Abstract: This cross-sectional study was conducted to evaluate the impact of students’ attitudes towards the learning of Social Studies in Senior High Schools in Upper West Region of Ghana. The study became necessary because students’ attitudes influence both teaching and learning processes and affect the way students and teachers will engage in the learning process. Attitudinal measures such as levels of students’ interest, study behaviours or habits and the perceived utility of Social Studies were examined. A total number of 255 subjects participated in the study. Questionnaires were administered to evaluate the impact of students’ attitudes towards the learning of Social Studies in Senior High Schools. The findings indicated that students were not as negative toward Social Studies as previous research studies indicate. Students thought learning Social Studies was less important than Mathematics, Science and English since grades acquired in Social Studies was not used to determine their final grade and for admission requirements into the universities. It is recommended that, Social Studies instruction should not focus on only transmission of knowledge since the knowledge itself is not very important unless it causes some skill and attitude development in students.

Keywords: Social Studies, Citizenship Education, attitudes, values, skills, social skills, civil action

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Social Studies, originated in the United States of America at the time when violence, social disharmony and discrimination became a threat to their survival, hence there was the need to introduce an academic discipline into the school curriculum to address these problems and to produce good citizens in the American society through citizenship education [1]. It was this noble and indispensable idea that gave birth to a new academic discipline called Social Studies in the early 20th century. Similar problems precipitated the introduction and the growth of the subject particularly in Ghana and in Africa as a whole after independence. Social Studies therefore originated from the need for schools to use a specific subject to prepare their students to become effective and competent citizens in the future [1].

The precursor to the development of Social Studies in Africa was a conference of eleven African nations, including Ghana, held in Mombasa, Kenya in 1968 [2, 3]. As a follow up to the African Social Studies Programme (ASSP) conference in Mombasa, an educational conference was held in Winneba in 1969 during which Social Studies was adopted [4]. Since 1972, Social Studies has been taught at the basic levels. However, it was not until 1998 that Social Studies was introduced as a separate and core subject in all Senior High Schools in Ghana [5]. Currently, Social Studies is taught in all Junior and Senior High Schools as well as all Colleges of Education. However, research shows that Social Studies is one of the students’ least favourite subjects [6]. Attitude towards studying Social Studies has become negative with increasing amount of schooling [6]. In Ghana, much attention has been given to subjects like English, Mathematics and Science at the Senior High School level. While some educators would not dispute the importance of these disciplines, Social Studies is equally important and, in fact, indispensable to every citizen. Yet, attention does not seem to have been given to the study of Social Studies by students of Senior High Schools in Ghana.

In Ghana, Social Studies teachers are faced with a number of problems unique to the subject area. For instance, most students hold a number of beliefs about Social Studies, which diminishes the importance of the subject. The most common of these beliefs are that Social Studies is cheap, not important, because it is not used to grade students in their final West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), and it is not used as an admission requirement to tertiary institutions. [7] opines that some students in high school go as far as to say that Social Studies is a ‘push over’ subject and for that matter there is no need paying regular attention to it. Critics of the subject also suggest that Social Studies should be eliminated from the Senior High School curriculum because students do not learn any basic skills in them. According to [7], the critics maintained that Social Studies waste time, energy and resources which could be used to help...
students’ master basic mathematics, English and science skills which are needed for future performance in larger society. Despite these, defenders of Social Studies, argue that the subject is important for character building and development of interpersonal skills, and therefore very important for the student’s future. One could say that Social Studies teaches different kinds of basic skills which are referred to as social skills. The purpose of teaching social skills in Social Studies is to enable the individual to gain knowledge concerning his/her society, to think reflectively about problems and issues, and to apply this thinking in constructive action [8].

It is important to note that whatever learning attitude (positive or negative) that students may have towards Social Studies, teachers cannot escape the blame since they are the pivot through which teaching and learning revolves. This is because; the teaching-learning environment plays a key role in shaping students attitude about Social Studies. Teachers, who are willing to assist students in learning, show enthusiasm in the classroom and pay close attention to student needs have a very strong effect on how students should feel about Social Studies [6] since an effective teacher is capable of creating a positive learning climate in the classroom. Both classroom settings and students attitude could be altered to improve students’ thoughts of Social Studies by teachers [6].

According to [9], how a student judges a teacher is linked to the student's potential for developing an open-minded attitude about a subject, which can either be positive or negative. Students who have positive attitude towards a subject matter are more likely to continue being focused on that particular subject. In the light of changes taking place in the society today, the issue of the impact of students’ attitude on the teaching and learning of Social Studies becomes important as [6] contends that progressive change comes not from the head but from the heart and Social Studies is the heart.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The success of Ghana’s stability and growth relies strongly on its educational system. Social Studies is one of the major parts of the school curriculum, because it explores mores and values, and provides students with the ability to understand the values associated with being a good citizen. Students who have sound understanding of their country’s culture and historical development are more inclined to address societal problems [7]. To help Ghanaians cope with rapid economic, social, and political developments, and to bring about meaningful participatory citizenship among younger students, an effective Social Studies curriculum is needed.

Research studies have shown that students in Senior High Schools take Social Studies for granted because they show negative attitude towards studying it and see it as one of the least favourite subjects [10, 11]. Students in Senior High Schools do not only accord low status to Social Studies, but also generally have negative attitude towards the subject. They show apathy when it comes to Social Studies lessons and it often lacks students’ input during lessons. For instance, most students are not committed to learning Social Studies with the believe that either passing or failing it will not affect them in any way since it is not a mandatory subject for further studies.

The impact of any subject in terms of knowledge, skills, attitude and other aspects is very important to consider in assessing the overall effectiveness of curriculum implementation and Social Studies is equally expected to have certain amount of influence on students with regards to its goal. Because the subject is so important to national development, it is necessary to evaluate the learning attitudes expressed by students towards Social Studies in Senior High Schools and its impact on the teaching and learning of the subject. This will help to establish how the quality of teaching and learning of the subject can be improved and interest of the students sustained since attitudes can alter every aspect of a person's life, including their education.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to direct the study:

1. What attitudes do students have towards studying Social Studies?

2. What perception do students hold regarding the importance of Social Studies?

3. What is the impact of students’ attitudes on the learning of Social Studies?

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 The Impact of Learning Attitudes on Teaching and Learning

It was once believed that attitudes were unchangeable and once acquired, a person was stuck with it. This has been disproved by psychologists and they say that people rather tend to do what they tell themselves to do [12] and if a person has negative attitudes, it affects what the person expect of him/herself, which in turn affects his/her actions. [12] emphasizes that negative attitude limits performance, saps motivation and inhibits learning while positive attitudes combats frustration from self imposed limits on ones potentials to change through
learning. According to [13], students do not passively receive and process information but are active participants in the learning process by constructing meaning in ways shaped by their own prior knowledge and new experiences. Students with a well-developed ability to manage their own learning are able to choose appropriate learning goals, use their existing knowledge and skills to direct their learning, and to select learning strategies appropriate to the task in hand. [14] identified three important problems teachers face in teaching Social Studies to include lack of student interest, lack of teacher interest or enthusiasm and time constraints. According to [15], if students lack interest, then their retention of ideas and concepts will be minimal. In addition, low priority from teachers will lead to less time dedicated to Social Studies in the daily curriculum [15]. Ultimately, much of the problems facing teachers may lead to poor learning attitude by students towards Social Studies.

In the opinion of [16], if the teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of the subject matter meaningful for students, then an interest would be sustained. Another cause of poor students’ attitude is the teacher’s direct influence on this attitude. Enthusiasm in the subject matter displayed by the teacher can be directly correlated to student's interest and attitude [17], teacher variables hold the key to students’ attitudes towards school subjects since teachers to a large extent influence what happens in lessons. [18] indicated that attitude and perception is the key to success and the reasons are that, attitudes towards a class or a teacher are casually related to achievement. Secondly, students who have positive attitudes towards a subject matter are more likely to pursue that subject area. Thirdly, students convey their attitudes about school subjects to parents, teachers and friends and if their overall attitude towards school subject is negative, this increases the likelihood that the student will convey a negative attitude about the subject to other people. [20] and [18] indicate that, the teacher’s attitude towards a Social Studies and the students or parents commitment to education has a unique and interactive influences on the school curriculum.

[19] stated that many teachers struggling with Social Studies had a poor attitude that has been influenced by curriculum guidelines and the way they strangle opportunities to effectively teach the material and in the view of [15] the curriculum with its implied preference to reading, writing, and math skills due to standardized testing, forces teachers to spend more time in these areas. [20] states that fostering a feeling of importance in the subject was paramount while [21] points out that engagement in school is important in promoting student success and learning and that a number of factors in the school environment foster high levels of engagement [22] warn that if students consistently report that they do not like Social Studies and do not consider it important, their learning outcomes in the subject will be adversely affected as a result of their negative attitude towards the subject and this will have significant repercussions on the whole community of Social Studies educators. Researchers have attempted to identify and measure students’ attitude towards Social Studies and to identify what influence their attitude [14, 7] and this calls for the need to understand why students like or dislike Social Studies.

Despite ongoing changes in school curriculum design, teaching methodology and teacher development, which have helped to improve the perception of Social Studies, some negative attitudes still persist among many students who see Social Studies as dull, boring and irrelevant to their lives [23]. This is problematic in relation to the role that Social Studies is expected to play in national development. If Social Studies is to continue to have support of government and the general public, then it is desirable for students to have positive attitudes towards the discipline, as the negative attitude towards it can ultimately result in its removal from the school curriculum. This is because; no nation puts a subject into its school curriculum without knowing or realizing its importance to nation-building [22]. It is perhaps possible that, the importance of social studies as an academic discipline has not been properly understood by students, teachers, parents and the general public leading to it being either neglected or considered optional course although it is a core subject [24].

[25] see attitude, motivation and genuine interest as the most important characteristics associated with successful teaching and learning in schools, since attitude and the individual’s underlying belief system are considered the best indicators of the decisions people will make throughout their lives. Even today, many educators equate Social Studies to what they remember from their school days, no matter how long it has been since they were in school and these misconceptions make students to exhibit certain kinds of attitude towards the subject, which can result in ineffective teaching and learning. [26] reports that, attitudes towards Social Studies become more positive with grade level through the junior years and then declines as students’ progress to high schools. This unfortunate prejudices and attitudes, according to [26] (op. cit.), inhibit teachers and learners from realizing their aim of teaching and learning to their full potential. [27] in a study also observed that many students begin studying Social Studies in Junior High Schools with eager anticipation, but due to prejudices and
misconceptions many students soon lose interest at the Senior High Level. For most of the studies that have been carried out, researchers have illustrated a general lack of interest towards Social Studies. In, the attitude of Junior High School students towards Social Studies perhaps, may be different because of its mandatory requirement for one to enter Senior High School which is opposite in the case of admission requirements for Senior High School students into the tertiary institutions and colleges in Ghana. Notwithstanding the foregoing arguments, [28] intimated that some students seem naturally enthusiastic about learning, but many need or expect their instructors to inspire, challenge, and stimulate them because any effective learning in the classroom depends on the teacher's ability to maintain the interest that brings students to the course in the first place.

According to [29] attitude determines the success of teaching and learning process since students who have positive attitude towards Social Studies and its culture are expected to learn and appreciate it better than students who have negative attitude towards it. This is because they will have stronger motivation to learn, while students who have negative attitude will do the opposite. [30] further reiterated that the likelihood of a student putting his or her knowledge to use is influenced by his attitude for or against the subject and the attitude with which students leave the classroom may have an effect on the teaching and learning of the subject. According to [16], attitude is a learned behaviour and, as such, is highly susceptible to change. The Behavioural Theory requires "positive reinforcement" or reward for good behaviour. This theory is consistent with the attitudes toward learning, especially at an elementary level since Krathwohl's Taxonomy theory states that a learning attitude is developed over time, and that past learning experiences affect future learning experiences [16].

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A cross-sectional survey was used to collect data from the sampled students. The rationale for using cross-sectional survey was generally to attain a snapshot of conditions, attitudes, and/or events at a single point in time.

3.2 Population

The population for this study was all students in the eighteen (18) public Senior High Schools in the Upper West Region with a population of Ten Thousand and Twenty-Five (10025) comprising 6355 boys and 3670 girls [31]. However, only those in the first and second years were sampled because, at the time of gathering the data, the third years had completed school.

3.3 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The size of the sample for this study was 255 students from 10 Senior High Schools. For the purpose of this study, simple random sampling was used to sample respondents. Ten (10) schools were randomly selected from the eighteen (18) schools for the study. To ensure that every school as well as student had a chance to be included in the selected sample, a simple random sampling procedure was employed. The lottery technique was first used to select ten (10) out of the eighteen (18) public Senior High Schools in the Region for the study.

Twenty-five (25) students each were randomly from nine (9) out of the ten (10) sampled schools using the class register. The same method was followed to select thirty (30) students from the tenth (10th) school. The rationale for this decision was for the fact that Wa Senior High School had the largest population of over one thousand (1000) students, which warranted that, more students from the school to be included in the sample.

3.4 Research Instrument

Questionnaires were used for the survey. The items had components which tested for Knowledge, attitudes and practice. In order to generate better understanding, closed and open-ended and scaling items (Likert scale) were used for the study, since they are suitable to measure opinions, attitudes or knowledge [32]. Although open-ended questions are difficult to interpret because of the different kinds of responses that are often received, it was useful combining both formats in a single questionnaire to allow for more individualized responses.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

Survey questionnaires were self-administered to 255 students. Students were given orientations on the research study and their roles as research participants. The students’ willingness and consent were taken by the researcher to ensure data anonymity and confidentiality.

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the various data collected for the study. The questionnaires from the students were coded and fed into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 16.0) software package and analyzed descriptively. Data collected was summarized and put in form of Tables.
4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Research Question One: What attitudes do students have towards Social Studies?

Table 1 sought to find out students’ awareness of the objectives of Social Studies at the Senior High School level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are you aware of the objectives of Social Studies?</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tables 1 give an indication of students’ awareness of the goal and objectives of Learning Social Studies. About 53.3% of the students indicated that they were aware of the objectives of learning Social Studies while 46.7% students said they were not aware. The findings of the study showed that most students know the objectives of studying Social Studies. However, there is cause for worry from the results since quite a good number of students are not aware of the purpose and objectives of studying Social Studies. According to [5], no learner will appreciate what s/he is been taught if such a learner does not know the ultimate goal of learning it. [15] is of the view that if there is no feeling of relevance of a subject to the student, then his/her interest level and desire to learn it, is going to reflect in a negative manner, and if students lack interest, then his/her retention of ideas and concepts are going to be minimal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What attitude do you have towards learning Social Studies learning?</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>78.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 sought to find out whether students exhibit positive or negative attitudes towards the learning of Social Studies. The analysis of the results indicates that 21.2% of the students had negative attitude towards Social Studies. The evidence from the present study negates the assertion by some researchers that students in High Schools have poor perception about Social Studies and exhibit negative learning attitudes when it comes to Social Studies lessons [10]. This was confirmed by another question which sought to find out whether students like Social Studies.

Results from Table 3 reveal that 200 (78.4%) respondents like Social studies. The remaining 55 (21.6%) said that they do not like Social Studies. The results showed that greater number of students in Senior High Schools like the subject. Those who said they do not like the subject were as a result of poor perceptions they have about the programme they offer and for admission requirements into the tertiary institutions. For instance, one student said “I don’t like Social Studies simply because as a science student, as I am, at the end of my four years in school it will not be added to my result even if I had an ‘A’”. This submission confirms [10] studies which indicated that Social Studies is not perceived as an enjoyable subject while others reported that teaching methods were simply boring. Some of the views of those who said they like Social Studies was that: “In fact, I like Social Studies because it is an applied subject. It helps me to solve my everyday life problems and also helps me understand why certain things are happening better. I use the knowledge in Social Studies to educate my parents at home and they understand why they should not do some things to their children”. The above submissions indicate that students like Social Studies not just for examination purposes but also because it is relevant to their lives since it equips them with problem solving skills needed in life.

4.2 Research Question Two: What Perception do Students hold Regarding the Importance of Social Studies?

Table 4: Ranking of Social Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What position would you rate Social Studies among the core subjects?</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Science</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results in Table 4 represent responses of students ranking of Social Studies among Mathematics, English and Integrated Science in terms of students’ preference. Eighty-six (33.7%) students each ranked Mathematics and English Language in the 1st position. Fifty (19.6%) respondents ranked Integrated Science in the 3rd position while 33 (12.9%) respondents ranked Social
Studies at the 4th position. The reason assigned by some of the students was that, even though the subject is liked by them, it is not one of the subjects which is mandatorily needed for further post-secondary studies.

Table 5: Responses of Respondents as to whether they would choose Social Studies if it were to be an Elective Subject

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Would you opt for Social Studies if it is made an elective subject?</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>231</td>
<td>90.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>255</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results presented in Table 5 sought to ask respondents whether they would choose Social Studies among their elective subjects, if it was made an elective subject the next academic year. Two-hundred and thirty-one (90.6%) respondents said they would choose it on condition that it would be used for grading and admission purposes. Twenty-four (9.4%) of the respondents however, indicated that they would not offer it. This is a probable indication that majority of students like the subject because of the perceived relevance to them. According to [13] students with an interest in a subject are likely to be more motivated to manage their own learning and develop the requisite skills to become effective learners of that subject.

Table 6: Students’ Views on the Importance of Social Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What I learn in Social studies is interesting</td>
<td>91 (35.7%)</td>
<td>151 (59.2%)</td>
<td>7 (2.7%)</td>
<td>5 (2.0%)</td>
<td>1 (0.4%)</td>
<td>255 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social studies is not worth studying</td>
<td>9 (3.5%)</td>
<td>19 (7.5%)</td>
<td>19 (7.5%)</td>
<td>92 (36.1%)</td>
<td>116 (45.5%)</td>
<td>255 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Social Studies is very important</td>
<td>155 (60.8%)</td>
<td>83 (32.6%)</td>
<td>5 (2.0%)</td>
<td>8 (3.1%)</td>
<td>4 (1.6%)</td>
<td>255 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know the importance of studying social studies</td>
<td>107 (42.0%)</td>
<td>140 (54.9%)</td>
<td>6 (2.4%)</td>
<td>2 (0.8%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>255 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Looking at Table 6, it is noted that 94.9% (35.7% and 59.2%) respondents agreed that learning Social Studies is interesting. However, a considerable number representing 5.1% (2.7%, 2.0% and 0.4%) said that learning Social Studies is not interesting.

The results also show that greater numbers of students forming 81.6% (36.1% and 45.5%) agreed that Social Studies is worth studying. However, 11.0% (3.5% and 7.5%) are of the view that it is not worth it, while 7.5% were undecided.

To buttress the main research questions, on the importance of the subject, 93.4% (60.8% and 32.6%) of the students indicated that it is important to learn Social Studies while 2.0% of the respondents were undecided. However, 4.7% (3.1% and 1.6%) disagreed that Social Studies is important.

To find out whether students know the importance of studying Social Studies, responses from students representing 96.9% (42.0% and 54.9%) indicated that they know the importance of studying Social Studies while 2.4% were undecided. However, 0.8% said they do not know its importance.

4.3 Research Question Three: What is the impact of students’ attitudes on the learning of Social Studies?

Table 7: Students’ Opinion on how their Attitudes Affect the Learning of Social Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does your attitude affect how you learn Social Studies?</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To a great extent</td>
<td></td>
<td>242</td>
<td>94.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some extent</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very little</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>255</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 sought to find out from student the extent to which their attitudes (positive or negative) affect their learning of Social Studies. Two (0.7%) respondents indicated very little with 11(4.3%) respondents indicating some extent. Most of the respondents, 242 (94.9%) indicated that their attitudes to a great extent affects their learning of Social studies. This is an indication that, students’ negative attitudes have a corresponding negative impact on their learning. This confirms [12] assertion that, attitudes can alter every aspect of a person’s life, including their education. Student attitudes on learning determine their ability and willingness to learn. If negative attitudes are not altered, a student is unlikely to continue his education beyond what is required.
Table 8: Students’ Opinion on Whether the way their Teachers Teach Social Studies Affects their Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does your teacher teach</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>your learning of Social Studies?</td>
<td>To a great extent</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>79.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some extent</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very little</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 255 100.0

Results present in Table 8 sought to find out the extent to which they are affected by the way their teachers teach Social Studies. Majority of the respondents, 202(79.2 %) were of the view that, the manner in which they are taught affects them to a great extent while 53(20.8%) respondents indicated to some extent. The results from Table 10 therefore confirm Sham’s (2008), assertion that students’ learning attitudes have great impact on their learning while teacher’s teaching attitudes affect their teaching effectiveness.

Table 9: Frequency on how Students’ Attitudes Affect their Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often does your attitude affect your performance in Social Studies?</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>40.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 255 100.0

Table 9 presents the frequency of how students’ attitude affects their performance in Social Studies. Ten (3.9%) respondents indicated never, 82(32.1%) of the respondents responded seldom with 102(40.1%) respondents indicated sometimes whilst 61 respondents (23.9%) indicated often. The results give indication that the kind of attitudes that students exhibit towards a subject have a greater impact, either negatively or positively, on their performance. This is an indication that students’ attitude greatly impacts on students’ learning. This is in consonance with [12] position that, students’ attitudes to learning, whether good or bad, affects their outlook toward learning throughout life.

4.4 Key Findings

The results in this study showed that Senior High school students’ attitude towards Social Studies is not negative contrary to the findings of earlier research. Senior High School students in this study reported that they like Social Studies.

The study revealed that students in Senior High Schools value Social Studies, although they rated it in the fourth position among the core subjects they offer.

Students also believe that Social Studies is a good option for an elective course and a greater number of them indicated, they would choose it if it should become an elective course.

The study again, revealed that 78.8% of students’ in Senior High Schools showed positive learning attitudes towards the Social Studies.

It also became evident that majority of the students (66.5%) in Senior High Schools do not frequently study Social Studies on their independent time Table even though they like Social Studies.

The study also revealed that students do not learn Social Studies for the sake of passing examinations only, but also to help them solve their personal problems since the subject is a problem-solving oriented.

Furthermore, it became clear that the learning attitudes that students largely affect students’ performances either positively or negatively. It came to limelight that positive learning attitudes both intrinsically and extrinsically motivate students to put up their best in learning.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Based on the findings from the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

- Students consider Social Studies as important subject of study although they ranked Social Studies forth among mathematics, English and Integrated Science.

- In addition, students’ understanding, perspectives, thinking skills and interest seem to be impacted positively on students as a result of learning social Studies. Although less apparent, the positive influence was also seen on how students’ expressed themselves to the open-ended questions. These results showed that students are positive about Social Studies as a result of the outcomes they individually derives from it. Thus, the study discovers that the high school students’ learning attitude is rather active, but not to a better extent.

- The findings strengthened the case that students’ learning attitudes towards Social Studies can be improved if Social Studies teachers use greater variety and more active approaches in teaching Social Studies. This idea is further reinforced by the earlier research which concluded that teacher quality is the central variable which
directly influences students’ attitudes towards Social Studies [20].

- In addition, it is worth to note that the teachers’ attitude also plays an influential role in students’ learning. What this means is that teachers who put up their best and love Social Studies, value and respect their students, and impress upon them to work harder can win their confidence. On the contrary, teachers who are hostile, unfriendly and do not value students or the subject cannot motivate students to like Social Studies and this can result in students’ negativity towards the subject.

- Again, it is also salient to note that classroom activities carry a special importance for Social Studies teaching. This Social Studies lesson can easily be boring when teachers use an undesired experience through a straightforward lecture method without involving students actively in their learning. On the other way round, the same Social Studies lesson can be delivered in a lively atmosphere where students are always involved in their knowledge and idea building process.

5.2 Recommendations

The following suggestions, implied in the study, may help to meet some of the challenges facing the learning of Social Studies.

Social Studies teachers need to be aware of individual differences among students; different levels of intelligence, different learning styles, and differences relating to comprehension or understanding the subject or material. Because of these differences, teachers must not only realize, but also study the differences and use a variety of teaching strategies to ensure that all students have quality Social Studies education.

Social Studies instruction should not focus on only transmission of knowledge since the knowledge itself is not very important unless it causes some skill and attitude development in individuals. For this reason lesson should be made more practical for students to ensure that what is taught becomes relevant for nation building.

The importance of the objectives of Social Studies for students own future should be communicated to them and it should be made clear to the students, how the long term goal of Social Studies relates to their own aspirations. That is, Social studies teachers need to communicate to students why Social Studies knowledge and skills are valuable in their future lives.

Again, Curriculum and Research Development Division (CRDD, 2007) of Ghana Education Service should employ competent and qualified people to write textbooks on Social Studies. A situation where by non-experts are contracted to write textbooks is worrisome since most of such books do not usually meet the required standard of the syllabus.

6. References


