3 showed that the standard deviation for each of the specific statements and the overall standard deviation were within the satisfactory threshold of ± 3 for normal distribution of data as suggested by Babbie (2011). The findings showed that Social Studies teachers in the Municipality had a positive relationship with the learners, good grasp of what they teach, understand how their students develop and integrate technology into teaching, This is consistent with Pedagogical Content knowledge (PCK) which stipulates the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organised, represented and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction (Shulman, 1987).

Test of Hypothesis

Ho: There is no statistically significant effect of Social Studies teachers’ integration of 21st Century skills on academic performance of public junior high learners in Effutu Municipality

Ha: There is a statistically significant effect of Social Studies teachers’ integration of 21st Century skills on academic performance of public junior high learners in Effutu Municipality

For a sample to be representative of a specific population, it should exhibit characteristics of the population under study. A data that is normally distributed requires a parametric test for high result. The study used Shapiro-Wilk test.

Table 4: Test of Normality Shapiro-Wilk

Variables	Statistics	Df	Sig
CC	0.991	45	0.352
DL	0.823	45	0.321
CI	0.245	45	0.255
CG	0.834	45	0.563
PL	0.152	45	0.439
CP	0.468	45	0.220

From the data in Table 4, the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality was conducted and the p-values for the entire measured construct were greater than 0.05 adducing sufficient evidence to conclude that the data were normally distributed.

The result of the multiple regression is displayed in Table 5

Model	Coefficients				t	Sig.
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)		1.243	0.441		2.968	0.010
21 st Century Skills		2.932	2.105	0.327	1.393	0.002
R-squared	0.638					
Adjusted R-Squared	0.626					
F-Statistics	54.224					
Prob (F-Statistics)	0.000					

The effect of the multiple regression established R² value of 0.638. This means that the independent variable -21st Century skills embracing (CC, DL, CI, CG, PL, CP) accounted for 63.8 % of the variance in the dependent variable (academic performance), and this is observed to be statistically significant (p=0.002). The results suggest that other indicators of Social Studies teachers' integration of 21st Century skills not included in this study accounted for 36.2 % variance in the academic performance. Consequently, the results suggested that Social Studies teachers' integration of 21st Century Skills has an effect on the academic performance. Thus, the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant effect of Social Studies teachers' integration of 21st Century Skills on academic performance of public junior high learners in Effutu Municipality was rejected and the alternative accepted. The results suggest that holding other variables constant, one unit increase in 21st Century skills integration will result in an improvement in academic performance of Social Studies by 32.7% (0.327). This finding confirms Ghanney & Mwinkaar, (2019); Varona, (2020). that 21st Century teaching skills influence students' academic performance by empowering them to meet contemporary educational demands and prepare them for future career challenges. It also supports the assertion that the learning experience and academic performance of students can be considerably improved by incorporating 21st Century skills into teaching of Social Studies (Chauhan, 2023).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that 21st Century Skills are vital in determining academic performance of students in the Junior High Schools in Effutu Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana. With this indication, it is important that teachers adopt good 21st Century skills if they desire to improve the academic performance of their learners

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion drawn, the following recommendations are made from the study:

1. The study disclosed that 21st Century Skills impacted academic performance of the learners. Accordingly, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service should organize in-service training for head teachers and teachers to help them identify and integrate appropriate 21st century Skills in teaching.
2. It was recommended that Ghana Education Service should initiate and encourage continuous professional development (CPD) programmes for teachers in the Effutu Municipality to update and improve their integration of 21st Century skills and enhance teaching and learning.

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