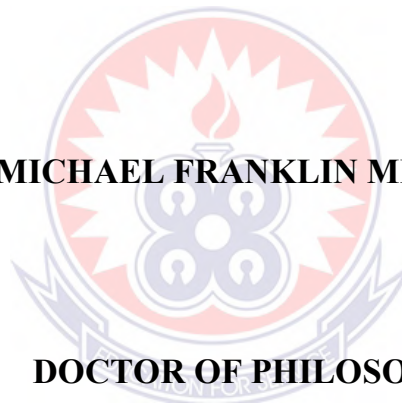


UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA



**EXPLORING PEDAGOGICAL CONTENT KNOWLEDGE FOR
TEACHER PREPARATION: A STUDY OF SOCIAL STUDIES
TUTORS IN SELECTED COLLEGES OF EDUCATION**

MICHAEL FRANKLIN MENSAH



DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

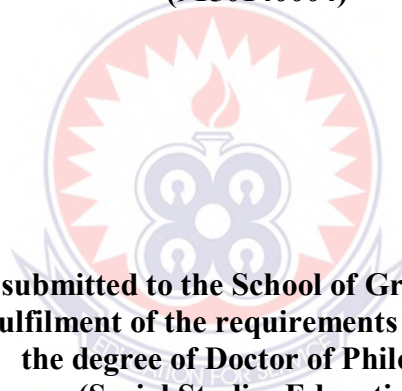
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**MICHAEL FRANKLIN MENSAH
(9150140004)**



**A Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in
partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
(Social Studies Education)**

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION,
FACULTY OF LIBERAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION,
UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

AUGUST, 2024

DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

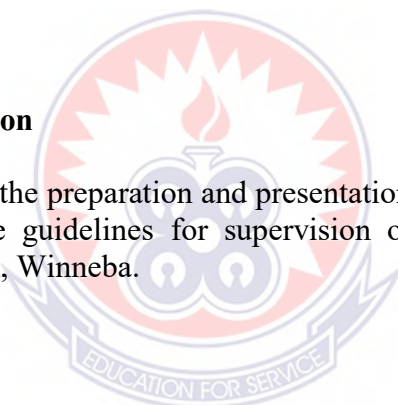
I, Michael Franklin Mensah, hereby declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted either in part or whole for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Signature:.....

Date.....

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.



Name of Principal Supervisor: Dr. Lawrence Odumah

Signature:.....

Date:.....

Name of Co-Supervisor: Prof. Isaac Eshun

Signature

Date

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Jemima, my children and my family.



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I wish to express my most sincere and special thanks to a number of people, some of whom I can name, others I cannot, but all of them have, during the course of my study, made significant impact towards the completion of this study. First of all, I wish to thank my supervisors, Dr. Lawrence Odumah and Prof. Isaac Eshun, who guided me through to the completion of this work by challenging and supporting me, accompanied by their continuous encouraging support to my study. I am deeply grateful for the time you spent reading and re-reading my work step-by-step, and for the very helpful advice on making the work better and more meaningful.

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ABBREVIATION AND ACRONYMS

CoEs	Colleges of Education
GES	Ghana Education Service
GTEC	Ghana Tertiary Education Commission
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IRCAF	International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Framework
NCSS	National Council on Social Studies
PCK	Pedagogical Content Knowledge
SHS	Senior High School
UCC	University of Cape Coast



ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to explore how the Social Studies tutors in the Colleges of Education perceive, enact and adapt pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) to prepare teachers. This study sits in interpretivism philosophy and employed a qualitative research approach with its data collection and analysis. The study employed a case study design. Fifteen Social Studies tutors were selected from five Colleges of Education affiliated with the University of Cape Coast through multi staged sampling techniques. Fifteen Social Studies tutors were observed and interviewed. The data were analysed using inductive thematic approach. Findings revealed that Social Studies tutors adopted a variety of pedagogical approaches such as inquiry-based learning and differentiated instruction techniques to cater for varying needs. Furthermore, the study found that tutors demonstrated pedagogical content knowledge by integrating content knowledge with pedagogical skills, supported by digital tools, collaborative instruction, assessment with feedback, and insights from developmental psychology. However, tutors did not demonstrate adequate knowledge of teacher trainees' misconceptions and learning difficulties. Also, Social Studies tutors faced challenges in applying PCK, including inadequate teaching resources, insufficient contact hours and large class sizes. The study concluded that Social Studies tutors demonstrated strong pedagogical skills aligned with Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory by fostering collaborative, contextually situated learning environments. The study further concluded that the challenges Social Studies tutors face in applying PCK are rooted in limited teaching resources, inadequate instructional hours and large class sizes, underscoring a persistent gap between theoretical ideals of teacher education and realities of classroom practice. The study recommended that Social Studies tutors continue to explore and adopt modern pedagogical approaches, blending them with content knowledge in their teaching. It is also recommended that the Ministry of Education, the University of Cape Coast as the mentoring university, and Colleges of Education management should make efforts to resource college libraries with required textbooks, reading materials, globes, charts, maps and other physical resources needed for the effective application of PCK in Social Studies lessons delivery.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Curriculum reform has assumed a central place in contemporary educational reform discourses across the world. The International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Framework (IRCAF) project, for instance, undertook extensive curriculum reviews in several countries, including Australia, Canada, Brazil, and the United States of America (Campbell-Phillips, 2020). Similarly, a number of African countries, such as Ghana, South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria, have embarked on major curriculum reforms aimed at aligning education with national development goal and global competencies (Heto et al., 2020; Arthur & Obeng, 2023). The diverse responses of these countries to the unprecedented pace and scale of global change have made the study of various subjects including Social Studies education particularly fascinating and timely. However, to effectively implement the content of these curriculum reforms, teachers who play a critical role in achieving educational goals have to be abreast with handling all the curriculum reforms. In assessing teachers' ability to implement curriculum policies, one important concept that needs to be examined is their pedagogical content knowledge.

Social Studies tutors' pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) is a critical concept in teacher education. Pedagogical content knowledge, which is the intersection of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, emphasises the need for teachers to possess knowledge of both the subject matter they teach and the most effective ways to convey that subject matter to students (Bordoh et al., 2021; Kind & Chan, 2019; van Driel, 2021). This integrated knowledge enables teachers to transform their knowledge of a subject matter into forms that are accessible and engaging for

students. It involves curricular knowledge which deals with understanding the structure and design of the curriculum, including the materials and resources available for teaching a subject, and knowing how to sequence and pace instruction effectively (Loughran, 2019). It further includes instructional strategies which involve the “techniques of teaching that teachers use to help students understand the subject matter” (Bordoh et al., 2021; Campbell-Phillips, 2020). It includes the ability to select and apply the most effective teaching strategies relevant to a particular content area to attain its goals and objectives.

The goal of the multidisciplinary subject known as Social Studies is to provide students with the knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills necessary to become responsible, educated and active citizens. Also, the goals and objectives of the Colleges of Education Social Studies curriculum are to help teacher trainees develop their overall personalities, including their cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor skills. The difficulties and issues that Ghanaian society faces endanger its survival are covered in Social Studies. It does this by providing the student the chance to apply ideas, generalizations, and concepts from a range of pertinent disciplines to analyse, research, and find workable solutions to their own and societal problems. According to National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) (2020), the subject gives students the chance to delve deeper into both their immediate surroundings and the wider environment.

Due to this, the goals of the Social Studies curriculum for Colleges of Education (CoEs) place a special emphasis on helping its learners develop their “curiosity, critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and leadership capabilities”. In addition, it aims to improve digital literacy, cultural identification, global citizenship, creativity, and teamwork. So, the “Common Core Programme” of the Pre-tertiary Education

Curriculum includes Social Studies to help students learn the skills they need to become responsible, active citizens (NaCCA, 2020; National Teacher Education Curriculum Framework, 2017).

It is therefore clear that Social Studies tutors' PCK is critical for effective teaching, as it enables teachers to make the content or subject matter comprehensible and engaging for students. It bridges the gap between knowing a subject and teaching it, ensuring that instructional strategies are appropriately aligned with the content and students' needs (Purwoko et al., 2019). Loughran (2019) and van Driel (2021) noted that PCK enables teachers to transform their knowledge of a subject matter into teaching that their students can understand. It involves knowing the most effective ways to present content, including which examples, analogies, and explanations work best for a particular topic. Similarly, Jacob et al. (2020) indicated that teachers with strong PCK can anticipate and address common misconceptions and difficulties that students may encounter. They can design lessons that build on students' prior knowledge and scaffold new information in a way that promotes deeper understanding. In the view of Chan and Hume (2019), PCK enables teachers to differentiate instruction more effectively. By understanding the unique challenges associated with teaching certain content, teachers can design diverse instructional approaches that cater to the "varied learning needs and styles of their students".

Research studies by Van de Oudeweetering and Voogt (2018) noted that PCK promotes student engagement and improves assessment practices. From the perspective of promoting student engagement, Purwoko et al. (2019) found that teachers with robust PCK are better equipped to create engaging and relevant lessons. They can connect the content to students' interests and real-world applications, which can increase student motivation and engagement. Van de Oudeweetering and Voogt

corroborated that with strong PCK, teachers can develop more effective assessment tools and strategies that align closely with the content and its pedagogical demands. This alignment ensures that assessments accurately measure students' understanding and skills.

As a result of the crucial role PCK plays in teacher preparation, it has remained one of the focal points for educational researchers and administrators. For instance, researchers are investigating how the development and application of teachers' knowledge, particularly PCK, influences educational reform and teacher education (Samuel et al., 2022; Bakar et al., 2022; Adams et al., 2023). Other studies on PCK have concentrated on both “in-service and pre-service teachers’ professional development (Fogal, 2017; Apau, 2022; Berry et al., 2016; Bostock, 2019). Through exploring the “question of what knowledge informs teaching, researchers have contributed to conceptual understandings of teachers’ professional knowledge” (Gray et al., 2022; Adarkwah et al., 2022; Adiyaa et al., 2022; Oteng et al., 2023). Research about PCK also focuses on the investigation of “specific subjects”, such as Social Studies (Ofori et al., 2022; Bordoh et al., 2021; Ghanney, & Agyei, 2021), Mathematics (Kumi, & Wonu, 2021; Gess-Newsome et al., 2019), Science (Abukari et al., 2022; Naah et al., 2021), Geography (Mubita et al., 2022), or English (Bunch, 2013) where “teachers develop their PCK”. In addition, varying levels of expertise and their corresponding structures of PCK are compared and examined (Wolff et al., 2016). Other studies investigate university lecturers' PCK (Oteng et al., 2023; Mubita et al., 2022; Connelly & Clandinin, 2007).

A thorough review of the literature reveals that although several studies have examined PCK in Social Studies, limited attention has been paid to Colleges of Education in Ghana. According to Oteng et al. (2023), Colleges of Education serve as

the cornerstone of basic-level education in Ghana because a large proportion of basic schools teachers are trained by there. Therefore, Social Studies tutors within these colleges should have practical knowledge on PCK in Social Studies in order to ensure that pre-services teachers have quality training. CoEs Social Studies tutors also help the teacher trainees to be equipped with both content and pedagogy to handle confidently the Social Studies programme at the basic level of education. Furthermore, tutors of Social Studies are responsible for equipping teacher trainees with the necessary skills to facilitate changes in learners' values and attitudes (Banks, 2020; Donkor et al., 2023). It is evident that the way these Social Studies tutors perceive the PCK of Social Studies they have acquired will shape their teaching methods, techniques (delivery mode) as well as their knowledge of students' learning and misconceptions. It is therefore important to critically examine the PCK of tutors in the Colleges of Education within the context of Social Studies education in Ghana.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The quality of a nation's system of education depends largely on the effectiveness of its teachers, whose preparation shapes the learning experiences and civic values of future generations. In Ghana, Social Studies plays an important role in promoting citizenship, national consciousness, and social cohesion (Pufaa et al., 2023). Colleges of Education, which prepare teachers for this responsibility, are expected to equip pre-service teachers with strong content knowledge and the pedagogical competence needed to make learning meaningful and transformative. However, concerns have been raised about the adequacy of teacher preparation in developing the pedagogical content knowledge required for effective Social Studies instruction (Ghanney, & Agyei, 2021; Osei-Yaw. 2024).

According to Darling-Hammond (2017), the design of practical pre-service training should be grounded in a comprehensive understanding of the instruction, the development of methodological competencies, and practice teaching under the mentorship of an experienced teacher. When these dimensions are integrated into the context of Social Studies tutors' PCK, the concept of "teaching" Social Studies should be emphasised as content knowledge in the preparation of teachers. Basically, the components of Social Studies teaching should include pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, and contextual considerations to enhance learners' understanding of facts and concepts, while fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Despite this, the University of Cape Coast's Institute of Education Chief Examiners Reports on Social Studies courses such as "Social Studies as an Integrated Subject" and "Population and Socio-Economic Development" from 2020 to 2023 reveal a decline in teacher trainees' academic performance compared with the previous years. In addition, a report from the Fidelity of Implementation by Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) in May, 2022 on how far training and assessment are aligning with principles and practices for the Bachelor of Education programmes in the forty-six Colleges of Education in Ghana, revealed significant shortcomings in teaching and learning. These gaps raise questions about the effectiveness of Social Studies instructions and may leave teacher trainees inadequately prepared for academic and professional settings that require competence in Social Studies education.

According to Loughran (2019), tutors at the Colleges of Education operate at two different levels of practice. One concern is that teacher trainees should learn about the process of learning through the experiences offered in the pre-service teacher education programme. The other level focuses on the simultaneous learning about teaching. Loughran (2019) stated that teacher preparation is a synchronous learning

and teaching process. Therefore, tutors need to help teacher trainees to reflect on their cognitive development as teacher trainees under the pedagogical environment that tutors create and to facilitate teacher trainees' reflection on pedagogy itself, thus, how and why it is used, adapted, understood and developed. However, the lack of clarity surrounding tutors' PCK in teaching Social Studies at the selected Colleges of Education in Ghana may limit teacher trainees' overall content mastery and pedagogical effectiveness.

In Ghana, teacher trainees majoring in Social Studies at the various Colleges of Education take courses in both Social Studies content and methodology. A further gap is the observation that there is a limited space for the reflection on pedagogy during Social Studies lessons, even though Social Studies major students are required to learn how their tutors teach Social Studies content. According to Beal et al. (2009), when Social Studies instruction relies heavily on rote memorisation rather than inquiry-based and reflective approaches, students often develop only a superficial understanding of societal issues and concepts. Therefore, it is not surprising that some teacher trainees experience challenges when applying the theories and knowledge gained from college preparatory programmes into practice in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Feiman-Nemser, 2012).

The differences observed in Social Studies tutors' instruction, the Chief Examiners' Reports, and the Fidelity of Implementation reports may lead to inconsistencies in teaching techniques, further complicating the issues. These uncertainties are critical for improving Social Studies instruction and ensuring that teacher trainees majoring in Social Studies at the various Colleges of Education in Ghana acquire strong foundation in the subject. Exploring the Social Studies tutors' PCK is essential, as

gaps in this knowledge may affect trainees' understanding of the subject and their subsequent teaching effectiveness.

Since it was introduced by Shulman (1986), PCK has gained considerable attention across various fields and contexts. Most studies on PCK have focused on in-service teachers (Bostock, 2019; Bosu, 2022; Mayne, 2019; Park & Oliver, 2008), while others have examined pre-service teachers (Apau, 2022; Ghanney, & Agyei, 2021; Fogal, 2017; Ozden, 2008). Several studies have been carried out outside Ghana (Bostock, 2019; Liu, 2013; Mayne, 2019; Park & Oliver, 2008). In Ghana, however, the available studies on PCK have focused more on other disciplines, including Science and Mathematics than that of Social Studies. Those PCK studies on Social Studies have focused more on the basic and secondary school teachers.

More so, methodologically, most of the PCK studies in Ghana have either employed a pragmatist approach (Ofori et al., 2022; Ghanney & Agyei, 2021) or the quantitative approach (Owusu-Fordjour et al., 2020; Wilmot, 2020) to address the phenomenon. However, qualitative studies like this one have not employed an exploratory case study design that collects interview and observation data from the Social Studies tutors in the selected Colleges of Education affiliated with the University of Cape Coast in Ghana.

Furthermore, the PCK in teaching in all subjects is very important to achieve stated educational objectives (Willermark, 2018; Neumann et al., 2019). According to Gess-Newsome et al. (2019), teachers' content (subject matter) knowledge shapes their PCK, resulting in more effective content delivery to students. Studies on knowledge of subject matter delivery have always been restricted to curriculum development, updating teaching materials and introducing innovative means of teaching (Graham et al., 2020). However, the perspectives of Social Studies tutors in Colleges of Education

on content knowledge remain largely underexplored. Schoenfeld et al. (2019) further asserted that understanding teachers' perception of content knowledge helps them to appreciate the scope and sequence of their subject, identify key concepts and skills, and design coherent and effective instructional plans.

In addition to PCK constructs such as subject matter knowledge, Chan and Hume (2019) emphasised the importance of tertiary teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical approaches (techniques of teaching) in exploring PCK. Studies have shown that teachers often employ inquiry-based learning that foster critical thinking, problem-solving and decision making, while also adapting their instructional techniques to meet diverse learners needs through variety of methods, such as group work, individual projects, and technology-enhanced learning (Loughran, 2019; Schoenfeld et al., 2019; Van de Oudeweetering & Voogt, 2018). However, in the case of Social Studies tutors in CoEs, researchers have not directed sufficient attention to how teaching techniques are perceived. This oversight has created a gap in understanding the most effective approaches to interpreting and applying these techniques for the advancement of Social Studies education. There is a need to address the problem of integrating PCK in designing learner centred plans and approaches to teaching Social Studies.

In Ghana, available literature have shown that several studies on Social Studies tutors' knowledge have been conducted, but most have concentrated either on tutors' content knowledge or pedagogical knowledge in the Colleges of Education. It appears that little attention has been given to Social Studies tutors' pedagogical content knowledge at the selected Colleges of Education affiliated with the University of Cape Coast, which is the focus of the current study. Therefore, filling the gaps identified, this

study sought to explore pedagogical content knowledge of Social Studies tutors for teacher preparation in the selected Colleges of Education in Ghana.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The study explored how Social Studies tutors perceive, enact, and adapt pedagogical content knowledge for fostering effective teachers in selected Colleges of Education.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study sought to:

1. explore the content knowledge that Social Studies tutors possess in teaching Social Studies courses in the selected CoEs.
2. examine how Social Studies tutors in the selected CoEs perceive and apply pedagogical knowledge in teaching Social Studies courses.
3. explore how Social Studies tutors integrate pedagogical content knowledge in their teaching of Social Studies courses in the selected CoEs.
4. explore the challenges that Social Studies tutors face in applying PCK during teaching Social Studies courses in the selected CoEs.

1.5 Research Questions

The following questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What content knowledge do Social Studies tutors possess in teaching Social Studies courses in the selected CoEs?
2. How do Social Studies tutors in the selected CoEs perceive and apply pedagogical knowledge in teaching Social Studies courses?
3. How do Social Studies tutors integrate pedagogical content knowledge in their teaching of Social Studies courses in the selected CoEs?

4. What challenges do Social Studies tutors face in applying their PCK during teaching Social Studies courses in the selected CoEs?

1.6 Significance of the Study

Exploring the PCK of Social Studies tutors in Colleges of Education could prove advantageous. It could enhance their classroom methodologies or practices not only at the institutions where the research was conducted, but also for other Social Studies tutors who may lay hands on this report. Also, the findings could provide valuable insights to “curriculum developers in the future development of Social Studies curriculum” for Colleges of Education.

Secondly, the study would provide information on how effectively PCK is conceptualised in the Colleges of Education. It would highlight how Social Studies tutors’ integration of PCK components enhances teacher trainees’ learning outcomes in Colleges of Education in Ghana, thereby contributing to the achievement of the goals and objectives of Social Studies.

Furthermore, it is anticipated that the study will provide valuable insights to Social Studies tutors on the effective pedagogical approaches that are grounded in the discipline of Social Studies for the development of citizenship education in their students, as well as the acquisition of decision-making skills and the adoption of democratic practices.

Similarly, the study could attract the attention of Colleges of Education where the implementation of Social Studies teacher education programmes take place. This would encourage these colleges to reflect on and enhance their teaching practices. It may also provide insights that support the professional development of Social Studies tutors. Furthermore, the study would contribute to the growing body of literature on PCK, and demonstrate the potential benefits of further investigation into teacher

knowledge and thinking. Finally, it will offer a unique contribution to the theorisation of pedagogical thinking.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

The study explored Social Studies tutors' PCK in selected CoEs in Ghana. The study required in-depth analysis from opinions, views and perceptions of Social Studies tutors. Hence, the study concentrates exclusively on Social Studies tutors. This narrow focus ensures that the research can deeply investigate the unique aspects of PCK pertinent to Social Studies, without the complications of cross-subject variability. The research targets tutors at CoEs level. It does not include educators from primary, secondary, or university levels. This delimitation is crucial for maintaining a consistent context, as the roles, responsibilities, and professional development needs of educators can vary significantly across different educational tiers. Also, only Social Studies tutors with a minimum of five years of teaching experience at the selected CoEs are included in the study. This criterion is set to ensure that participants have a substantial amount of practical teaching experience, which is essential for providing meaningful insights into their development and application of PCK. Novice educators with less experience are excluded to maintain a focus on more established teaching practices.

The research is confined to five selected CoEs affiliated with the University of Cape Coast in Ghana. This specific focus allows for a more in-depth analysis of local educational practices and conditions. Consequently, the findings may not be directly applicable to the entire UCC-affiliated CoEs in Ghana, where educational contexts and challenges might differ.

The study employs qualitative research methods, including in-depth interviews, and classroom observations. Hence, the study employed inductive qualitative analysis where conclusions are drawn from opinions, views gathered from participants.

Moreover, although PCK is a complex concept, the study factored how teachers apply their PCK, perception on subject matter knowledge, how educators perceive their pedagogical knowledge (teaching techniques), knowledge of learners' understanding and misconceptions and challenges tutors face in developing and applying their PCK. The study was delimited to five Colleges of Education affiliated with the University of Cape Coast, which served as the sources of data. The primary subjects of the study were tutors responsible for training Social Studies teachers at the Colleges of Education. This primary subjects includes tutors qualifications, teaching techniques, and understanding of the College of Education Social Studies curriculum.

1.8 Definitions of Terms

The research questions consist of several terms that required their definitions.

1. **Conception of Curriculum:** General comprehension of the subject being taught or components of the subject being taught.
2. **Evaluation:** The capability to judge the value of material or content based on established or specified standards or criteria.
3. **Knowledge of pedagogy:** "This covers knowledge of planning and organization of a lesson and teaching strategies especially in Social Studies". In this study, Social Studies tutors "who have strong pedagogical knowledge are Social Studies tutors who have rich repertoires of teaching activities and are able to choose tasks, examples, representations, and teaching strategies that are appropriate for their Social Studies teacher-trainees when teaching".

Furthermore, they possess the knowledge to guide classroom discussions and efficiently manage time for classroom tasks.

4. **Knowledge of learners:** This refers to knowledge of teacher-trainees' common difficulties, errors, and misconceptions. It is believed that Social Studies teacher-educator who possess a strong knowledge base in this domain know what Social Studies concepts are difficult for teacher-trainees to grasp, which concepts teacher-trainees typically have misconceptions about, possible sources of misconceptions when teaching them.
5. **Knowledge of curriculum:** The knowledge of curriculum is expected to include knowledge of learning goals for different levels and knowledge of instructional materials. Social Studies tutors with strong knowledge in this area know the state and standards for teaching. Social Studies tutors identified teacher-trainees for different levels and plan their teaching activities accordingly. They choose appropriate materials, for instance, reading books, technology, and other resource to meet the goals of the curriculum and use them effectively.
6. **Subject-Matter Knowledge:** This is presumed to include knowledge of Social Studies concepts, facts, generalisation and principles and the relationships among them. In this study, knowledge of Social Studies was defined as knowing how Social Studies concepts, facts, generalisation and principles are related and how the Social Studies procedures work. Subject-matter knowledge includes being able to relate a particular Social Studies concept, fact, generalisation and principle with others and explicitly explain or justify the “reasons behind the Social Studies procedures to promote” teacher-trainees' understanding.

7. **Pedagogy:** The science or profession of teaching.
8. **Pedagogical Content Knowledge:** This is defined by De Miranda (2008) to represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction (p. 8).
9. **Social Studies Classroom Practices:** This encompasses the “work or teaching of professionally Social Studies trained”.
10. **Social Studies Conceptions:** General understanding of Social Studies subject, examples are: Amalgamation of the social sciences; citizenship education; global citizenship; method of teaching; multicultural education; peace education; political education; and others.
11. **Social Studies Curriculum Conceptions:** General understanding or elements of teaching Social Studies. “Examples of Social Studies Curriculum Conceptions include amalgamation of the social sciences; citizenship education; global citizenship; problem solving; and others”.
12. **Social Studies Content:** Social Studies draws its scope and content from relevant subject areas or topics.
13. **Social Studies Content Knowledge:** The “ability to remember previously learned material, from specific facts to complete theories in Social Studies”.
14. **Social Studies Education:** The study of “Social Studies and its related courses”.
15. **Social Studies tutor:** “Tutors in the CoEs who teach Social Studies and its related courses”.

16. **Tutor:** This refers to CoEs Social Studies tutors whose principal activity is “the preparation of beginning teachers in the CoEs”. Social Studies tutors are the professionals who engage in training the prospective teachers. In this study, “Social Studies tutors have extensive experience in the field of education and use their expertise” to help aspiring teachers develop their skills and knowledge. They teach courses on pedagogy, curriculum development, classroom management, and other Social Studies topics relevant to teaching. Additionally, Social Studies tutors conduct research, provide mentorship, and offer support to teachers throughout their careers.

17. **Teacher trainee:** This also refers to students in CoEs who are studying teacher education programmes and are on the job training, but have not obtained a degree nor been certified as teachers yet. They are responsible for pedagogical implementation in the classroom.

1.9 Organisation of the Study

This study was organised into five chapters. Chapter One is the introduction to the study which provides the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose and objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations of the study, definitions of important terms and organisation of the study. Chapter Two dealt with review of related literature focusing on PCK studies. Chapter Three describes the methodology for the study. Chapter Four dealt with the presentation of data collected. The chapter also focused on the discussion of the findings of the research. Chapter Five, which is the final chapter presents the summary, conclusion, recommendations and suggestion for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the literature that is relevant to the issues being investigated in this study. The review covers the theoretical frameworks, conceptual review and related literature on the existing problem. Shulman's theory of pedagogical content knowledge and Sociocultural Theory constituted the theoretical review of the study. The components of conceptual review and the related literature reviewed included: the perspectives on the components of PCK; the nature of Social Studies teachers' PCK; development of teachers' PCK; teachers' knowledge of Social Studies subject matter; teachers' pedagogical knowledge; teachers' knowledge of Students' understanding and misconception; and challenges that confront integration of PCK.

2.1 Theoretical Frameworks

Underpinning this investigation are two broad theories. The theories that are discussed in this chapter include Shulman's theory of pedagogical content knowledge, and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. These well-crafted theories helped to shape this study.

2.1.1 Shulman's theory of Pedagogical Content Knowledge

The pursuit of enhancing teaching and learning to improve learners' understanding of concepts, facts, and principles highlights the necessity for pedagogical models or frameworks that integrate the teacher's pedagogical knowledge and subject matter knowledge. Shulman's (1986, 1987) pedagogical content knowledge concept appears to be the one of the models that stands out clearly. "Pedagogical content knowledge" is an educational theory formulated by Lee Shulman in the 1980's for the purpose of

helping student learning be more productive and effective (Rahman & Scaife, 2005). I have applied “Shulman’s theory of PCK by extending it to the situation of teachers amalgamating both content and pedagogy for effective teaching and learning”. This implies that “PCK is grounded in the beliefs and practices of the teacher”. In its earliest conceptualization, Shulman (1987, p. 17) posited that PCK comprised two essential elements:

“the most useful forms of representation of those 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 [and] an understanding of what makes the learning of specific topics easy or difficult: the conceptions and preconceptions that students of different ages and backgrounds bring with them to the learning of those most frequently taught topics and lessons”.

Pedagogical content knowledge was later conceptualised as “special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers” by Shulman (1987) after he made a few minor revisions to his original idea. Pedagogical content knowledge was further linked to:

[t]he capacity of a teacher to transform the content knowledge he or she possesses into forms that are pedagogically powerful and yet adaptive to the variations in ability and background presented by the students” (De Miranda, 2008, p.20).

This theoretical framework was built on “Shulman’s descriptions of PCK to show how teachers’ content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge interact with one another to produce effective teaching” (De Miranda, 2008). He asserted that the focus on teachers’ subject knowledge and pedagogy was considered separate and distinct areas in research related to these fields or domains.

According to De Miranda (2008), Shulman in 1987 stated that “the practical consequence of such exclusion was the production of teacher education programmes in which a focus on either subject matter or pedagogy dominated”. To rectify this disparity, Shulman proposed considering the necessary relationship between subject

knowledge and pedagogy by introducing the seminal notion of PCK. “This knowledge includes knowing what teaching approaches fit the content, and likewise, knowing how elements of the content can be arranged for better teaching”. Shulman added that “this knowledge is also different from the knowledge of a disciplinary expert and also from the general pedagogical knowledge shared by teachers across disciplines” (Tsui, 2003; Valenta & Enge, 2013). Thus, “PCK is a special kind of knowledge that distinguishes teachers from lay people and other educators”. PCK is also “concerned with knowledge of teaching strategies that incorporate appropriate conceptual representations, to address learner difficulties and misconceptions and foster meaningful understanding” (Seleim & Mahmoud, 2013). In the words of Smith (2013), PCK “involves the representation and formulation of concepts, pedagogical techniques, as well as knowledge of students and theories of epistemology”. According to Reyes (2013), PCK is a “special knowledge of students which encompasses their prior conceptions (both “naive” and those formed through instruction); misconceptions students are likely to have about a particular domain and potential misapplications” of previously acquired knowledge. Also, Tsui (2003) and Valenta and Enge (2013) added that PCK includes “knowledge of what the students bring to the learning situation, knowledge that might be either facilitative or dysfunctional for the particular learning task at hand”. In this regard, Mishra and Koehler (2006) opined that PCK “exists at the intersection of content and pedagogy”. The concept of PCK therefore goes beyond simply considering content and pedagogy in isolation. It rather involves “an amalgamation of both content and pedagogy, enabling the transformation of content into effective teaching practices forms” (Andoh-Mensah, 2013). Pedagogical content knowledge “represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular aspects of subject

matter are organized, adapted, and represented for instruction” (Mishra & Koehler, 2006).

Nuangchalerm (2012) claimed that “having knowledge of subject matter and general pedagogical strategies, though necessary, were not sufficient for capturing the knowledge of good teachers”. In an effort to encapsulate the intricate thought processes teachers employ when determining how specific content should be imparted, he “advocated for the term pedagogical content knowledge”. This refers to the specialized knowledge that pertains to the teaching process, including the methods of presenting and structuring the subject matter in a manner that makes it understandable to others (Lumadi, 2012).

For teachers to achieve success, according to Soare (2013), they must simultaneously address both the facets of content and pedagogy by integrating the elements of content that are most pertinent to its ability to be taught effectively. Central to the concept of PCK is the process by which the subject matter is adapted for instructional purposes (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). This adaptation takes place when the teacher deciphers the subject matter, identifies various methods of representation, and renders it comprehensible to students (Akinlaye, 2003). It is therefore implied that, there exists a link between teachers’ PCK and effective teaching and learning. When this knowledge is effectively integrated, it assists in realizing the objectives and goals that Social Studies aspires to achieve.

In the broader context, effective teaching in Social Studies is perceived as the capability to apply a repertoire of strategies (Bordoh et al., 2021). Given this interpretation of teaching, the role of educator is to impart widely accepted strategies to student teachers (Liu, 2013; Kwong et al., 2007). Consequently, Social Studies tutors are expected to assist pre-service teachers develop and apply PCK that

integrates subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and knowledge of learners' conceptions and difficulties in Social Studies. In essence, teacher knowledge for Social Studies is not solely confined to subject matter knowledge or pedagogical knowledge. Predicated on this premise, it becomes crucial to investigate the integrative relationship among different facets of teacher knowledge, which are shaped into PCK for effective Social Studies teaching or instruction in a social learning environment tailored to specific students in particular learning contexts.

2.1.2 Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

This study is also grounded in Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory. This conceptualises learning as a socially mediated process shaped by cultural environment and institutional contexts. According to Nardo (2021), "this theoretical perspective became known as social constructivism or sociocultural theory, and it focused on the cognitive processes that occur within the context of shared activities". From this perspective, pedagogical knowledge is not viewed as static or individually acquired but as knowledge that is constructed, interpreted, and enacted through social interaction and professional practice. This framework is appropriate for examining how Social Studies tutors in Colleges of Education perceive and apply pedagogical knowledge in their teaching.

Sociocultural theory emphasizes that learning and development occur first through social interaction before becoming internalized by the individual (Vygotsky, 1978). In teacher education contexts, tutors' pedagogical knowledge is shaped through participation in professional communities, interactions with colleagues and students, and engagement with institutional norms and curricular expectations (Johnson, 2009). In Colleges of Education, tutors' instructional practices are further influenced by national curriculum reforms, institutional cultures, and expectations of teacher

preparation (Akyeampong & Stephens, 2002; Anamuah-Mensah, 2012). These social and cultural conditions shape how tutors perceive pedagogy and how they enact it in Social Studies classrooms.

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is reframed in this study as a zone of proximal teacher development, where tutors develop pedagogical practices through guidance and collaboration with more experienced colleagues, mentors, and institutional structures (Warford, 2011). Within colleges of education, professional interactions such as mentoring, peer collaboration, and reflective dialogue provide support that enables tutors to apply and refine pedagogical knowledge. Research on teacher education in sub-Saharan Africa suggests that such collaborative professional learning is critical for improving instructional quality (Pryor et al., 2012).

Closely related to this is the concept of scaffolding, understood as structured professional support that assists tutors in applying pedagogical knowledge in classroom practice. In the Ghanaian context, scaffolding may occur through lesson planning support, departmental supervision, professional development workshops, and informal peer feedback (Akyeampong, 2017). As tutors gain experience, these supports may be adapted or reduced, reflecting growth in pedagogical competence.

The concept of mediation further informs this study by highlighting the role of cultural tools and artifacts in teaching (Lantolf et al., 2014). In Social Studies instruction, mediation occurs through curricula, textbooks, assessment practices, and classroom discourse. According to Ottevanger et al. (2007), teacher education emphasizes the role of instructional materials and discourse in shaping classroom practice.

Overall, sociocultural theory provides an analytical lens for understanding how Social Studies tutors in CoEs perceive pedagogical knowledge and how this knowledge is applied through socially mediated teaching practices. The framework supports an examination of tutors' perceptions alongside their instructional practices within their specific institutional and cultural contexts.

A number of researchers have emphasized the social and contextual factors in learning (Choi, 2023; Farnsworth et al., 2016; Agyekum, 2023; Aubrey, & Riley, 2022). Their studies underscore that learning is always embedded within a social and cultural context, and its situated nature elevates and furthers the knowledge within the learner's community. Farnsworth et al. (2016) observed that it is through participation in practices that are relevant or defining to the community that individuals learn within that social context. It is therefore important to describe some pedagogical models for learning and instruction that have been grounded in a socio-cultural or community-based perspective.

2.1.3 Justification for the Choice of the Two Theories

My study adopted two (2) theories related to teachers' PCK that illuminate the potentials of tutors in the teaching and learning process. The first is the Shulman's theory of pedagogical content knowledge, which emphasizes the active role of teachers in integrating content and pedagogical knowledge to promote meaningful student learning.

Shulman's (1987) theory believes that PCK is the wheels that drive every teacher education programme in order to prepare competent teachers in both pedagogy and content knowledge. This theory explains the role that tutors' knowledge base plays in the preparation and training of new teachers. Thus, to "become a competent" Social Studies teacher, there is the need to develop valuable pedagogical skills, strong

content knowledge and knowledge of student that “will aid the teaching” of the subject in a practical and meaningful form.

Sociocultural theory is also relevant to this study because the goal of Social Studies education and teacher preparation in Ghana emphasise socially grounded, reflective and participatory learning. Social Studies is designed not simply to transmit facts but to prepare learners to understand and engage with societal, civic, cultural and environmental issues in ways that are socially meaningful and context-specific. The Social Studies curriculum underscores the development of informed, reflective and responsible citizens who can make decisions for individual and public good, understand cultural identity, and participate in community life (NaCCA, 2020; Ministry of Education [MoE], 2019).

Sociocultural theory positions learning as a social process mediated through interaction and cultural tools (Vygotsky, 1978). In the Social Studies classroom, tutors are expected to support teacher trainees in exploring culture, governance, socio-economic development, and civic responsibilities through guided dialogue and reflection, aligning well with sociocultural emphasis on mediated meaning-making through discussion, collaborative inquiry, classroom discourse, documents, and community contexts.

The theory also aligns with teacher preparation goals in CoEs in Ghana, where emphasis is placed on professional collaboration, reflective practice and mentorship. Tutors must not only deliver content but support teacher trainees in developing pedagogical strategies that foster interactive and learner-centred classrooms. The sociocultural concepts of Zone of Proximal Development and scaffolding provide a useful lens for understanding how experienced tutors guide novices toward

pedagogical competence through structured support and joint problem solving (Warford, 2011).

This theory, in the context of this study, focuses on the importance of Social Studies tutors possessing valuable knowledge about how social interactions and friendship among teacher-trainees and teachers help improve learning among teacher-trainees. The theory underscores the importance of considering the school environment, the organizational context, and broader social and cultural context to inform tutors' practices. Furthermore, it suggests that knowledge is constructed through individual internal processing as one interacts with their environment. Therefore, teacher-trainees' must develop critical thinking abilities and mental models through problem-solving activities, particularly by using real-world problems.

2.2 Perspectives on Components of Pedagogical Content Knowledge

De Miranda (2008) builds on Shulman's knowledge base framework by positioning pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) as central to effective teaching, rather than as a 0 skill. His argument challenges the assumption that strong subject matter knowledge alone guarantees instructional competence. Instead, he contends that teachers must be able to translate disciplinary knowledge into forms that are meaningful for learners. In this sense, PCK functions as the mechanism through which subject knowledge becomes teachable knowledge.

Drawing on Shulman's model, De Miranda (2008) conceptualises "pedagogical content knowledge as encompassing not only instructional strategies", but also knowledge of learners, educational contexts, and the purposes and values underpinning education. This broader framing helps explain why many scholars treat PCK as equally important as subject matter knowledge. It also highlights a key analytical point: PCK is not an isolated body of knowledge, but one that emerges

from the interaction between content expertise, pedagogical understanding, and contextual awareness. At the same time, De Miranda acknowledges a persistent limitation in the literature, namely the difficulty of isolating and measuring PCK due to its integrated and practice-based nature.

Kwong et al. (2007) reinforce this position by arguing that “pedagogical content knowledge constitutes a distinct domain of teacher cognition”, rather than a simple overlap between content knowledge and pedagogy. Their interpretation of Shulman’s work emphasises the relational aspect of PCK, particularly how teachers connect what they know about a subject with how learners understand, misunderstand, and engage with that subject. This perspective shifts the focus from what teachers know to how they reason pedagogically during instruction.

Shulman’s (1986) original “definition of pedagogical content knowledge” further clarifies this distinction by foregrounding representation and learner understanding. His emphasis on analogies, examples, and explanations underscores that effective teaching depends on selecting representations that align with learners’ prior knowledge and cognitive readiness. Importantly, Shulman also highlights teachers’ awareness of student misconceptions, suggesting that PCK involves anticipating learning difficulties as much as presenting content clearly.

Building on this, Kwong et al. (2007, p. 28) argue that “pedagogical content knowledge differentiates expert teachers from subject specialists who lack teaching experience”. While general pedagogical knowledge may transfer across subjects, they assert that much of PCK is topic-specific, developing through sustained engagement with particular content areas. This distinction helps explain why teachers may be effective in one subject or topic but struggle in another, despite comparable pedagogical training.

This view is supported by Darling-Hammond (2000), who notes a growing consensus that discipline-specific pedagogy is essential for enabling learner understanding. Similarly, Nel (2012) and Roehrig and Luft (2004) report that novice teachers frequently experience difficulty presenting concepts clearly, largely because they have not yet developed sufficient PCK. These findings suggest that weaknesses in teaching are not necessarily due to inadequate content knowledge, but rather to limited experience in transforming that knowledge for learners.

Thus, these studies indicate that pedagogical content knowledge is a foundational component of effective teaching. In the context of Social Studies, where concepts are often abstract and value-laden, the ability to represent content meaningfully and respond to learners' preconceptions is particularly important. The literature, therefore, strongly supports the view that PCK is not optional but essential for effective Social Studies instruction.

Mishra and Koehler (2006, p.1027) perceive "pedagogical content knowledge as that knowledge base which is concerned with the representation and formulation of concepts, pedagogical techniques, and knowledge of what makes concepts difficult or easy to learn, and knowledge of learners' prior knowledge". De Miranda (2008), Park and Oliver (2008) and Hill et al. (2008) share a similar view with regards to the meaning of PCK. Moreover, Rohaan et al. (2011) opine that "pedagogical content knowledge is a type of knowledge which involves knowledge of teaching strategies that incorporate appropriate conceptual representations to address learner difficulties and misconceptions and to foster a meaningful understanding". Also, Kaya et al. (2022, p. 698) perceive pedagogical content knowledge as the knowledge that is held by teachers at all levels, which:

... “includes knowledge of the conceptual and procedural knowledge that students bring to the learning of a topic, the misconceptions about the topic that they may have developed, and the stages of understanding that they are likely to pass through in moving from a state of having little understanding of the topic to mastery of it. It also includes knowledge of techniques for assessing students' understanding and diagnosing their misconceptions, knowledge of instructional strategies that can be used to enable students to connect what they are learning to the knowledge they already possess, and knowledge of instructional strategies to eliminate the misconceptions they may have developed”.

The discussion highlights the need for teachers to possess strong PCK in order to teach their subjects effectively. It is against this background that this study had interest in investigated the PCK supposedly held by the Social Studies tutors in the selected CoEs in Ghana.

Different perceptions and conceptions about what constitute teachers' knowledge domains have led to different explanations as well as definitions for PCK and various descriptions about its nature. Some authors and researchers have posited that, when Shulman introduced the term PCK in the first place, he defined it as “knowing how to represent the subject-matter to facilitate students' understanding” (De Miranda, 2008; Park & Oliver, 2008; Hill et al., 2008). However, “as a result of arguments about teacher knowledge domains, PCK is either accepted as a distinct knowledge domain for teaching or not. Not only is identifying PCK as a knowledge domain controversial, but what constitutes that knowledge is also debated by scholars”.

Fundamentally, the term pedagogical content knowledge can be traced back to early twentieth century, as highlighted by Dewey (De Miranda, 2008; Park & Oliver, 2008). He pointed out the need to differentiate between the subject knowledge possessed by a scientist and that held by a teacher, each serving distinct purposes. In fact, these differences form the bedrock for understanding PCK in contemporary education. The comparison Burke (2000, p. 102) made is:

“.....as a teacher he is not concerned with adding new facts to the science he teaches, in propounding new hypotheses or in verifying them. He is concerned with the subject matter of the science as representing a given stage and phase of development of experience. His problem is that of inducing a vital and personal experience. Hence, what concerns him, as teacher, is the ways in which that subject may become a part of experiencing; what there is in the child’s present that is usable with reference to it; how such elements are to be used; how his own knowledge of the subject matter may assist in interpreting the child’s needs and doings, and determine the medium in which the child should be properly directed. He is concerned not with subject matter as such, but with the subject matter as a related factor in the total and growing experience.”

According to Burke (2000), Dewey appears to indicate several approaches to transforming subject matter into an experience suitable for students: knowing students’ prior and existing knowledge; making use of that understanding; transforming one’s own knowledge of subject matter; selecting the proper means for communicating; and linking the subject matter to other experience. In short, Burke emphasised the distinguished body of knowledge the teacher is holding for the purpose of instruction. De Miranda (2008) indicates that Shulman followed this line of argument by coining the “term pedagogical content knowledge among a set of other knowledge categories for teachers who need to promote understanding among students”.

According to De Miranda (2008), Shulman identified the seven domains of teacher knowledge, one of which is PCK. He further explained why Shulman identified PCK as a knowledge domain for teachers as follows:

“Among those categories, PCK is of special interest because it identifies the distinctive bodies of knowledge for teaching. It represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction. Pedagogical content knowledge is the category most likely to distinguish the understanding of the content specialist from that of them pedagogue” (De Miranda, 2008, p. 204)

From the above, De Miranda (2008) posited that the concept “pedagogical content knowledge” constitutes a unique and separate domain of knowledge even though knowledge of content and pedagogy contribute to it. De Miranda also noted that “PCK includes knowledge of learners, educational context, and instructional materials”.

Rollnick and Mavhunga (2016), however, made a sharper distinction between subject-matter-specific pedagogical knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge. They posited that each type of knowledge is composed of four categories namely; student, curriculum, instruction, and evaluation but they have different meanings in each domain. Rollnick and Mavhunga further provided examples for each category to reveal the distinction between subject-matter specific pedagogical knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge. For instance, “for the student category, knowing about specific common conceptions and misconceptions in a given topic is related to subject-matter specific pedagogical knowledge, whereas knowing about Piaget’s developmental levels is related to general pedagogical knowledge. Furthermore, Rollnick and Mavhunga identified “teachers’ skills in diagnosing students’ conceptual difficulties in a given topic and their knowledge about effective use of instructional tools as subject-matter-specific pedagogical knowledge”.

In a similar vein, Ball and Bass (2000) recognized that teachers’ “knowledge of students’ difficulties and appropriate teaching strategies to eliminate those difficulties as part of teachers’ PCK”. Ball and Bass (2000, p. 88) defined PCK as follows:

“... is a special form of knowledge that bundles mathematical knowledge with knowledge of learners, learning, and pedagogy. These bundles offer a crucial resource for teaching mathematics, for they can help the teacher anticipate what students might have trouble learning, and have ready alternative models or explanations to mediate those difficulties.”

This definition positions PCK not as isolated knowledge domains, but as an integrated and functional resource that supports teachers' moment-to-moment instructional decision-making. By emphasising anticipation and responsiveness, Ball and Bass foreground the proactive role of teachers in addressing students' learning challenges before they become entrenched.

However, Ball and Bass opined that there is “no way of adequately anticipating what students might think or whether a new representation or explanation for a familiar topic is needed; therefore, teachers should decide how they will orchestrate activities according to the nature of current circumstances”. This assertion introduces an important tension within their conceptualisation of PCK. While anticipation is presented as a core function of PCK, the authors simultaneously acknowledge its limits, thereby highlighting the inherently contingent and adaptive nature of teaching practice.

Moreover, Hill et al. (2008) put forth a model of mathematical knowledge for teaching mathematics. This model posits that PCK and subject-matter knowledge are two major domains contributing to it. In that model, they delineate PCK to include knowledge of content and students, knowledge of content and teaching, as well as knowledge of curriculum. This comprehensive understanding is integral to effective teaching practices. This therefore implies that, “teachers' PCK encompasses the knowledge of how students think about, know or learn particular content and what teaching strategies and curriculum materials can be used to teach that content”. These perspectives therefore suggest that PCK is both structured and dynamic: structured in terms of identifiable knowledge components, yet dynamic in its enactment within specific classroom contexts. While Ball and Bass emphasise responsiveness to immediate instructional conditions, Hill et al. provide a more systematic articulation

of the domains that inform such responsiveness. This alignment underscores PCK as a critical bridge between theoretical knowledge and practical teaching action.

In contrast, Grossman (1990) delineated four distinct domains of knowledge for educators or teachers: general pedagogical knowledge, subject-matter knowledge, PCK, and contextual knowledge. These particular domains of knowledge provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the multifaceted knowledge base required in the field of teaching. “The Grossman model shown in Figure 1 represents what is included in each knowledge domain and how they are related to each other”.

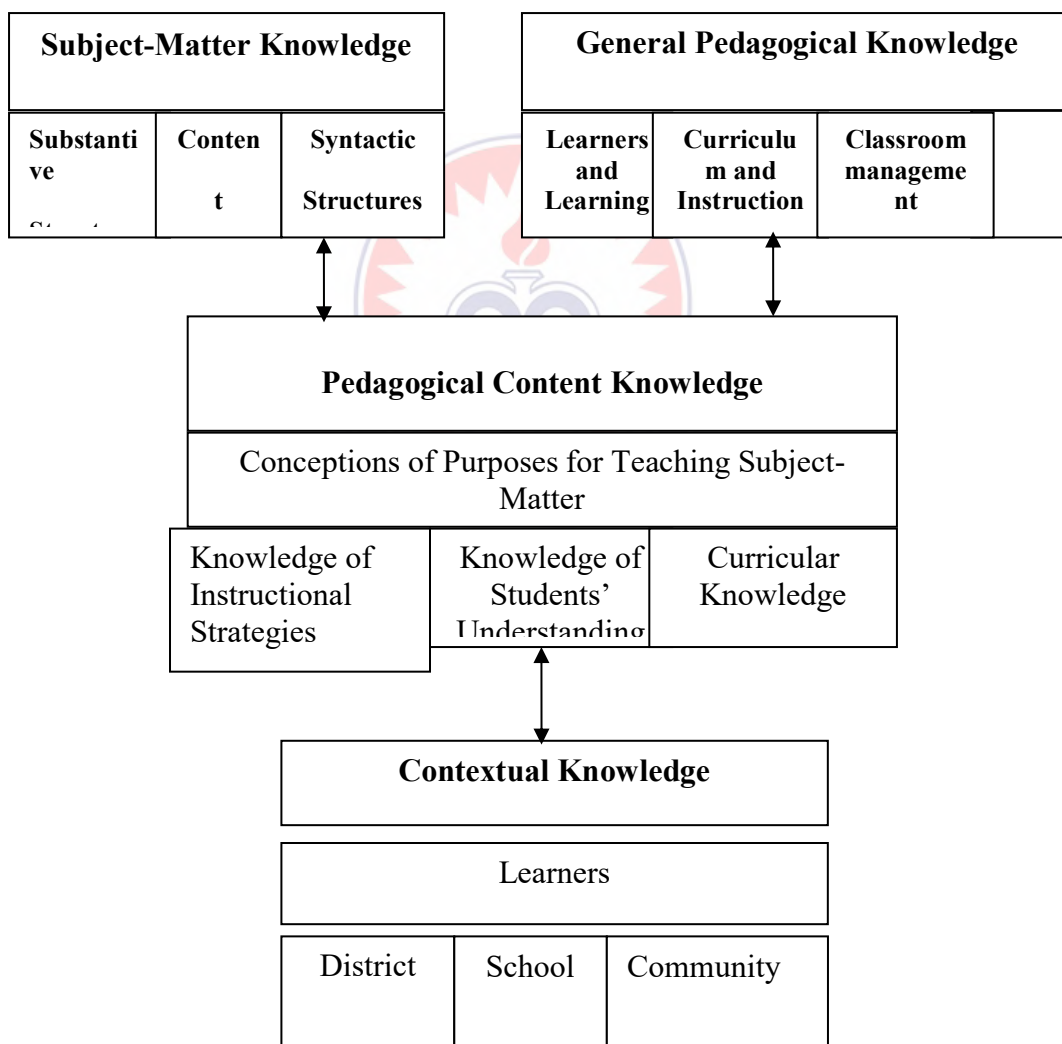


Figure 1: Model of teacher knowledge Adapted from (Neumann et al., 2019)

According to Neumann et al. (2019), “the Grossman model proposed that PCK is composed of four central components. This model identified “the first component as

knowledge and beliefs about the purposes for teaching a subject at different grade levels”. The Grossman model noted that “knowledge of students’ understanding, conceptions, and misconceptions of particular topics in a subject is a component of PCK”. Moreover, the model made it clear that “knowledge of curriculum materials available for teaching particular subject-matter and knowledge of instructional strategies and representations for teaching particular topics are components of PCK”.

Based on their study with pre-tertiary teachers, Berry et al. (2016) suggested three distinct conceptualisations for the construct of PCK which indicates multifaceted nature of this key educational concept. In the first place, according to Berry et al. (2016), PCK is rooted in subject-matter knowledge. This implies that “the transition from subject-matter knowledge to PCK is achieved through transforming a particular piece of content to make it comprehensible for specific learners”. Secondly, they proposed that “PCK is primarily derived from general pedagogical knowledge, which pre-service teachers acquire from courses where they learn about students’ learning processes and teaching strategies”. However, to Berry et al. (2016), “teachers have to apply those ideas to particular content and particular students when they are teaching”. Thirdly, “PCK is derived from the combination of subject-matter knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge or from previous construction of PCK”. To them, “teachers make decisions about what learning activities and teaching strategies to use when teaching a particular topic by depending on their previous experiences with teaching that topic”.

Similarly, Hix (2008) and Kankam and Abroampa (2016) conceptualised “PCK as the subset of content knowledge that has particular utility for planning and conducting lessons that facilitate student learning”. In fact, Kankam and Abroampa delineated “pedagogical content knowledge as the knowledge base including, but not limited to,

useful representations and analogies, clarifying examples and counterexamples, and connections among ideas”. Hence, Kankam and Abroampa, and Hix noted that “PCK is content knowledge that is useful for teaching”.

In his discourse, Lee (2007) examined the term pedagogical content knowledge via the lenses of structural and post-structural perspectives. Lee stated that through the lens of a structural perspective, “PCK is a form of teacher knowledge distinct from other forms and defined by its relationship to those forms”. Lee delineated the multifaceted nature of teacher knowledge into five domains such as knowledge about general educational context, knowledge about specific educational context, general pedagogical knowledge, subject-matter knowledge, and PCK. He emphasized that “from a structural point of view PCK is established through its relationship to and difference from other knowledge domains”. On the contrary, the other perspective, post-structuralists rejects “the view of knowledge that is fixed and systematic”. Post-structuralists think that “knowledge might be formed in a different way in each new educational context”. A post-structural view also “accepts that definitions of PCK may vary with respect to who defines it; that is, the definition of PCK may not be the same for a Social Studies teacher or a Social Studies teacher”. Therefore, “the main criticism by the post-structuralist of the structural approach is that the structuralist represents knowledge as fixed and external to teachers and students and disregards the relationship between power and knowledge”.

Gess-Newsome (2013) “classified views about the nature of PCK under two models namely: the integrative model and the transformative model”. This model of PCK is shown in Figure 2. In this perspective, Gess-Newsome stated that “the integrative model is based on the idea that PCK is not a separate knowledge domain for teachers; rather, it emerges as an integration of subject matter knowledge, pedagogy, and

context during the act of teaching”. Further, in terms of integrative model, Gess-Newsome conceived teaching as “the presentation of content to students using appropriate forms of instruction. The task of the teacher in that model is to integrate subject-matter, pedagogy, and context in accordance with the purpose of the lesson to create effective learning opportunities for the students”. However, “the integration depends on the purpose of the lesson; therefore, teachers should integrate all types of knowledge specifically for each topic taught”. Within the framework of the integrative model, expertise in teaching is characterized by the possession of meticulously structured individual knowledge repositories, coupled with the capacity for seamless transitions between these repositories. This fluid movement across knowledge bases is an indicative of a high level of expertise in the teaching domain.

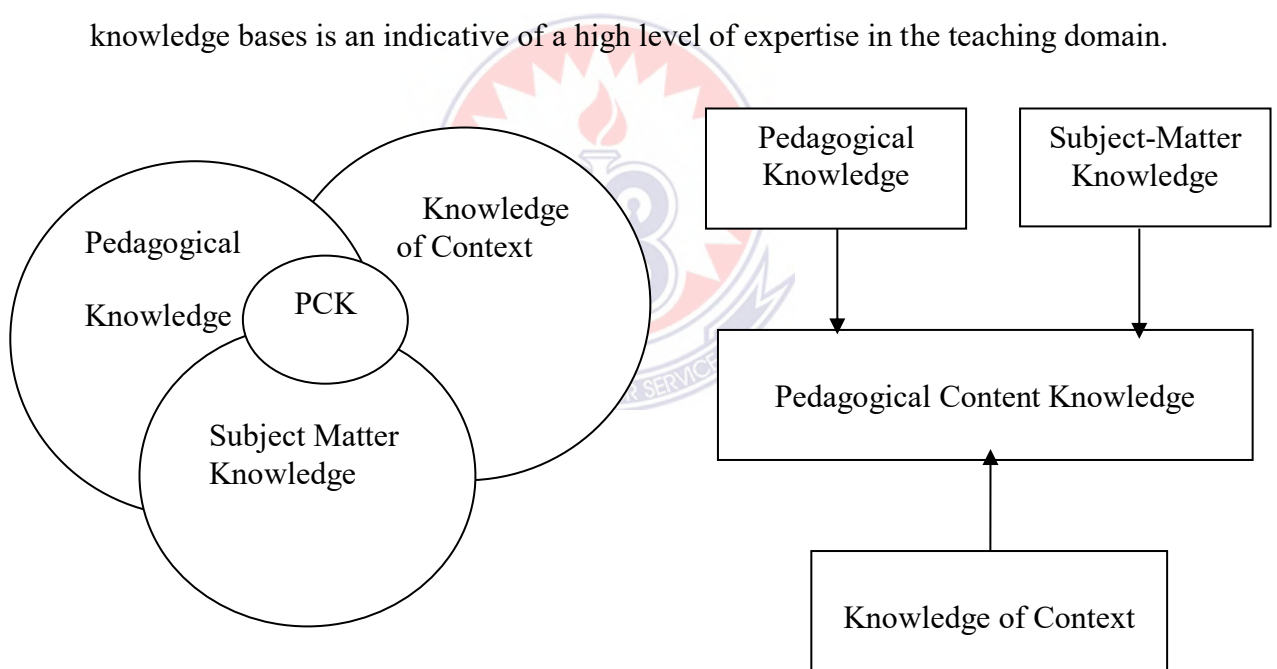


Figure 2: Integrative and Transformative Models of Teacher Knowledge

adapted from Gess-Newsome (2013, p. 13).

According to Gess-Newsome (2013), the transformative model is the second model for PCK. In this transformative model, Gess-Newsome conceived PCK as a synthesized knowledge base for teaching. It is accepted that “knowledge bases for subject-matter, pedagogy and context exist, but they are useful only when transformed

into pedagogical content knowledge”. Also, within the framework of the transformative model, the effective teaching is grounded on the premise that teachers possess a well-structured and easily accessible body of PCK that spans all the topics they teach. This comprehensive understanding is instrumental in aiding effective teaching practices.

In the context of teacher education, the integrative and transformative models have distinct implications for knowledge-based instruction. The integrative model suggests that knowledge bases can be taught separately or together, emphasizing the role of teaching experiences in fostering the growth, selection, integration, and application of these knowledge bases. On the other hand, the transformative model promotes a holistic approach, proposing that knowledge bases are most effectively taught when integrated. It also highlights that teaching experiences facilitate the development, selection, and use of PCK. The comparison between these two models provides valuable insights into the pedagogical strategies that can be used in teacher preparation programmes.

Furthermore, Gess-Newsome (2013) has delineated the potential pitfalls associated with both the integrative and transformative models. This critical analysis provides a nuanced understanding of the challenges inherent in these pedagogical approaches. In the integrative model, for instance, “teachers may fail to see the importance of content over pedagogy, and they may pay little attention to content structure or contextual factors”. In the case of transformative model, “teachers may ignore context but focus on some common teaching practices that exist for given topics and are specific to grade level”. However, Gess-Newsome strategically situated herself at the intersection of these two polarities, acknowledging the existence of knowledge bases pertaining to subject matter, pedagogy, and context. She further emphasized their

symbiotic interplay with PCK, thereby enriching our understanding of this complex educational construct. Gess-Newsome (2013, p.13) “stated that PCK is a unique domain that does not totally subsume all other knowledge, allowing for distinctions within and across domains”. She acknowledged that the acquisition of new knowledge gained through teacher education programmes and practical teaching experiences, serves to enhance the profundity of PCK. This recognition underscores the pivotal role of continuous learning and experiential engagement in the enrichment of PCK.

In their seminal work, Saeli et al. (2011) delineated the various sources of PCK and elucidated their interrelationships. They proposed a model that encapsulates the interaction between PCK and other domains of knowledge. Their theoretical framework posits that PCK is informed by a multitude of factors, including knowledge of pedagogy, knowledge of learners and learning processes, knowledge of the curriculum, content knowledge, knowledge of specific contexts, and knowledge or insights into instructional issues. Moreover, their model graphically represents the dynamic interactions among these domains of knowledge, thereby offering a comprehensive view of the multifaceted nature of PCK.

In their endeavour to apply PCK to both teaching practice and teacher preparation, Gray et al. (2022) proposed a revised conceptualization of PCK, grounded in a constructivist perspective of learning and instruction. Rather than concentrating solely on the transformation of understanding subject matter knowledge, which could imply that PCK is merely a novel form of traditional subject matter knowledge; Gray et al. (2022) expanded the definition of PCK. They posited that it transcends being merely a new form of content knowledge and instead constitutes an amalgamation of four integral components: knowledge of students, knowledge of environmental contexts,

the knowledge of subject matter, and the knowledge of pedagogy. This nuanced understanding underscores the multifaceted nature of PCK in the realm of education.

Turner (2013) has proposed an evolved model of PCK. Contrary to Shulman's assertion that PCK is simply a fusion of subject matter knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge, Turner contends that the construct of PCK is more complex and nuanced. She breaks new ground by using the term "PCK to describe the overall knowledge bases of the teacher" and incorporating different knowledge domains because she insists "that PCK is an amalgam of various knowledge bases":

"There are a number of key ideas which need to be grasped for a full understanding of pedagogical content knowledge. These are: the key notion of representation, which might be said to be the summation of all the knowledge bases in action; the idea of knowledge bases as interacting sets; the idea that sometimes only some of the knowledge bases work together; the idea that in an expert act of teaching, all of the knowledge bases are present in the amalgam; and the idea that the knowledge bases are the submerged "nine-tenths of the iceberg" (Turner, 2013, p.125).

Consequently, Turner (2013) identified eleven distinct domains of knowledge within the comprehensive framework of PCK. This categorization provides a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of PCK.

Compared with the prior models proposed by other researchers, Turner's model includes comprehensive knowledge sources to demonstrate a fuller, richer and deeper conceptualization of PCK. Among those additional sources, knowledge of self as teachers becomes manifest because it comprises both personal and professional senses to help teachers better understand the nature of their profession. Elbaz (2018) regards knowledge of self as one of the essential knowledge bases for teaching, which is also found in some of the earlier studies (Gravemeijer & van Eerde, 2009; Turner, 2013; Hussain, & Mahmood, 2010). Therefore, she provides a new paradigm of how those knowledge bases interact and intermesh in the processes of teaching with a

comprehensive and complicated map particularly valuable for illuminating expert teachers' teaching. She claims that it is in this PCK that expert teachers' expertise is best seen, which implies that it is the integrative nature of teacher knowledge that constitutes expertise in teaching. Therefore, Turner (2013) maintains that PCK becomes an integration of various knowledge domains that is crucial to instruction. Thus, it is argued that all of these knowledge bases are essential for the most expert teaching, which demonstrates PCK in its most comprehensive form (Turner, 2013).

Meanwhile, Tsui (2003, p. 47) proposes a similar notion on the basis of her critical review of the literature and her case studies of four second language teachers' professional development in Hong Kong by explicitly stating that PCK is "not a knowledge domain separate from other teacher knowledge domains, but rather is an integrated body of knowledge". The specific nature of PCK is elaborated by Tsui (2003, p. 59) as:

I would argue that pedagogical content knowledge, which is central to the teaching act, is an integrated and coherent whole. This kind of knowledge is situated and practical because it is closely tied to the specific context of the classroom and is embodied in teachers' classroom practices.

To her, teachers' PCK "is embodied in the act of teaching" with two intertwined dimensions: "the management of learning and the enactment of the curriculum in the classroom" (Tsui, 2003, p.66). The former refers to "how the classroom should be organised and managed in order that student learning will be maximised" while the latter refers to "the effective representation of the subject matter being taught". When comparing these two latest publications on PCK, it is found that both Turner (2013) and Tsui (2003), though their wording differs slightly across the geographical and cultural variations, coincidentally share exactly the same understanding of the nature of PCK as integration.

Although there are a variety of the views about what constitutes PCK in the literature, all of the scholars cited here agree that PCK interacts in some way with other knowledge domains. Many researchers agree that PCK includes knowledge of subject-matter, knowledge of pedagogy, and knowledge of learners (Gess-Newsome et al., 2019; An et al., 2004; Shulman, 2013; Yusof & Zakaria, 2010; Kind & Chan, 2019; Neumann et al., 2019; Bailie, 2017).

Since the inception of pedagogical content knowledge, scholars have worked on the concept and consequently the concept of PCK has been interpreted in multiple ways according to different scholars and research agendas, each pointing to a different quality, characteristic, context, attribute, behaviour, among others (Park & Oliver, 2008). In spite of the disagreement on its definition, the blending of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge in the context of facilitating student learning is the key to conceptualizing PCK (Park & Oliver, 2008; Jong et al., 2005).

A particularly persuasive way of defining PCK is to identify central components constituting PCK based on researchers' beliefs, experiences, or empirical studies. Although educational scholars have not yet fully reached a consensus on components comprising PCK, they agree that in order for teachers to effectively plan and enact instruction for a certain group of students in a particular context they should be able to integrate the PCK components into in a coherent way (Loughran et al., 2012; Jong et al., 2005). Research indicates that these components interact in highly complex ways (Park & Oliver, 2008), and a coherent integration among them is critical to PCK development and further changes in practice (Gray et al., 2022; Davis et al., 2008).

According to Jong et al. (2005), PCK is a construct that is surrounded by the knowledge of the subject matter, general pedagogical knowledge, and contextual knowledge. Park and Oliver (2008) identified five components of PCK as orientations

of teaching science, knowledge of students' understanding in science, knowledge of science curriculum, knowledge of instructional strategies and representations, and knowledge of assessment of science learning. Davis et al. (2011) viewed these components imperative because they work together to help teachers represent specific subject matter in ways that make it comprehensible to students. Bozkurt and Nafiz (2008) viewed PCK as the knowledge base required for teaching and comprising subject matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. They expanded these to show three main components, that is, knowledge of the curriculum, knowledge of learning difficulties of students and knowledge of instructional strategies and activities.

Koehler and Mishra (2009) posited that there are obviously several knowledge systems that are essential to teaching, as well as knowledge of student thinking and learning, and knowledge of subject matter. Koehler and Mishra identified knowledge of student thinking and learning, and knowledge of subject matter as components of PCK.

Wongsopawiro et al. (2017) classified PCK into four components: overarching conception of teaching, subject knowledge of instructional strategies and representations, knowledge of students' understanding and potential understanding and knowledge of curriculum and curriculum materials. However, Hanuscin et al. (2011), based on science context, distinguished PCK's components into five, including science curriculum, students' understanding of specific science topics, assessment, instructional strategies, and the teachers' orientation toward science teaching context. Yet, within the same context, Veal and Makinster (2011) viewed it in another way. Veal and Makinster categorized pedagogical content knowledge's components into ten categories: "context, environment, nature of the subject,

assessment, pedagogy, curriculum, socio-culture, classroom management, knowledge of students, and content knowledge”.

According to Park and Chen (2012), Grossman model organized pedagogical content knowledge components into four, namely, “conception of purposes for teaching subject matter, knowledge of students understanding, curricular knowledge, and knowledge of instructional strategies”. Among these four components, “conceptions and purposes for teaching subject matter” is the most important PCK component as it reflects the goal of teaching. This component, in the words of Grossman, refers to “knowledge and beliefs about the purpose for teaching a specific subject at different grade levels” (Park, & Chen, 2012). However, Grossman’s PCK components which is widely cited in PCK research, is also widely criticized as being static and independent elements. According to Alonzo et al. (2012), the static or independent view of PCK components is of little significance to teachers, for PCK components do not exist separately but rather interact and integrate when comparing PCK. This therefore means that effective teaching in Social Studies at all levels of education will occur if teachers integrate all PCK components and apply them to their specific teaching environments.

According to Lee (2007), PCK is a form of teacher knowledge and it includes four general knowledge domains namely; general education context, specific education context, general pedagogical knowledge, and subject matter knowledge. It follows therefore that to attain an understanding of Social Studies education as well as the development of Social Studies knowledge while taking into consideration the needs of diverse groups of learners, teachers will have to display differentiated and integrated knowledge domains to effectively design and guide learning experiences. This implies that for Social Studies tutors to be able to teach effectively, they need to have a deep

PCK about Social Studies education which will enable them to coordinate all the aspects that influence instruction for effective learning to take place and enhance students' achievement.

In view of Shulman (1987), the components of PCK comprise first, knowledge of the specific subject matter; second, knowledge of instructional strategies; third, knowledge of learners' conceptions; and fourth, an understanding of what makes the learning of a specific topic difficult or easy for learners. Shulman's fifth category of teachers' knowledge bases which is curriculum knowledge, involves awareness of how topics are arranged both within a school year and over a given longer period and ways of using curriculum resources, such as textbooks, to organise a programme of study for students.

An et al. (2004) pointed out that PCK has three components:

1. Knowledge of content
2. Knowledge of curriculum
3. Knowledge of teaching

An et al. (2004) are of the opinion that knowledge of content and curriculum knowledge are of great importance to knowledge of teaching because teacher's subject matter which is the knowledge of content plus the content given in the syllabus will produce effective teaching and learning. An et al. (2004) were of the same view with Shulman (2013) and they accept that content knowledge is the core component of PCK. In Social Studies, for example, its content deals with such distillate knowledge, development of attitudes, values and skills that are essential in solving the problems of the individual's survival in a given community. This means that what can rightly be called Social Studies would centre on issues, questions and problems of the individual's survival in the society and the development of positive

mind and skills towards their solutions. To be able to achieve this requires the teacher deep understands about the subject and his/her right approach to the teaching of the content as prescribed to him/her.

Pedagogical content knowledge, which is the heart of this study, is an amalgam of a teacher's knowledge bases that Bailie (2017), Yusof and Zakaria (2010), Kind and Chan (2019), and Neumann et al. (2019) say includes:

1. knowledge of context, curriculum and assessment
2. knowledge of student learning
3. knowledge of instructional strategies and representations
4. Knowledge of student understanding about concepts

De Miranda (2008, p. 17) described pedagogical content knowledge as “the knowledge of three knowledge bases coming together to inform teacher practice: namely, subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and knowledge of context. Subject matter knowledge is described as knowledge that is unique to Social Studies teachers and separates, for example, a biology teacher from a scientist”. Since different versions of the definition of PCK exist, for the purpose of this study, Shulman's (2013) description of PCK which was adopted as its theoretical framework in which he sees it as an amalgam of a teacher's knowledge base that includes:

1. Knowledge of the representation of subject matter for teaching
2. Knowledge of relevant instructional strategies/techniques of teaching
3. Knowledge of learners' conceptions (preconceptions and misconceptions).

This study focused on these three elements of PCK as mentioned earlier. This was consciously integrated when observing how effective Social Studies tutors displayed them when teaching Social Studies in their respective classes in CoEs. The choice of the three elements of PCK was influenced by the fact that they form the core of what

Shulman (2013) indicated as teachers' PCK that would enable them (the teachers) to transform the subject matter in such a way that their learners would be readily able to access the content. First, the teacher needs to have a good grasp of the subject matter (content knowledge) before being able to transform it. Second, the teacher needs a teaching technique or strategy to use to make the subject accessible to the learners. Third, the teacher needs to have an idea of possible learners' conceptions that the learners may have about the topic in order to prepare explanations that will help to eliminate or reinforce the conceptions as is necessary. Furthermore, studying the PCK elements that a teacher holds cannot be done in isolation of each of its other elements since PCK is an amalgam within a teacher's total knowledge base that is uniquely constructed by the individual teacher. It is the intersection of knowledge of pedagogy, knowledge of learners' conceptions and subject matter knowledge (Mishra & Koehler, 2006), and is thus individualistic.

These three elements of PCK in this study were also used by Winsor (2003) in a study involving an investigation of pre-service mathematics teachers' knowledge of functions where he regarded them (the three elements of PCK) analogously as the legs of "a three-legged stool". The seat of the stool represents the PCK and each one of the legs represents subject matter knowledge, knowledge of learners and knowledge of instructional strategies/techniques. It is reasoned that the seat needs equal support from each leg while the legs need help from the seat to stand firmly. They are interdependent in relation to each other, and can thus not be studied in isolation although each has its own characteristics and function.

2.3 Nature of Social Studies Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Pedagogical content knowledge is widely conceptualised as an “amalgam” form of knowledge that brings together subject matter and pedagogy in ways that make content accessible and meaningful to learners (Neumann et al., 2019). Rather than existing as discrete domains, content and pedagogy interact to shape how teachers represent ideas, anticipate learning difficulties and select instructional approaches that support understanding. This positions PCK as a critical determinant of classroom or teaching practice, particularly because it directly informs how subject matter is transformed into teachable and learnable forms. However, the literature also suggests that pedagogical content knowledge is not generic, its components must be identified and examined within specific subject contexts in order to be educationally useful.

According to Quartey (2011), Social Studies teachers need to possess the philosophy of the subject they teach and learning of students. The philosophy provides guidance and direction in choosing content, objectives, teaching and learning experience and nature of assessment. In order for students to get understanding of facts, concepts and generalisations taught in Social Studies to develop positive attitudes in them, their teachers need to have a strong PCK in Social Studies. This knowledge comes from Social Studies courses, educational courses, experience and professional development. This goes to support the view of the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS, 2001, p. 54) that the methods course for Social Studies teachers' preparation should focus on the “PCK that deals specifically with the nature of Social Studies and its ideas, strategies, and techniques for teaching Social Studies at the appropriate level”. The view of the NCSS (2001) is echoed by Neumann et al. (2019) by describing PCK as the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of

how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners.

Further elaboration of pedagogical content knowledge in Social Studies highlights its complexity. Ananga and Ayaaba (2004) contend that “comprehensive pedagogical content knowledge” in Social Studies includes knowledge of students’ prior understanding, common misconceptions, and the cognitive pathways through which students’ progress toward mastery. This view positions Social Studies teachers not merely as transmitters of content, but as diagnosticians of learning who must continually assess students’ understanding and respond instructionally. Effective PCK therefore encompasses assessment literacy and knowledge of instructional strategies, enabling teachers to connect new learning (ideas) to existing knowledge while addressing any misconceptions that may hinder learning.

Empirical and theoretical work also links PCK to instructional approaches commonly associated with Social Studies, such as inquiry-based and problem-solving methods. Parker and Heywood (2000) argue that “teachers need both deep content knowledge and mastery of teaching strategies” to facilitate meaningful interaction between learners and subject matter. Banks (2020) further notes that the success of problem-solving approaches depends heavily on teachers’ orientation toward such methods, as well as their understanding of learners and content. These arguments suggest that PCK is not only about knowing what to teach, but also about knowing when and how to employ particular strategies to support active learning.

However, the consequences of weak PCK are well documented. Kind and Chan (2019, p. 969) observe that “teachers with limited pedagogical content knowledge tend to rely on textbook paraphrasing or abstract explanations that fail to engage students meaningful”. This reinforces the idea that, Social Studies teachers who do

not possess the subject's PCK cannot ensure effective teaching as well as meaningful learning in their classroom. Related literature on teacher effectiveness supports this claim, with Stronge (2018) identifying teachers' knowledge of subject matter, pedagogical skills, attitude in the classroom, qualifications and experiences as key variables influencing students' academic achievement. In the context of Social Studies, Nind (2020) underscores that teachers' knowledge of subject matter has direct implications for content delivery and, ultimately, for whether students derive educational value from the subject.

2.4 Development of Tutors' Pedagogical Content Knowledge

By and large, the evolution of PCK can be conceptualised through three broad but overlapping ways of understanding how PCK develops: as "integration, invention, and refinement". While these perspectives are often treated separately, they emphasise different "dimensions of the same developmental process" rather than mutually exclusive pathways.

From an "integrative perspective", PCK development is understood as the progressive coordination of subject matter knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge. Fogal (2017) and Bostock (2019) argue that growth in PCK depends on how teachers interpret subject content and adapt their pedagogical knowledge to make that content teachable. In this view, development is not about acquiring entirely new knowledge but about strengthening the connections between existing knowledge domains. The analytical strength of this perspective lies in its attention to coherence: effective teaching emerges when teachers learn to align what they know about a subject with how they know to teach.

In contrast, the inventive perspective conceptualises PCK development as the generation of new, topic-specific knowledge. Hashweh (2005) frames PCK as teachers' accumulated memories of teaching experiences, arguing that repeated engagement with the same content allows teachers to construct new representations, analogies, and explanations. Here, "development is not simply integrative but creative". Teachers expand their PCK by responding to instructional challenges and devising novel ways to address student misunderstandings. This perspective highlights teacher agency and positions PCK as "knowledge that is actively produced through practice rather than passively accumulated".

A third group of scholars conceptualises PCK development as refinement, focusing on changes in the quality rather than the quantity of teachers' knowledge. Studies using analytic rubrics exemplify this approach. For example, Lee (2007) assessed student teachers' PCK by evaluating the "scientific accuracy and pedagogical effectiveness" of their instructional strategies, categorising PCK as limited, basic, or proficient. This perspective treats "development as movement along a continuum", where growth is evidenced by increased precision, appropriateness, and effectiveness of instructional decisions. While this approach offers clarity and measurability, it risks oversimplifying the complexity and contextual nature of PCK by reducing it to discrete levels.

Despite these differing emphases, the literature converges on several key 'claims about PCK development'. First, "PCK is not an innate characteristic," but a form of knowledge constructed through teaching practice (Kind, 2009). It develops through 'cycles of planning, instruction, reflection, and re-teaching' (Hashweh, 2005; Davis et al., 2008). Second, experience alone does not guarantee growth. "Development occurs when experience is accompanied by deliberate reflection", both during teaching

(reflection-in-action) and after instruction (reflection-on-action) (Chang, 2005; Hashweh, 2005). Third, ‘pedagogical content knowledge development is typically slow, uncertain, and non-linear’, often shaped through ‘trial-and-error in authentic classroom’ contexts (Okanlawon, 2012; Schneider & Plasman, 2011; Tal et al., 2006). These insights “collectively reinforce the view of PCK as dynamic, situated, and continuously evolving.

Although complex, PCK is not immune to purposeful development. A substantial body of research demonstrates that targeted inputs and interventions can support its growth (Jong et al., 2005; Rohaan et al., 2011; Rozenszajn & Yarden, 2014). However, this process is highly individualised and mediated by teachers’ personal, contextual, and professional characteristics (Adadan & Oner, 2014; Loughran et al., 2004). Teachers develop PCK through multiple, often intersecting pathways, and patterns of development vary across grade levels and teaching contexts (Appleton, 2008).

The literature further identifies a range of internal and external sources that contribute to PCK development. Internal sources include “reflection on classroom practice and prior learning experiences” (Park & Chen, 2012), while external sources encompass teacher education programmes (Jong et al., 2005), professional development activities (Tal et al., 2006), academic qualifications, and ‘professional communities’ (Aydın et al., 2014). Research by Mayne (2019) and Yesiltas (2016) suggests that well-qualified teachers are better positioned to design effective instruction, indirectly supporting the development of PCK. Additionally, “social interaction” plays a significant role, as collaborative dialogue with colleagues and mentors enables teachers to articulate, challenge, and refine their instructional thinking (Appleton, 2008; Nilsson & van Driel, 2010).

Drawing on this body of work, the present study adopts a “transformative” view of PCK development. PCK is conceptualised as an inventive process through which teachers transform subject matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge into a distinctive, topic-specific knowledge base. Development is understood not as linear accumulation, but as the ongoing construction of new understandings and teaching repertoires in response to instructional demands.

The following discussion examines key factors that shape this process, including subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, teaching experience, and emotional attributes. Although these factors are discussed separately for analytical clarity, they operate in interaction rather than isolation, collectively mediating the development of teachers’ PCK.

2.4.1 Subject Matter Knowledge

An in-depth and coherent understanding of subject matter is often identified as a necessary condition for the development of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). However, empirical research does not present a single, unified position on the extent or nature of this relationship. Instead, findings point to a more complex and nuanced interaction between subject matter knowledge and PCK, suggesting that content knowledge alone is insufficient to account for pedagogical expertise.

A substantial body of research nonetheless indicates that strong subject matter knowledge can meaningfully support the development of PCK, particularly by enhancing teachers’ capacity to anticipate and respond to students’ learning needs. For instance, Kapyła et al. (2009) found that content specialists demonstrated greater awareness of students’ conceptual difficulties and were more adept at identifying core learning concepts than their less knowledgeable counterparts. This suggests that

deeper content understanding enables teachers to recognise patterns in student thinking and to prioritise disciplinary ideas more effectively.

Similarly, Davis and Petish (2005), drawing on two interconnected studies of student teachers' instructional practices, argued that strong subject matter knowledge significantly enhanced the teachers' ability to design pedagogically appropriate instructional strategies. Their findings imply that content knowledge functions as an enabling resource, shaping how teachers interpret curricular goals and select teaching approaches. Collectively, these studies support the view that subject matter knowledge plays a critical, though not exclusive, role in the development of PCK, operating in interaction with other forms of professional knowledge rather than in isolation.

Subject matter knowledge also “appears to have a positive influence on many facets of pedagogical content knowledge”. In their investigation of the relationship between student teachers' subject matter knowledge and their topic-specific PCK for instructing about ozone, Bozkurt and Nafiz (2008) observed that “student teachers possessing strong subject matter knowledge demonstrated superior overall quality in the components of pedagogical content knowledge compared to those with weaker subject matter knowledge”. A plethora of related studies have underscored that deficiencies in subject matter knowledge can constrain teachers' topic-specific pedagogical content knowledge. For instance, “teacher-trainees harbouring misconceptions themselves often exhibit a lack of awareness and an inability to accurately anticipate students' misconceptions, thereby impacts their knowledge of students” (Halim & Meerah, 2002).

However, there is also a body of evidence suggesting that possessing strong subject matter knowledge does not necessarily guarantee the development of PCK (Kind, 2009). For instance, studies conducted by Davis and Petish (2005) indicate that “the instructional strategies and representations formulated by student teachers with strong subject matter knowledge can occasionally be flawed”. Further studies on novice teachers suggest that a strong grasp of subject matter knowledge can, in fact, impede the development of PCK (de Jong & van Driel, 2004; Nathan & Petrosino, 2003). Specifically, “it was discovered that pre-service teachers’ deep familiarity with the subject matter led to a lack of awareness of students’ potential difficulties in understanding the teaching materials and the possible misunderstandings that might arise from the students’ interpretation of their textbooks, thereby impacting their knowledge of students” (de Jong & van Driel, 2004). In a similar context, Kind (2009) highlighted the “conflicts” encountered by student teachers with strong subject matter knowledge when they are required to represent knowledge they perceive as “partially true”, due to their understanding of the “correct” scientific knowledge. This highlights the complex interplay between subject matter knowledge and PCK in the realm of education.

Interestingly, Kind (2009) suggested that, “rather counterintuitive role for low levels of subject matter knowledge with respect to PCK development”. Kind further reported that “a lack of sound subject matter knowledge actually drove the student teachers in her study work harder to prepare their lessons better and acquire PCK from experienced teachers; these teachers’ resulting PCK proved better than that of their counterparts with strong subject matter knowledge”. Some scholars have posited that a lesser degree of subject matter knowledge can have a beneficial impact on the development of PCK. This is predicated on the notion that teachers, when possessing

a knowledge level akin to that of their students, are better positioned to engage with the instructional materials from the students' perspective (Berry et al., 2016; Chang et al., 2020; Childs & McNicholl, 2007).

Continuing the discourse on the role of subject matter knowledge in the development of PCK, a segment of scholars posits that “the development of pedagogical content knowledge commences with the requisite subject matter knowledge, which subsequently undergoes transformation or integration with classroom experience to form pedagogical content knowledge” (Schneider & Plasma, 2011; Park & Chen, 2012; Loughran et al., 2004). Conversely, other researchers argue that the development of PCK does not necessarily originate from subject matter knowledge. For instance, in a series of studies focusing on the PCK of elementary science teachers, Appleton (2003) opined that “elementary teachers often construct their PCK from activities that work”. He discovered that when teachers implement these effective activities, their reflections on the relevant experience would engender PCK related to that activity (Appleton, 2003). Echoing this perspective, Davis and Petish (2005) suggested that PCK might develop from “real-world applications” rather than from subject matter knowledge. Given that these researchers were examining PCK among basic school teachers, who typically possess limited subject matter knowledge, their process of PCK development might be qualitatively distinct from that of Social Studies tutors.

2.4.2 Pedagogical Knowledge

Compared with subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge has received less focused attention in research on PCK development, resulting in an uneven and conceptually thin evidence base (Abell, 2013). While pedagogical knowledge is often assumed to accumulate naturally through classroom experience (Whitcomb, 2012;

Shulman, 2013), this assumption is not consistently supported by empirical work. In particular, Rollnick and Mavhunga's (2016) comparison of novice and experienced teachers suggests that pedagogical knowledge does not necessarily increase with time and may even regress. Collectively, these findings call into question the routine treatment of pedagogical knowledge as an automatic by-product of experience and point instead to its vulnerability as a component of PCK that may require deliberate development.

Despite disagreement over how pedagogical knowledge develops, there is relatively strong convergence around its importance for PCK growth (Friedrichsen et al., 2011; Hanuscin, 2013; Hanuscin et al., 2011; Loughran et al., 2004). Across these studies, pedagogical knowledge functions less as a discrete body of techniques and more as an organising framework that shapes instructional decision-making. For example, the capacity to "manage lesson" flow and respond to student thinking appears to create conditions under which teachers can refine both content understanding and topic-specific PCK during instruction (Kind, 2009; Rollnick et al., 2008). However, while these studies clearly demonstrate an enabling role, they offer limited insight into "how such mediation occurs in practice", leaving the mechanisms of this relationship under-specified.

Research on experienced teachers further complicates linear accounts of PCK development by emphasising the adaptive use of pedagogical knowledge. Hanuscin et al. (2011) showed that experienced teachers draw on established strengths in general instructional strategies and knowledge of learners when teaching unfamiliar content. Rather than replacing existing pedagogical knowledge, teachers appeared to "repurpose" it in response to new instructional demands. This finding is significant because it suggests that growth in PCK may depend less on the accumulation of new

knowledge than on the capacity to “rework existing pedagogical resources”, a possibility that is not fully addressed in stage-based or experience-driven models of teacher development.

The constraining effects of limited pedagogical knowledge are particularly evident in studies of novice teachers. Mulholland and Wallace’s (2005) longitudinal case study illustrates how weaknesses in classroom management and instructional planning restricted opportunities to develop topic-specific representations and responses to student misconceptions. While this single case cannot be generalised, it nonetheless provides a detailed account of how insufficient pedagogical knowledge can shape the early trajectory of PCK development. In this sense, pedagogical knowledge appears not merely to influence the pace of PCK growth, but to delimit what forms of PCK are possible in the early stages of teaching.

The relationship between pedagogical knowledge and specific components of PCK is further evident in studies of instructional strategy development. Boz and Boz (2008) found that student teachers drew on general pedagogical principles, such as the use of visualisation, to design topic-specific strategies for teaching abstract concepts like the particulate nature of matter. What is notable in this study is not simply that pedagogical knowledge informs instructional choices, but that teachers actively translate general principles into content-specific forms. This translation process, while implied, remains largely unexplored in the literature.

Although there is growing agreement that sophisticated PCK does not emerge in isolation, the field has yet to reach consensus on how pedagogical knowledge contributes to this integration (Abell, 2013; Friedrichsen et al., 2011; Hanuscin et al., 2011). Claims that PCK develops through the interaction of fragmented topic-specific knowledge and general pedagogical understanding are persuasive, but often rest on

inferred rather than directly examined processes. As a result, pedagogical knowledge is “frequently acknowledged as an active ingredient” in PCK development without being examined in sufficient empirical detail. Addressing this limitation requires closer attention to how pedagogical knowledge is “drawn on, adapted, and transformed as teachers develop PCK in practice.

2.4.3 Teaching Experience

The significance of teaching experience as a pivotal determinant in the development of PCK is widely acknowledged. However, a common oversight in this discourse is the lack of differentiation between the impacts of general teaching experience and subject-specific teaching experience. Intriguingly, the profound influence of teaching experience on the development of PCK is frequently illuminated through investigations centred on novice teachers, thereby underscoring the paradoxical nature of this relationship. This highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of the role of teaching experience in shaping PCK.

A multitude of independent research focusing on novice teachers posits that teachers possessing extensive subject matter knowledge are often only able to develop a minimal degree of PCK during their initial forays into teaching new concepts or topics (Friedrichsen et al., 2011; Lee, 2007). The incipient development of their PCK is frequently impeded by various deterrents, including their deficient pedagogical knowledge and subpar emotional attributes (Melville et al., 2008; Davis et al., 2011). For instance, Friedrichsen et al. (2011) conducted a comparative analysis of the topic-specific PCK of student teachers, both with and without prior teaching experience, in the absence of an educative curriculum and reflective teacher education programmes. Their findings suggest that, even among teachers endowed with subject matter knowledge, mere teaching experience does not ensure the development of topic-

specific PCK. Instead, it merely facilitates the integration of general pedagogical knowledge. Further assertions indicate that “novice teachers necessitate several years of classroom teaching experience before their PCK can fully mature, thereby implying the significant role of experience in the development of teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge” (Kind, 2009; Jang et al., 2009).

2.4.4 Emotional attributes

Kind (2009) elucidated two pivotal emotional attributes that bolster the development of PCK, specifically, self-confidence and a nurturing learning environment. A high degree of “self-confidence in teaching a particular concept or topic appears to expedite the growth of topic-specific pedagogical content knowledge. For instance, Kind (2009) noted that student teachers exhibiting “super-confidence” demonstrated an enhanced cognizance of the necessity to adapt their subject matter knowledge for instructional purposes and to ensure effective student learning, even when delivering their “subject matter or content” beyond their specialization. In contrast, the teaching flexibility of ‘anxious’ trainee teachers is observed to be restricted. The relationship between the level of self-confidence and level of subject matter knowledge is particularly pronounced in studies involving elementary teachers, who are frequently found to exhibit low levels of emotional confidence in teaching when their subject matter knowledge is deficient (Rice & Roychoudhury, 2003; Shallcross et al., 2002). As per Appleton (2008), minimal development of PCK can be anticipated among teachers with low levels of emotional confidence, underscoring the critical role of emotional attributes in PCK development.

The existence of a supportive environment is deemed critical in catalysing the growth of PCK. This aligns with the situated perspective of teacher learning (Putnam & Borko, 2000), which posits that PCK is constructed through social interactions within

the teaching workplace (Childs & McNicholl, 2007; Childs et al., 2013; McNicholl et al., 2013), and can be disseminated and shared across the community. For instance, in their exploration of the PCK development of teachers in England, where teachers are frequently required to teach beyond their subject specialization, McNicholl et al. (2013) found that teachers leveraged the expertise of colleagues from diverse subject backgrounds as a resource for their own PCK application. It was also observed that PCK was disseminated through social interaction, as well as through teaching schemes and analogous artefacts. A supportive environment conducive to the development of PCK encompasses elements such as a safe work environment and a shared physical space for meeting and sharing (Childs et al., 2013; McNicholl et al., 2013).

Intriguingly, Kind (2009) observed that student teachers tend to solicit assistance less frequently when instructing within their area of specialization compared to when they are teaching outside their specialization. This phenomenon could be attributed to the perception that seeking help within their specialization may be construed as a sign of weakness, given the expectation that teachers should possess comprehensive knowledge of their respective subjects. This underscores the complex dynamics between subject specialization, perceived competence, and the willingness to seek help in the context of teaching.

The development of PCK is often a protracted and uncertain process, as evidenced by the work of Tal et al. (2006) and van Driel and Berry (2010). In the realm of professional development and teacher education, various interventions have been proposed to expedite this process. One such intervention, as suggested by Rollnick et al. (2013), involves the enhancement of teachers' subject matter knowledge,

predicated on the assumption that a reciprocal relationship exists between the improvement of PCK and the refinement of subject matter knowledge.

Another prevalent approach involves the active engagement of teachers, often in collaborative environments, in the exploration of topic-specific instructional strategies and/or students' conceptions/reasoning. This could involve providing teachers with opportunities to discuss instructional materials such as textbook sessions (de Jong & van Driel, 2004), to analyse students' learning difficulties and conceptions (Jong et al., 2005; Loughran et al., 2004), or "to examine content-specific teaching cases" (Heller et al., 2012; Veal, & Makinster, 2011).

Promoting teachers' reflection on their own practical experience is another strategy they employed. As noted by Mensah (2020), engaging in reflective practice allows teacher to identify strengths and areas for improvement, fostering a cycle of continuous learning and adaptation. Additionally, recent researches have indicated that teachers who engage in regular reflection and seek feedback from peers and mentors demonstrate significant improvements in their teaching effectiveness (Afari-Yankson, 2021; Gyamfi, 2020). This can be achieved through the use of videos (Nilsson & Loughran, 2012), the encouragement of reflective journal writing (de Jong & van Driel, 2004), or the involvement of teachers in the construction of teaching cases (Heller et al., 2012; Loughran & Berry, 2011). The provision of relevant resources, such as "educational research articles" (Jong et al., 2005) and "educative curriculum" (Gess-Newsome et al., 2019; Schneider & Krajcik, 2002), can also aid teachers in the application of their PCK.

In recent years, several independent PCK research groups (Aydin et al., 2014; Hume & Berry, 2013; Rollnick & Mavhunga, 2016; Nilsson & Loughran, 2012; Williams et al., 2012) have converged on the idea of "using the PCK construct itself as a

metacognitive device to promote PCK development”. This has led to the formulation of various strategies, including the deliberate introduction of the notion of PCK or the use of PCK eliciting questions to guide lesson planning and/or reflection. These scholars posit that making the concept of PCK explicit to teachers would facilitate their PCK development. It is therefore crucial to discuss the tutors’ subject matter knowledge.

2.5 Social Studies Tutors’ Content Knowledge

Research consistently reports that Social Studies teachers place a high value on subject matter knowledge, often positioning it as a necessary condition for effective teaching (Margot & Kettler, 2019). While this emphasis is understandable given the “interpretive and content-heavy” nature of the discipline, it rests on the assumption that strong content knowledge is sufficient to ensure instructional accuracy and meaningful student engagement. Teachers frequently equate mastery of subject matter with the ability to respond confidently to “student questions and to clarify complex concepts” (Crocco & Marino, 2017). What is less clear, however, is whether this “confidence translates into pedagogical practices” that genuinely support higher-order learning. Although tutors link subject matter expertise to the development of critical thinking and to students’ capacity to connect historical events with contemporary issues, the literature tends to assert this relationship rather than examine it empirically. Consequently, content knowledge is repeatedly foregrounded as essential, but its role in shaping instruction remains conceptually assumed rather than analytically demonstrated.

One of the three elements of PCK identified for this study is subject matter knowledge (content knowledge). According to Aksu and Kul (2016), Shulman defined content knowledge as the knowledge about the subject, for example, Social Studies and its

structure. Content knowledge is teachers' knowledge about the subject matter to be learned or taught and the content to be covered at school as the curriculum or syllabus specifies. As Neumann et al. (2019) noted, this knowledge includes an understanding of concepts, which Bhuttah et al. (2019) describe as “complex systems of highly abstract experiences across a variety of context”. In Social Studies, concepts such as “democracy”, “environment”, “marriage” and “lesson planning” abound in the 4-year Bachelor of Education (B. Ed) curriculum for CoEs in Ghana. Again, in Social Studies, concepts are taught in these ways;

- 1) When an important concept is unknown or known only in a narrow context, the teacher can supply or extend it by applying it to familiar instances and as concrete as possible.
- 2) The class can be asked to supply example from their own background. For instance, in learning concept of “family”, the child can say, some families live in compound houses, others live in apartments.
- 3) The teacher can, when necessary, help children learn words or terms to apply to other concepts.
- 4) The Social Studies teacher can do something about empty or erroneous concepts held by children and polish them up.

Other subject matter includes theories, ideas, organisational frameworks, knowledge of evidence and proof, as well as established practices and approaches toward developing such knowledge. Knowledge and the nature of inquiry differ greatly between fields, and teachers should understand the deeper knowledge as fundamentals of the disciplines in which they teach.

Arguably, depth and breadth of content knowledge are fundamental to the effectiveness of Social Studies tutors. As noted by Shulman (2013), content knowledge encompasses understanding the structure of the subject matter, which includes substantive knowledge and syntactic knowledge. Substantive knowledge refers to the key facts, concepts, and theories of the discipline, while syntactic knowledge pertains to the rules of evidence and ways of reasoning within the subject. The depth of content knowledge allows teachers to present the material more effectively, facilitating student engagement and comprehension (Demir & Pismek, 2018). This dual focus shapes their instructional strategies and interactions with students. Also, the depth of content knowledge involves a thorough grasp of the subject's concepts, principles, and structures. According to Ball et al. (2008) and Maba (2017), "teachers with strong content knowledge are better equipped to address student misconceptions and provide deeper insights into the subject matter". This implies that teachers who perceive their subject matter knowledge as robust are better positioned to present the material confidently and accurately. Teachers will be empowered to identify the foundational ideas that students must grasp and build upon them effectively (Ball et al., 2008; Maba, 2017).

One of the aspects of a highly-qualified teacher from the "No Child Left Behind Act" is to be knowledgeable in content of the subject taught. The United States Department of Education (2004, p. 4) states, "teachers in the middle and high school must prove that they know the subject they teach with a major in the subject they teach". However, Ahtee and Johnston (2006) show that a lack in subject matter knowledge can lead to teaching difficulties. The cost of teachers having an inadequate content related knowledge base can be quite prohibitive; students can develop and retain

epistemologically incorrect conceptions about and within the content area (Menz et al., 2021).

According to Hill et al. (2005), many professional development activities are aimed at improving content knowledge because evidence has shown that teacher knowledge in the subject area can strongly influence student learning. This implies that Social Studies tutors' knowledge of the subject content or subject matter will influence teacher-trainees learning at the tertiary level of education.

One aspect of the subject matter of Social Studies is the nature of the subject. This comprises the meaning, scope, goals and objectives of Social Studies. The discipline, Social Studies, over the years, has lacked consensus in a definite meaning and definition by Social Studies scholars. Quartey (2011) shares in this view by saying "the question of defining Social Studies has plagued the field of Social Studies since its inception in 1916". Similarly, Eshun (2020) and Nyantakyi et al. (2020) indicated that the field of Social Studies is caught up with ambiguity, inconsistency and contradiction that represent a complex educational enigma which defies any final definition acceptable to all.

Defining Social Studies is not an easy task: it is encumbered by a confounding history, conflicting conceptual ideas and strong ideological divergence in both political and educational philosophy. Even the question of whether Social Studies is a singular or plural term has political overtones.

Singular suggesting the field is an integrated study of social knowledge and plural suggesting it is a collection of several separately defined subjects. More important, the several definitions of Social Studies cover a political educational gamut from right-wing conservative traditional (Zevin, 2015). Some writers define Social Studies in the

form of integration. Eshun (2020) and Nyantakyi et al. (2020) state that, “Social Studies is an integration of experience concerning human relations for the purpose of citizenship education”. Similarly, the African Social and Environmental Studies Programme sees Social Studies as “the integration of purpose of promoting and practising effective problem solving, promoting citizenship skills in social, political and economic issues and problems” (Farisi, 2016).

Heafner and Fitchett (2012) share similar view by defining Social Studies as the integration of knowledge, skills, and processes that provide powerful learning in the humanities and social sciences for the purpose of helping children learn to be good problem solvers and wise decision makers. Viewed from modern perspective, Mehta (2022) defines Social Studies as an integrated approach to the study of the social sciences subjects and other related subjects like music, art and craft with the view of preparing students to fit into a society. Moreover, Ghana Education Service (GES, 2007, p.3) defines Social Studies as “an integrated body of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will help the pupils develop a broader perspective of Ghana and the world”.

The official definition by the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) (2010) contains a strong inter-disciplinary focus with the aim of solving social problems. It states that Social Studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence within the school programme. To NCSS, because civic issues such as health care and crime are multi-disciplinary in nature, understanding these issues require multi-disciplinary education and Social Studies is one of the subjects in GES that is multi-dimensional in nature. This depicts that within the school programme, Social Studies provides coordinated and a systematic study drawing upon disciplines such as Anthropology, Archaeology, Economics,

Geography, History, Law, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Religion and Sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, Mathematics and Natural Sciences” (National Council for Social Studies, 2010).

Ogunyemi (2006) submits that “Social Studies is the study of the dynamic interactions people have with themselves as well as the elements of their environments. With these definitions, Social Studies could be seen as a discipline dealing with the study of human behaviour and human institutions which aim at helping the people understand the cultural values of the society in which they live. It is a problem-solving discipline in a multicultural society as it is used in making informed and reasoned decisions for progress and development in the society”.

The distinctiveness of Social Studies as a discipline is underscored by its encompassing nature, integrating a multitude of fields of study. This integrative characteristic necessitates a critical examination of social issues, thereby fostering a culture of thoughtfulness among students. The process of integration equips students with a diverse skill set, encompassing inquiry, investigation, and discovery, and actively engages them in the pedagogical process or teaching and learning process.

An examination of the existing literature delineates a tripartite perspective on the scope that constitutes the content of Social Studies. The concept of scope is defined as the process of selecting and sequentially arranging subject matter within the school curriculum. Certain scholars delineate the scope of the subject based on the disciplines that contribute to the content of the Social Studies curriculum. Alternatively, some authors articulate the scope from the vantage point of the environments (or communities) that are studied in a concentric manner. A third group of scholars construe the scope in terms of areas deemed pertinent for study by societal life.

Khalifa et al. (2016) posit that the scope of Social Studies in lower grades should be predicated on institutions and communities such as the home, the family, the school, the neighbourhood, and the community. They further propose that at advanced levels, an array of elective courses encompassing Sociology, Psychology, and democratic issues should be introduced. This conceptual framework resonates with the structure of Social Studies in Ghana. At the foundational level (Primary and Junior High), the curriculum is structured around eight communities: the home, the school, the neighbourhood, the local community, the national community, the West African Community, the African Community, and the World Community. At the higher levels, such as Senior High Schools, CoEs, and universities, the Social Studies programmes integrate elements from Geography, Economics, Sociology, Political Science, and History. These programmes are designed in alignment with the Ghana Education Service (2007) directive that “Social Studies should integrate history, geography, civics, and elements of economics, government, and sociology”.

Moreover, Martorella (2001) asserts that a significant portion of the identity of Social Studies is derived from various social sciences, including but not limited to “History, Political Science, Geography, Economics, Sociology, Anthropology, and Psychology”, a sentiment that is widely acknowledged by the majority of educators. In elucidating the scope of Social Studies, GES (2007), accentuates that “Social Studies takes its source from geography, history, economics and civic education and integrates it in a fashion that creates a subject of its own”. Ravitch (2003, p.1) encapsulates the essence of Social Studies by characterizing it as a comprehensive umbrella encompassing a diverse array of subjects, disciplines, and skills. Aggarwal (2001), on the other hand, describes the scope of Social Studies as encompassing the

examination of relationships, the functional study of natural sciences and arts, and the analysis of contemporary affairs.

Brophy et al. (2016) propose a novel perspective on the scope or subject matter for the teaching and learning of Social Studies, advocating for a discipline-based, dimension-based, and concern-based approach. The discipline-based scope posits that the structure and contributions of individual disciplines, particularly the social sciences, should serve as the foundational elements for Social Studies. This point, which has been elaborated upon in the preceding paragraph, is underpinned by the philosophy that the structure and contribution of individual disciplines form the building blocks of Social Studies. The objective of this approach is to enhance the understanding, abilities, and values associated with the subject area. It is noteworthy that when subject areas are employed to delineate the scope of Social Studies, the goal is to foster the understanding, abilities, and values pertinent to these subject areas. As a result, the elements chosen for examination should encompass the defining questions or purposes, the central concepts and bodies of knowledge, the attitudes and methods of inquiry, and the criteria for evaluating evidence that are unique to those subject areas. If implemented effectively, this approach could “provide the most systematic and rigorous (or disciplined) way of organizing our study of the social world” (Brophy et al., 2016).

The dimension-based scope is founded on the premise that the world does not inherently align itself with academic disciplines, thereby necessitating that the focus of Social Studies should be on the prevalent dimensions of society. This perspective is echoed by Cobbold (2013) in his work “Introduction to the nature and philosophy of Social Studies”, where he refers to it as the community-based scope. Consequently,

this scope encompasses the study of the perspectives of the social environments or communities within which students reside and operate.

The Concern-Based Scope underscores the urgency of addressing issues or challenges that students encounter at the local, national, and international levels. These issues encompass environmental education, global education, human rights education, law-related education, multicultural education, and peace education. Ross (2006, p. 26) “appears to reference these two types of scope (dimension-based and concern-based) when he asserts that Social Studies should be highly responsive to social conditions, events, transitions, confusions, and conflicts of interest within a community”. These issues necessitate comprehensive and explicit address within a multidisciplinary context. Cobbold (2013) reinforces this perspective by “stating that this scope constitutes the critical areas or issues of societal life, thereby defining the issue-based scope of the subject”. According to Cobbold, these issues extend beyond the parameters set by Brophy et al. (2016) and include, but are not limited to, environmental degradation, globalization, modernization, human rights abuses and violations, unemployment, war, and conflict. It is crucial that such issues are addressed within a multidisciplinary context, enabling Social Studies to respond to social phenomena, events, transitions, conflicts, and areas of societal or community interest.

Kankam et al. (2014) argue that there are diverse interpretations regarding the scope of Social Studies content in Ghana. Teachers conceptualize the content of Social Studies to encompass: subject-centred learning; acquisition of problem-solving skills; addressing issues that threaten human survival; organization into individual subject areas rather than as an integrated discipline; development of students’ positive attitudes; critical examination of controversial issues; critical thinking about

significant social and political issues; and key social and cultural situations within the community. The emphasis on subject-matter knowledge suggests that teachers may not have made the necessary impact on their teaching and may lack the essential knowledge required for teaching their respective fields or areas (Rollnick & Mavhunga, 2016).

Børhaug (2005) contends that Social Studies lacks a definitive didactic standard that outlines its primary purpose, objectives, content, and pedagogical methodologies. This absence of a clear standard renders the subject matter susceptible, as it is tasked with addressing topics and themes of concern to the educational institution that do not align with the other established school subjects. This situation complicates the teaching of such a subject. In sum, Børhaug delineates at least three distinct perspectives on the content that should be encompassed within Social Studies.

The first perspective, as delineated by Børhaug (2005), posits that a key objective of Social Studies is to legitimize the existing societal structure by imparting democratic values and educating students about entrenched social and political institutions. From a political science standpoint, this is crucial for the preservation of established structures, such as democracy and free speech (March & Olsen, 2006). There exist multiple pedagogical approaches to ensure the realization of these intentions in Social Studies.

The second perspective, introduced by Børhaug (2005), advocates for Social Studies to be perceived as a subject that imparts essential skills to students that are applicable in their daily lives. This could encompass understanding one's role within a technological society, awareness of welfare rights, as well as the development of critical thinking skills and methodological competence. According to Asare-Danso (2017), "critical thinking involves interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference,

explanation, and self-regulation”. In the most recent national curriculum, this perspective has gained prominence, suggesting that students should acquire the necessary skills to navigate social and political issues (NaCCA, 2020). To actively participate in a dynamic society, members need to comprehend societal changes, their origins, how to manage these changes, and how to shape the future. It seems plausible that the application of skills and methods becomes challenging without some foundational knowledge of the society in which new knowledge is to be constructed.

The third perspective, proposed by Børhaug (2005), adopts a more critical approach, where the goal and objective of Social Studies instruction are to foster reflexivity in students regarding their own actions and the social and political system. Students should learn to understand that political behaviour and institutions are not immutable, but subject to evaluation and change. This necessitates knowledge of the social and political system, as well as the student’s position within it. Additionally, it requires political skills, the ability to cooperate with others, and the methodological skills to independently evaluate information.

Scholars and standard-setting bodies in Social Studies consistently affirm that the fundamental purpose of Social Studies is Citizenship Education (Evans, 2021; NCSS, 2010). Blege (2001, p. 13) posits that within the Ghanaian context, “Social Studies is Citizenship Education which aims at producing reflective, competent, responsible and participatory citizens”. This assertion aligns with the perspective of the National Council for Social Studies (2010, p. 23) in United States of America, which posits that “the primary purpose of Social Studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse democratic society in an interdependent world”. In the context of Social Studies, the focus is on cultivating and developing relevant knowledge, skills,

attitudes, and values that will empower learners to make thoughtful decisions and take action to address both their individual and societal challenges. This therefore indicates that, Social Studies within an educational environment bears a distinctive responsibility to equip students with the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values to operate effectively within their local, national, and international societies. This underscores the necessity for effective teaching methodologies to achieve the goals and objectives of Social Studies.

From these perspectives, “the scope of Social Studies content in Colleges of Education in Ghana is concerned with equipping the teacher-trainees with an integrated body of knowledge, skills and attitude that will help the student develop a broader perspective of Ghana and the world”. It also deals with “curricular and pedagogic approaches in the design and facilitation of effective implementation of courses in Social Studies which will equip students with the knowledge and skills to be able to plan lessons and adequately prepare schemes of work and lesson plans”. The discipline delves into historical contexts and equips the learner with the necessary knowledge to comprehend their societal constructs and address both personal and societal challenges (Curriculum Research and Development Division [CRDD], 2010; Institute of Education, University of Cape Coast, 2014). Furthermore, the erstwhile 3-year Diploma in Basic Education Social Studies curriculum for CoEs was primarily designed towards the training of a generalist teacher who would be capable of teaching at both Primary and Junior High School levels.

The multitude of perspectives from which the scope of Social Studies is defined are not mutually exclusive. There exists a degree of convergence and overlap, offering alternative approaches to addressing the fundamental question, “What content should be selected for study in Social Studies?” The seemingly limitless scope of Social

Studies has led some individuals to characterize the subject in less than favourable terms. In the context of Social Studies, Charles Beard eloquently described its scope as a “seamless web too vast for any human eye” (Evans, 2021). In terms of the scope of Social Studies, Leming and Ellington (2003) assert that “the seamless web endures and will persist because the human experience defies confinement within a solitary discipline or the scrutiny of a singular life aspect”. Their description characterizes the scope of Social Studies as boundless, eschewing substantive content and lacking focus for effective practice. This perspective underscores the multifaceted and interconnected nature of the field, transcending traditional disciplinary boundaries. They add, “Students rank Social Studies courses as one of their least liked subjects and that Social Studies textbooks are largely superficial and vapid”.

In his “personal prologue,” Zevin (2015, p. 16) contends that a significant factor contributing to students’ aversion toward Social Studies is the requirement to memorize facts, names, places, and various details. Perhaps “the debate about the scope of Social Studies may be partly due to the nature of the subject”.

Social Studies is frequently described as lacking a clearly bounded core body of content, a characterisation that, while broadly accurate, risks oversimplifying the nature of the subject. Unlike more tightly defined disciplines, Social Studies draws legitimacy from its responsiveness to social concerns, yet this very openness complicates curriculum design by shifting responsibility for content coherence onto curriculum developers. As a result, decisions about what constitutes “essential” knowledge are not neutral or self-evident, but value-laden and context-dependent. The central curricular challenge, therefore, lies less in ensuring coverage than in managing the persistent tension between conceptual depth and topical breadth within constrained instructional time. Where content selection lacks clear priorities, learning

is often reduced to superficial exposure; however, an overly narrow focus can be equally problematic, diminishing the subject's integrative purpose and civic orientation. For this reason, curriculum decisions in Social Studies cannot be justified solely on disciplinary grounds, but must be explicitly anchored in learner needs and socio-cultural contexts, with a deliberate emphasis on cultivating dispositions and competencies for engaging with social realities rather than privileging factual accumulation.

2.5.1 Goals and Objectives of Social Studies

Many authors, in defining Social Studies, also attempt to clarify its “goals and objectives”, a move that implicitly acknowledges the field's long-standing conceptual instability. Appiah and Adjei (2021) explain that the “term goal, used interchangeably with purpose, refers to the long-term expectations of Social Studies, as distinct from objectives, which are more specific and short term”. While this distinction is useful at a definitional level, it does little to resolve the more fundamental uncertainty surrounding what Social Studies is ultimately for. Indeed, the scope of Social Studies has remained persistently contested, particularly with respect to its goals. Ross and Marker (2005, p. 2) argue that “the very lack of agreement regarding the purpose of the field, perhaps more than any other characteristic, has become the hallmark of Social Studies”. Their further observation that educators have historically “pitched a big tent”, often prioritising coexistence over resolution of conflict (Ross & Marker, 2005, p. 7), suggests a pattern of accommodation that may preserve inclusivity at the expense of conceptual clarity.

Ravitch (2003, p. 1) reinforces this interpretation by noting that leaders in the field have “frequently wrestled with their goals and purposes”, and that Social Studies has repeatedly redefined its aims in response to shifting socio-political demands. While

such adaptability may be read as responsiveness, it also raises questions about the coherence and stability of the field's core commitments. Taken together, these accounts point not merely to healthy debate, but to enduring disagreement and factionalism among advocates of competing Social Studies traditions. Whelan's (2001, p. 43) warning that such "disagreement has become sufficiently adversarial to threaten" the field with factionalism is therefore difficult to dismiss, particularly given the risk that pluralism may slide into fragmentation.

Despite these divisions, Vinson and Ross (2001) maintain that although consensus on the goals of Social Studies remains elusive, there is general agreement that its primary pedagogical aim is to support students in understanding their world and developing civic urgency. This claim is significant because it marks a shift from disagreement over purposes to convergence around function. Consequently, Social Studies is frequently positioned as a vehicle for citizenship education, even if the precise meaning of that citizenship remains contested.

This positioning, however, has not gone unchallenged. Leming and Ellington (2003) and Sim and Print (2005) question the status of citizenship education as the central purpose of Social Studies, arguing that citizenship itself lacks a sufficiently clear and stable definition to serve as a curricular anchor. This critique exposes a persistent tension within the field: the desire for a unifying purpose alongside resistance to fixed or prescriptive definitions. As Ross and Marker (2005) rightly argue, there can be no "scientifically objective" answer to the purposes of citizenship education, since such purposes are normative rather than empirically discoverable. Acknowledging this limitation is important, as it reframes disagreement not as failure, but as an inherent feature of value-laden educational aims.

Nevertheless, defenders of citizenship education argue that normative uncertainty does not invalidate curricular purpose. Banks (2017, p. 3), for example, asserts that “citizenship education remains the primary focus of Social Studies”, particularly in its commitment to participatory citizenship. His claim that Social Studies uniquely prioritises civic competencies, even when other subjects contribute indirectly, is persuasive insofar as it highlights intentionality rather than exclusivity. Appiah and Adjei (2021) similarly argue that Social Studies equips students to make informed decisions in resolving personal problems and influencing public policy, capacities they regard as essential to citizenship. Ross and Marker (2005) extend this argument by emphasising critique, revision, and examination of social practices, positioning citizenship not as “passive conformity but as active” engagement.

Kankam’s (2016) conceptualisation of citizenship education as school-based opportunities for meaningful engagement usefully grounds these theoretical claims in pedagogical practice. Ayaaba et al. (2014) further strengthen this position by demonstrating how the Social Studies curriculum addresses concrete issues such as environmental sustainability and civic responsibility. The National Council for Social Studies (2006) reinforces this applied orientation by explicitly linking citizenship preparation to problem-solving within real social contexts. While these accounts vary in emphasis, they converge on the assumption that citizenship is learned through engagement rather than transmission.

Martorella’s (2001) framework provides a useful synthesis of these strands by articulating citizenship as reflective, competent, and concerned. His metaphor of the head, hand, and heart is particularly effective in capturing the multidimensional nature of Social Studies outcomes. However, its breadth also risks masking tensions between

these dimensions, especially when curricular time and assessment practices privilege cognition over affect or action.

Collectively, these arguments suggest that Social Studies tutors carry a distinct, though not uncontested, responsibility for developing students' cognitive, skill-based, and affective capacities. Martorella's (2001) conception of effective citizenship offers a "coherent rationale for this responsibility", even if it does not fully resolve the field's normative debates. What emerges, therefore, is not a settled consensus, but a defensible position: that citizenship education, despite its ambiguities, remains the most viable unifying purpose of Social Studies.

2.6 Social Studies Tutors' Pedagogical Knowledge

Social Studies tutors play a crucial role in the teaching process. Beyond possessing subject matter knowledge related to specific topics covered in the Social Studies classroom, tutors must be well-versed in effective teaching and learning strategies to effectively convey this knowledge to students. According to Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006, p. 280), "many a times teachers are knowledgeable in the subject matter without necessarily being able to decompress it in a way that makes it accessible to their students". Tutors need to possess competence in teaching methods, strategies, and techniques to effectively apply appropriate pedagogical approaches when delivering subject content.

According to Hudson (2007), "Shulman declared that the definition of pedagogical knowledge (knowledge about instructional strategies) is any theory or belief about teaching and the process of learning that a teacher possesses that influences that teacher's teaching". This process encompasses competencies such as instructional planning, material preparation, time and classroom management skills, implementation, problem-solving, teaching strategies, effective questioning

techniques, and assessment. Also, “the use of a particular teaching pedagogy will influence classroom management, questioning techniques and mode of assessment” (Hudson, 2007).

Social Studies has become an integral component of Ghana’s educational curriculum across all levels. However, its inclusion in basic schools, combined with the scarcity of professionally trained Social Studies teachers, poses several challenges. Addressing these challenges requires equipping teachers with a high degree of competence in Social Studies instruction.

Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006, p. 269) emphasize the significance of a teacher’s understanding of instructional strategies and systematic approaches in the following manner:

1. They simplify and facilitate the teaching and learning process.
2. They allow for an increase in learning.
3. They shorten the time required to achieve more learning outcomes, especially when the learning experiences are engaging and tailored to the learners’ needs and developmental stage.
4. Teaching methods aid in embedding pleasantly learned material in the learners’ memory, facilitating easy recall.
5. Individuals who are taught using these methods come to understand their significance and may eventually adopt them for use in their own classroom interactions if they are student-teachers or practicing teachers.
6. The application of teaching methods keeps learners engaged in the teaching-learning process.

7. Teaching methods have the capacity to minimize disruptive behaviours in the classroom to the lowest possible level, thereby contributing positively to effective classroom management.
8. The selection of a suitable teaching method for a specific teaching-learning situation keeps the teacher professionally engaged in their preparation for effective teaching.

Furthermore, in the field of Social Studies education, Alansari (2010) posits that “educators employ varied teaching techniques”. It is therefore necessary to understand how these techniques of teaching are effectively utilised by Social Studies teachers within the context of PCK. According to Ayaaba and Odumah (2013), in the area of Social Studies education, teaching methods are divided into two main categories: student-focused (learner-centred) and teacher-focused (teacher-transmission) approaches. A main insight from Social Studies research is the acknowledgement of the human being as the central element in learning and the development of meaningful skills and knowledge that enable them to function effectively in society. It is crucial for teachers to employ student-centred methods to achieve the stated objectives, goals, and aims of the subject (Abdu-Raheem, 2015).

Abdu-Raheem (2015) noted that the goal and objective of Social Studies have not been fully realized due to ineffective teaching and a lack or insufficiency of instructional materials to engage students. Cresswell (2015) maintains that successful teachers deliver information or skills in a clear and enthusiastic manner, maintain a non-judgmental and relaxed demeanour, keep lessons focused on tasks, aim for student achievement, interact with students through insightful questions, and support students by expanding on their responses.

Furthermore, Adewuya (2002) posited that the utilization of brainstorming within the context of the discussion technique serves as a mechanism for elucidating specific concepts and maximizing the contributions and sentiments of intellectually stimulated minds. Stephen and Stephen (2005) characterized the discussion technique as a reciprocal process of giving and receiving, articulating and listening, delineating and observing, which aids in broadening perspectives and developing mutual comprehension. Abdu-Raheem (2015) articulated that the discussion technique of instruction fosters cognitive engagement among both educators and learners, thereby enhancing learners' social competencies in articulation and active listening. Yusuf and Al-Banawi (2013) further contended that the active involvement of students in classroom activities and discussions stimulates their engagement and augments their motivation to acquire knowledge in the subject matter.

Reiterating, Abdu-Raheem (2015) advocates for the employment of inquiry, problem-solving, discussion, discovery, and role-playing as effective methods or pedagogical strategies. Adeyemi (2008) and Adewuya (2002) postulated that problem-solving entails the application of information and logical reasoning to surmount barriers. Abdu-Raheem (2015) concurred that the problem-solving method is potent due to the active participation it engenders among students during lessons. Richards (2005) and Ogunkunle (2008) echoed this sentiment, asserting that self-directed learning enhances the effectiveness and meaningfulness of learning for students, fosters the development of problem-solving skills, and accommodates learners of all categories.

Indeed, Richards (2005) and Ogunkunle (2008) posited that the pedagogical style of the teacher should align with the learning style of the students to facilitate comprehension of the imparted knowledge. They argued that learners should assume a

leading role in their educational journey, steering their own learning process, while the teacher serves as a facilitator during the teaching and learning process.

Adesanya and Adesina (2014) underscored that the attainment of meaningful instruction and enjoyable learning of fundamental concepts and processes can only be realized within an instructional framework that integrates a variety of teaching strategies and approaches. The lecture technique, they noted, facilitates the transmission of a substantial amount of information to the learner and is conducive for managing large classes. However, despite these benefits, Seweje (2000), Adewuya (2002), and Abdu-Raheem (2015) expressed concerns that this method fails to stimulate students' innovative thinking, inquiry, and scientific methodology. They argued that it encourages rote learning of facts that are easily forgotten (Okwilagwe, 2000).

The extensive application of this method, according to Jekayinfa (2012), tends to replace the student with the teacher, leading to the fading of students' memories and a decrease in their attention span. Afolabi (2000) further posited that conventional teaching, where the teacher is the epicentre of the instruction, controls class activities, and dictates the learning process while the learner passively absorbs the teacher's words without interaction, is a prevalent approach to teaching and learning. Similarly, Afolabi et al. (2013) expressed disappointment that despite the commendable objectives and benefits of Social Studies in the school curriculum, the subject's instruction is often characterized by this conventional teaching method, resulting in ineffective learning and students' negative attitudes towards the subject. Conversely, Oluwagbohunmi and Abdu-Raheem (2014) emphasized the need to abandon outdated methods of teaching and adopt new ones that are activity-based and ensure the active participation of learners to achieve learning objectives. Afolabi (2000) further

stressed the necessity for a continuous, systematic programme of professional development to “enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of teaching”.

The pedagogical approach, that a teacher employs, is contingent upon the efficacy of the teaching method or technique. Aggarwal (2001) posits that an optimal method or technique for instructing Social Studies should strive to inculcate a passion for work, develop an aspiration to perform tasks proficiently to the utmost of one’s capacity, offer abundant opportunities for learner participation, and foster the ability for lucid thinking, among other objectives. Every plan, strategy, and approach is utilized to impart knowledge to the learner, with a focus on fostering citizenship. According to Aggarwal (2001), it is imperative to inspire a love for work in the learner, nurture the aspiration to work efficiently to the best of the student’s ability, and provide ample opportunities for participation.

This implies that “laziness does not contribute to nation-building”. Banks (2020) encapsulated this concept by asserting that adept instruction in Social Studies is of utmost importance, as without it, effective learning cannot transpire. The techniques frequently employed in Social Studies education encompass: lecturing, discussions, project-based learning, simulations, role-playing, fieldwork, team teaching, and inquiry-based learning. Some of these pedagogical techniques or techniques of teaching have been elaborated upon in the review.

2.6.1 Lecture Technique

Characterised as the most ancient technique by Tamakloe et al. (2005), the lecture technique is arguably the most prevalent method of instruction and learning in classrooms across all ages, grades, levels, or forms. This technique has dominated formal education over the years due to its frequent use at all educational levels. Badang (2013) and Ayaaba (2013) noted that several researchers in Africa have

observed that Social Studies tutors predominantly employ the same expository, teacher centred teaching methods. These researchers concluded that the lecture technique does not actively involve students, with the teacher solely conducting all activities in the learning process. Adu-Yeboah (2011) and Bordoh et al (2021) asserted that the lecture technique, which is the primary method of teaching Social Studies in many CoEs in Ghana, emphasizes rote learning. If a method prioritizes rote learning, it does not foster understanding and participation, which is a characteristic of the lecture technique of teaching.

Bligh (2002, p. 20) provides a succinct summary of the outcomes associated with the lecture technique: “The balance of evidence favours this conclusion. Use lecture techniques to teach information but do not rely on them to improve thought or change attitude or behavioural skills”. This implies that the lecture technique is utilized to elucidate information to a large group in a brief span of time. This technique is primarily used to cover a certain amount of content as it allows for the presentation of a substantial amount of material. It is typically characterized by one-way communication, where ideas or concepts are presented by the teacher while students listen and take notes (Adu-Yeboah, 2011; Bordoh et al., 2021). The implication is that, although it is one of the techniques, its mode of delivery does not permit student contribution and does not consider behavioural change.

2.6.2 Team Teaching Technique

Adu-Yeboah (2011) posits that the multifaceted nature of Social Studies, with its broad spectrum of specialized topics, necessitates the adoption of collaborative teaching as an instructional strategy. A considerable number of Social Studies educators and scholars propose team teaching as a solution to classroom teacher shortages (Booth et al., 2003). The concept of team teaching has been defined in

various ways. Bess (2000), for instance, characterizes team teaching as a process wherein all team members share equal involvement and accountability for students' instruction, assessment, and the establishment and achievement of learning objectives. In a similar vein, Goetz (2000) describes team teaching as a collaborative effort of two teachers to plan, implement, and assess learning activities for the same group of students.

Some scholars have proposed that team teaching is most commonly associated with instruction provided in an interdisciplinary course by multiple team members who have collaborated to develop the course. These authors and educators perceive Social Studies as an interdisciplinary field, and thus, advocate for a diverse range of teaching techniques. They suggest that a team of two or more teachers can instruct the same subject, with each teacher focusing on a specific group or aspect to achieve a common objective. Consequently, in this teaching approach, all team members share equal responsibility in all facets of the subject's management and delivery (Hoa, 2022; Anwar et al., 2021). Martell and Stevens (2019) on their part identify "five models for teaching Social Studies". These include:

1. traditional team teaching:
2. complementary, supportive team teaching
3. parallel instruction
4. differentiated split class:
5. monitoring teacher

Indeed, as the number of educators increases from two and beyond, and their methodologies and approaches diversify, their personal characteristics will also exhibit variation. As role models, these teachers can meaningfully influence the lives of their students. Despite the challenges associated with team teaching, primarily due

to a lack of collaboration and cohesion among team members, there are numerous pedagogical benefits for both teachers and students (Goetz, 2000; Letterman & Dugan, 2004). As the exchange of ideas transpires in the classroom, teachers acquire novel teaching methods, which significantly contribute to fostering professional development among educators. Team teaching can facilitate the enhancement of friendship among teachers (Bordoh et al., 2021). Goetz (2000) further asserts that students reap benefits through the opportunity to receive instruction from experts in specific areas of a discipline's knowledge base, thereby exposing them to alternative perspectives.

Collaborative teaching and learning, which partly involves students working together in groups to achieve learning outcomes, has been widely researched for its effectiveness in Social Studies education. This technique of teaching aligns with social constructivist theories, which assert that knowledge is constructed through social interactions and collaboration (Vygotsky, 2012). Further studies have shown that collaborative learning significantly enhances critical thinking and problem-solving skills among students. According to Goetz (2000), "when students engage in group discussions and problem-solving activities, they are exposed to diverse perspectives, which fosters deeper understanding and critical analysis" of Social Studies content. Goetz assertion falls in line with Piaget's theory of cognitive development, which posits that social interaction is crucial for cognitive growth.

Moreover, other studies on collaborative learning have shown that it positively impacts academic achievement in Social Studies education. A study on a meta-analysis of cooperative learning's effects by Johnson et al. (2019) found "substantial evidence that students participating in collaborative learning activities achieved higher academic outcomes compared to those in traditional instructional settings".

Also, a study by Martin and Dowson (2019) found out that, “students involved in collaborative learning activities that are developmentally appropriate exhibit higher levels of motivation and engagement in Social Studies classes”. This improvement in performance can be credited to collaborative learning, which not only heightens student engagement and motivation but also cultivates vital social and emotional abilities that are crucial for their comprehensive growth and development. According to Bordoh et al. (2021), group work in Social Studies classes helps students develop empathy, communication skills, and the ability to work effectively in teams. Similarly, Kirschner et al. (2019) contend that collaborative pedagogical activities should be appropriately aligned with students' developmental levels to optimise the efficacy of group work and facilitate deeper cognitive engagement. This implies that mastering these “skills” are essential for effectively understanding and analysing complex social issues, a fundamental aspect of a comprehensive Social Studies education. However, while the benefits of collaborative learning are well-documented, there are also challenges to consider. For instance, Kirschner and Hendrick (2020) points out that implementing these approaches requires careful planning and on-going professional development for teachers. Classroom studies by Johnson et al. (2008) and Ghavifekr (2020) show that benefits of collaborative learning, such as communication, problem-solving, and social skills, are realised only when teachers understand how to design, scaffold and monitor group work. Similarly, Boud and Bearman (2024) argue that conventional assessment practices, such as grading and crediting individual outputs, discourage authentic collaborative practice because they privilege individual outcomes and foster anxieties about “collusion” and fairness. This suggests that a high-level barrier lies in the mismatch between the social

nature of collaborative learning and assessment systems that remain strongly individualistic.

2.6.3 Role Play Technique

Jacob et al (2020) explain that role play is an impromptu enactment of a scenario that encapsulates individuals' emotional responses in real-life contexts. This pedagogical strategy is employed within classroom settings to foster effective problem-solving skills, as students are encouraged to select social issues for examination (Martorella, 2001).

The successful execution of a role necessitates the adoption of an affective learning hierarchy, such as those proposed by Krathwohl or Neuman. This is predicated on the notion that problem-solving begins with the identification of the issue at hand. Subsequently, the resolution of the identified problem allows the individual to self-attribute value. In essence, an individual's unique capabilities, particularly those that surpass others, become defining characteristics of their persona. This process underscores the transformative potential of role play in shaping self-perception and fostering personal growth.

2.6.4 Simulation Technique

In terms of pedagogical strategies, Adu-Yeboah (2011, p. 56) delineates simulation as a technique intrinsically akin to role play. This pedagogical approach facilitates learners' acquisition of skills, competencies, knowledge, and behaviours by immersing them in scenarios that mirror real-life situations. This perspective is further corroborated by Farisi (2016), who conceptualize simulation as a form of pretence or imitation. He posits that simulation often entails role-playing within an imaginary context, guided by a set of predefined rules.

Simulation occasionally combines elements of role play and problem-solving to replicate real-life situations, thereby enhancing children's comprehension of these scenarios. Adu-Yeboah (2011, p. 57), in his analysis of Clark's definition of simulation, posits that simulation serves as a model of physical reality, striving to distil complex social realities into more manageable forms.

The intersection of simulation and gaming is not uncommon, as noted by Martorella (2001). Simulation often leverages gaming techniques, leading to the emergence of simulation games. These hybrid pedagogical tools blend the immersive qualities of simulation with the interactive nature of games, enabling students to assume the roles of others and make decisions on their behalf. This approach fosters a more active learning environment, reducing students' dependence on the teacher and transforming them from passive observers to active participants (Adu-Yeboah, 2011; Bordoh et al., 2021). Throughout these participatory activities, students collaborate with their peers, striving to accommodate differing perspectives by assimilating the values of others. This process underscores the transformative potential of simulation techniques in fostering collaborative learning and promoting empathy among students.

2.6.5 Discussion Technique

Discussion "as a technique of teaching is one of the key ways to involve students to take active part in what they are supposed to be taught and learnt". In relation to this technique of teaching, the teacher initiates a series of relevant inquiries on a specific topic or theme to solicit students' thoughts, perspectives, or beliefs. Occasionally, a student's understanding of a topic may be based on a misunderstanding, which should be addressed and clarified before introducing the accurate concept. The process of learning is a construction where new knowledge is built on the foundation of correct existing knowledge. Appau et al. (2022) describe discussion as "both inclusionary and

participatory because it implies that everyone has some useful contribution to make to the education effort and because it claims to be successful with actively involving learners”. In the domain of Social Studies, this is applicable and relevant since majority of the topics are often marked by controversy. Therefore, the assimilation of diverse viewpoints is indispensable for dispelling uncertainties and fostering a holistic understanding.

Since discussion technique of teaching ensures democratic environment within the classroom, Abudulai (2020) and Appau et al. (2022) assert that discussion is a prevalent technique employed in the teaching of Social Studies. This interactive process develops a sense of respect for diverse viewpoints among learners, fostering tolerance and cooperation, particularly during debates. Furthermore, it encourages the assimilation and accommodation of cultural differences, thereby promoting a more inclusive learning environment.

2.6.6 The Resource Person

The nature and objective of Social Studies require the need of resource persons. Within this collective, there exist persons endowed with exclusive skills that can be harnessed for the advancement of students (Mensah, 2020; Olawumi et al., 2021). A resource person, distinct from the conventional class or subject teacher, is an individual proficient and well-informed in a specific field of knowledge or experience, which can be summoned to enhance learning. Consequently, the resource person is expected to possess a more profound expertise in their area of specialization compared to the teacher.

In the context of Social Studies teaching, a resource person may be selected from either the immediate vicinity or beyond. Among the potential guests who may be invited comprise professionals such as doctors, lawyers, nurses, police officers as well

as community leaders like village heads (Mensah, 2020). A resource person may be needed only when the class teacher does not have adequate content knowledge and/or method and technique of teaching a particular topic. A number of studies have suggested that the incorporation of resource persons invigorates the learning environment by disrupting the habitual interaction between the teacher and learners (Mensah, 2020; Olawumi et al., 2021; Proctor et al., 2001).

2.6.7 The Project Method

Adu-Yeboah (2011) characterizes the project technique of teaching as a ‘purposeful and passionate act’. This perspective is further echoed by Ilter (2014) and Pufaa et al. (2023), who depict the project method as an instrumental approach that develops independence and responsibility among students. Moreover, it serves as a platform for students to embody social and democratic behaviours. This underscores the transformative potential of the project method in shaping students’ personal and social competencies. Adu-Yeboah (2011) argues that the diverse methodologies employed in teaching Social Studies necessitate the inclusion of the project method. This method is distinctly characterized as a learner centred activity, designed to achieve a specific objective. Originating from the professionalization of various occupations, the project method was incorporated into the curriculum with the aim of fostering independent work habits among students and facilitating the integration of theory and practice.

The project method involves an individual or a group undertaking a study, which could encompass independent observations, with the objective of problem-solving. This process enables learners to comprehend the nature of the problem at hand, thereby highlighting the project method’s role in enhancing students’ understanding and problem-solving skills.

Since Social Studies “concern itself with the study of environment, the project method may involve a local study whereby learners may be assigned to investigate and write a report about their local community”. In the context of the report, it may encompass a comprehensive description of the geographical location under study, an exploration of the occupations pursued by the local populace, and an examination of the cultural festivities celebrated by the inhabitants of the region.

Generally, project method of teaching enables “the groups write and share findings they come across in their study”. It is important to note that, “project method considers the abilities of the students and places students of varied abilities in a group so that, the weaker ones are helped by the stronger ones”. With regard to academic work, individuals with a quicker writing pace can provide assistance to those who write at a slower speed. The project method, rather than fostering self-centeredness, promotes a culture of cooperation, tolerance, and unity. Ilter (2014) and Abudulai (2020) added that, “the students who are good writers can help to revise and edit a weaker writer’s essay; the learning process is, therefore, integrated”. From an alternative perspective, project work or project as a technique of teaching facilitates the development of students’ abilities to analyse and construct hypotheses. This process leads students to a logical understanding of the problem or issues that require resolution (Bordoh et al., 2021). In the context of teaching techniques in Social Studies, this study perceives the “project-based technique” as a potent instrument for fostering a sense of unity, tolerance, and collaboration among learners. Consequently, it holds significant promise for enhancing the teaching and learning of Social Studies.

2.6.8 Differentiated Instruction

In the light of the increasing diversity among student populations, the concept of effective teaching pedagogy has been transformed. In other words, “there is a growing population of diverse learners in modern classrooms” (Gregory & Chapman, 2013). A notable shift within the educational sphere in the 21st century is the growing emphasis on addressing the diverse needs of student populations. According to Tomlinson (2017), “differentiated instruction focuses on learners’ individual educational needs rather than focusing on the curriculum”. Similarly to this view, Morgan (2014) reported that “students tend to lose focus when their teachers implement teaching strategies that do not coincide with their preferred learning preferences”.

Recognizing that students have diverse learning needs, teachers need to employ differentiated instruction to tailor their teaching techniques. This might involve providing varied reading materials, using multimedia resources, or offering different types of assessments to accommodate different learning styles and abilities (Rodríguez & Swalwell, 2023). In the context of Social Studies education, differentiated instruction plays a crucial role in enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes. This approach is particularly relevant in Social Studies, where the complexity of the Social Studies curriculum and content requires a nuanced and flexible teaching strategy.

Another technique employed by Social Studies teachers within the context of differentiated instruction is flexible grouping. This involves organizing students into diverse groups based on their skills, interests, or learning preferences. Grouping can be fluid, with students moving between groups as their needs and abilities change. In Social Studies, this might involve collaborative projects, discussions, or problem-solving activities that require students to work together and learn from each other.

(Keddie, 2019). By participating in heterogeneous groups, students can benefit from peer support and gain exposure to different perspectives and ideas. This collaborative approach also helps to develop important social and communication skills, which are essential for success in Social Studies and beyond.

Differentiated instruction is another crucial element in the conceptualization of teaching techniques for Social Studies tutors (Rodríguez & Swalwell, 2023). Differentiated instruction involves tailoring teaching techniques, materials, and assessments to meet the diverse needs of students. In Social Studies classrooms, students come from varied backgrounds and possess different levels of prior knowledge, skills, and learning preferences (Keddie, 2019). Differentiated instruction allows tutors to address these differences by providing multiple pathways for students to engage with content, process information, and demonstrate their understanding. This approach ensures that all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, have the opportunity to succeed and reach their full potential.

Tomlinson (2017) “identified five guidelines for acting within a framework to make differentiated instruction possible to implement”. “The first guideline that Tomlinson described focused on fundamental concepts. Tomlinson felt that teachers should examine the key concepts that students had to know in order to ensure they had addressed the essential content. The second guideline Tomlinson discussed was using formative and summative assessments to inform instruction. The third guideline connected to differentiated instruction is designing challenging tasks with teacher support. The fourth guideline stressed engaging all students with varied learning tasks. The final guideline attempted to find a balance between teachers’ instruction and students’ needs based on assessment data” (Santamaria, 2009). According to Tomlinson, differentiated instruction is only one element of effective instruction and

that students would have difficulty processing information unless the curriculum was tailored to meet the diverse needs of all learners.

2.6.9 Field Trip Technique

Field trips, also referred to as field works, excursions, study trips, and educated walks in the literature, serve as a critical pedagogical tool in the realm of Social Studies education. As elucidated by Adu-Yeboah (2011), these trips are characterized by teaching and learning experiences that transcend the confines of the classroom or laboratory settings. They are typically orchestrated to occur within the school premises, its surroundings, or the local community.

Tamakloe (2008) further expounds on the concept of a field trip, describing it as the nature of learning where learners are empowered to gather information from their immediate and broader environment. This implies that both Adu-Yeboah (2011) and Tamakloe (2008) regard field trips as an integral component of effective Social Studies teaching and learning.

Fieldtrip activities can be planned under three main steps namely; pre-fieldtrip activities, fieldtrip activities and post-fieldtrip activities (Mensah et al., 2023). The duration of fieldtrip is shaped by its learning objectives and the characteristics of the phenomena under investigation. As Mensah (2020) notes, the “phenomena explored during Social Studies fieldwork may be economic, historical, geographical or cultural. Each type of phenomenon requires different forms of inquiry and levels of engagement, which influence the duration of a fieldtrip needed to achieve its intended outcome.

Such trips or field works provide an impetus for teachers at all levels or grades to broaden the scope of their lessons beyond the classroom, thereby facilitating the acquisition of unadulterated, first-hand information from the field (Proctor et al., 2001). Consequently, the primary aim of these fieldtrips is to expand the educational knowledge of learners.

Upon visiting the site, learners are able to obtain first-hand knowledge, thereby rectifying any misconceptions or gaps in understanding they may have previously harboured. Thus, fieldworks serve as a channel for practical learning thereby fostering a deeper understanding of the concept of topic understudied.

In addition, field trips offer students at all levels or grades a practical methodology for problem-solving, as the learning environment is transferred to the field. This technique of teaching enhances critical thinking skills and promotes teamwork. Furthermore, it facilitates the students' ability to locate and interpret information derived from various sources, including books. The capacity to work collaboratively within a group, accommodating diverse perspectives, and interacting with individuals from different cultural backgrounds are affective domain traits that are fostered through fieldwork activities. This makes fieldwork a highly pedagogical approach in the teaching and learning of Social Studies. Mensah et al. (2023) noted that field trip activities have enduring impacts on students, often resulting in the retention of specific content. It therefore appears that, for Social Studies teaching to be effective and meaningful, field trips or fieldwork activities should be given significant emphasis.

2.6.10 Inquiry Based Technique

In the context of the Social Studies curriculum for Colleges of Education in Ghana, the main focus is to foster students' understanding of their physical and social environment. This nature and objective of Social Studies curriculum line up with the pedagogical approach of the inquiry technique, which is deemed highly effective for facilitating students' engagement with their environment. As articulated by Yalley et al. (2023), the inquiry technique of teaching is characterized by a pedagogical scenario that emphasizes the active involvement of students in the learning process. They added that inquiry-based learning method "encourages students to become active learners through asking questions, investigating and analysing information, and drawing conclusions". This technique of teaching is further elaborated by Abudulai (2020) and Tamakloe (2008) as a method where students are motivated to evaluate evidence, formulate and test hypotheses, make deductions, identify relationships, and arrive at conclusions. Thus, the inquiry technique serves as a potent tool for enhancing students' familiarity with their environment, a key objective of Social Studies education. The pedagogical strategy of the inquiry technique is of paramount significance with regard to Social Studies education. This is primarily due to its capacity to facilitate learners' understanding of existing situations through a process of self-discovery and self-formulated hypotheses. This technique of teaching, therefore, serves as a powerful tool for fostering insight and promoting active learning among students.

The inquiry technique "promote retention and remembrance of knowledge acquired through the learners' own inquiry". This is why Kadeef (2000) puts it that, "through inquiry, students become familiar with needs and problems in their environment". As good citizens, "we should be able to investigate into problems that affect development

and try to get appropriate solutions to them”. Inquiry technique of teaching is one of the key techniques that “create this opportunity in learners”. This therefore suggests that, Social Studies which aims at citizenship education (Blege, 2001) should not leave out inquiry method as a means of delivery. This implies that, within the field of Social Studies, which is primarily oriented towards fostering citizenship education as per Blege, should essentially incorporate the inquiry technique of teaching as a crucial mode of instruction delivery. This technique of teaching is integral to the pedagogical framework of Social Studies, given its emphasis on active learning and critical thinking.

Gauging from the above, Yalley et al. (2023) posited that;

“Social Studies teachers must use the inquiry-based teaching method to direct students on how individuals came to know, interpret, act on knowledge possessed, construct new knowledge, and engage in critical thinking to solve personal and societal problems. The Social Studies teacher must establish the question and problem themes, and allow students to draw on their existing knowledge to respond”.

The underpinning philosophy of the “inquiry-based method is process-oriented rather than content-oriented”. The process-oriented nature enables “students to question the truth authenticate the accuracy, trustworthiness, validity and reliability of the information in the course of teaching and learning” (Shanmugavelu et al., 2020).

Furthermore, inquiry-based learning revealed that it is pedagogical strategy that emphasizes the importance of students' questions, ideas, and observations in the learning process (Gallifa, 2018). Through inquiry-based learning, Social Studies tutors can create a classroom environment where students are encouraged to explore complex topics, ask meaningful questions, and develop their own interpretations based on evidence. This approach not only enhances students' engagement and motivation but also helps them develop important skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and information literacy (Keddie, 2019). Prior research has shown

that inquiry-based learning can lead to improved academic outcomes and a deeper understanding of content, making it a valuable strategy for Social Studies tutors in CoEs (Gallifa, 2018; Schutz, 2017).

In conclusion, knowledge of instructional strategies pertains to the understanding of effective teaching methodologies. This knowledge is developed through various educational avenues, including undergraduate and graduate programmes, as well as certificate and re-certification courses. These educational experiences are designed to enhance a teacher's pedagogical knowledge, mirroring the way content classes augment subject matter knowledge. It is convincing for teachers to be well equipped in the methods of teaching, as they bear the responsibility of translating educational policies into actionable classroom practices. Specifically, in the context of Social Studies, teachers must possess not only the knowledge of the subject matter but also the knowledge of teaching techniques in order to effectively impart relevant knowledge, skills and values as well as positive attitudes. This dual competency is a trademark of effective and efficient Social Studies tutors.

2.7 Social Studies Tutors' Knowledge of Assessment

Effective assessment techniques go beyond traditional tests and quizzes to include formative assessments, such as classroom discussions, peer reviews, and self-assessments. Providing timely and constructive feedback helps students understand their progress and areas for improvement (Kromydas, 2017). Assessment is a critical component of how teachers use a variety of formative and summative assessments to measure students' learning and provide feedback. Formative assessments help teachers monitor students' progress and adjust their instruction while summative assessments provide a comprehensive evaluation of students' understanding. Differentiated assessment methods, such as offering students a choice of project

formats or allowing for alternative assessments, ensure that all students have the opportunity to demonstrate their learning in ways that align with their strengths and abilities (Addo, 2020).

Assessment in Social Studies education involves evaluating students' understanding of concepts, their ability to apply knowledge, and their critical thinking skills. This can be done through various methods, including quizzes, essays, projects, and classroom discussions (Kromydas, 2017; Addo, 2020). Effective assessment provides tutors with valuable insights into students' progress and identifies gaps in their knowledge. By analysing assessment data, tutors can determine which teaching strategies are working well and which ones need to be adjusted. Feedback, on the other hand, serves as a crucial mechanism for guiding students and tutors alike (Angyagre & Quainoo, 2019). For students, feedback helps them understand their strengths and weaknesses, providing them with specific guidance on how to improve. For tutors, feedback from students, peers, and self-reflection offers a mirror to their teaching practices. It allows them to see the impact of their teaching techniques make informed decisions about how to refine their approach. Constructive feedback encourages a growth mind-set, fostering an environment where continuous improvement is valued.

It is clear that the process of integrating assessment with feedback into teaching techniques begins with the establishment of clear learning objectives. Tutors need to define what they want students to achieve and how they will measure success. These objectives guide the development of assessment tools and criteria, ensuring that they are aligned with the desired outcomes. By having a clear framework, tutors can design assessments that accurately capture student learning and provide meaningful data for feedback. Once assessments are conducted, the analysis of results becomes a pivotal step. Tutors need to systematically review the data to identify patterns and trends.

This analysis can reveal common misconceptions, areas of confusion, and topics that require further emphasis.

Feedback is effective when it is timely, specific, and actionable. Timely feedback allows students to make immediate adjustments and reinforces their learning while it is still fresh. Specific feedback highlights particular areas of strength and areas for improvement, providing clear direction for students. Actionable feedback offers practical suggestions that students can implement to enhance their performance. Effective feedback is timely, specific, and constructive, helping students understand their strengths and areas for growth (Angyagre & Quainoo, 2019). For tutors, feedback should be similarly specific and actionable, allowing them to make targeted changes to their teaching techniques. Research highlights the importance of assessment with feedback in promoting student learning and achievement (Addo, 2020). By incorporating a variety of assessment teaching techniques and providing meaningful feedback, Social Studies tutors can support students' development and ensure that they are meeting learning objectives. Pre-service teachers learn how to assess students' readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles, and how to design instruction that accommodates these differences (Kromydas, 2017).

2.8 Tutors' Knowledge of Students' Misconception

Knowledge of learners is generally recognised as a central component of effective teaching, particularly within constructivist approaches to learning. Connelly and Clandinin (2007) conceptualise this knowledge as an understanding of learners' characteristics such as their prior conceptions, misconceptions, learning difficulties, and the implications these have for classroom environment and instructional planning. This view challenges deficit-oriented assumptions about learners and instead positions students as active meaning-makers who enter classrooms with established ideas

shaped by prior experiences. Similarly, Rebich and Gautier (2005) argue that learners do not approach instruction as blank slates. They rather bring pre-existing interpretations that influence how new content is understood. This highlights a key tension in teaching, especially in Social Studies, where students' interpretations of social concepts may differ significantly from teachers' intentions, often without teachers being fully aware of the experiential knowledge students draw upon. From a constructivist perspective, "learning is understood as an interpretive process in which new information is filtered through existing cognitive frameworks. As a result, learners may construct meanings that diverge from canonical disciplinary understandings. This underscores the importance of teachers' awareness of learners' prior knowledge and interpretive lenses, as failure to engage with these can limit conceptual change and deepen misconception.

Knowledge of learners' understanding of Social Studies is divided into two distinct categories. These are; one, the teachers' knowledge about the requirements for learning and two, the teachers' knowledge about areas of student difficulty (Connelly & Clandinin, 2007). The knowledge that students might have different abilities and learning styles is also included in this category. Teachers at all levels should be aware of students' varying abilities and respond favourably to be effective and efficient.

Teachers' knowledge about areas of student difficulty category of "knowledge of learners' understanding" includes the parts of the topics or concepts that students have difficulty learning. Also, teachers' knowledge of students' perceptions is perceived as one of the vital components of teacher knowledge. As posited by Connelly and Clandinin (2007), "learning is based on what happens in the classroom, and thus, not only what students do, but also the learning environment is important for learning". This implies that, Social Studies teachers should create conducive learning

environment that caters for varied needs and abilities of the students. A study conducted by Halim et al. (2011) on the impact of science teachers' "PCK on students' conceptual understanding of cellular respiration showed that teacher PCK has positive influence on conceptual understanding of cellular respiration".

Importantly, knowledge of learners' understanding should not be conflated with subject matter expertise alone. Kilic (2011) shows that while strong subject knowledge is essential, it does not guarantee effective teaching. An et al. (2004) further argue that pedagogical content knowledge requires more than the combination of subject knowledge and general pedagogy; it demands an understanding of how specific learners engage with specific content. Without this learner-focused dimension, instructional practices risk remaining technically sound but pedagogically disconnected.

Tanner et al. (2003) highlight that learners "possess varying levels of prior knowledge and interest in the topics or concepts introduced by their teachers in the classroom". It appears that, the learners' pre-existing knowledge or preconceptions about the subject matter (topics or concepts) may potentially impede their new learning experiences. This could culminate in a misinterpretation of a concept by the learners.

Consequently, teachers must actively consider learners' prior knowledge when selecting teaching strategies. Tanner et al. (2003) emphasise that transforming content into accessible forms requires explicit attention to documented misconceptions. Ryan and McCrae (2009) similarly argue that understanding learners' misconceptions provides valuable insight into their thinking and offers a foundation for targeted instructional interventions. In Social Studies, this necessitates the use of baseline assessments to identify what learners already know, believe, or misunderstand before new instruction begins. When teachers are aware of learners' existing knowledge,

they are better positioned to bridge the gap between familiar ideas and new concepts, thereby facilitating deeper understanding.

It is very important for Social Studies teachers at all levels to know what misconceptions are. This would enable them to investigate the misconceptions their “learners could possibly have about the topics that they were previously taught”. According to Larkin (2012), “misconceptions are pieces of wrong knowledge that may arise from learners’ prior experience and learning, both inside and outside of the classroom”. Also, a study carried] out by Larkin on pre-service secondary school teachers revealed that “teachers who have poor subject matter knowledge may contribute to the development of such misconceptions in learners since misconceptions are faulty extensions of productive prior learning” (Larkin, 2012). In the words of Batanero and Sanchez (2005), “reasoning based on misconceptions leads to consistently wrong problem solutions”. Such misconceptions typically arise when the newly introduced lesson does not align with the learner’s pre-existing conceptual knowledge about the topic or subject matter. Moreover, due to their strength and erroneous content, misconceptions pose a significant impediment to the acquisition of new concepts. However, according to Qian et al. (2020), “effective teachers are aware of the common misconceptions that learners may have regarding a particular topic and they structure their lessons in such a way so as to confront the misconception that the learners may have”.

According to Larkin (2012), for “classroom instruction to be successful in eliminating misconceptions, teachers must present the correct concepts in clear opposition to the students' faulty conceptions”. The chosen instruction or “if the teacher has knowledge of learners’ misconception” should “include demonstrations and activities that produce counter-evidence and plausible conceptual alternatives to target

misconceptions. The confrontation of ideas through discussions in the classroom is then internalised by students as a psychological process of competition that finally results in the replacement of the misconception”.

Several studies have suggested means of eliminating students’ misconceptions through thoughtful instructional design (Unterhalter et al., 2018; Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2019). In their seminal, Unterhalter et al. (2018) assert that “well-planned and thoughtfully executed lessons can enhance student understanding, motivation, and achievement”. Similarly, Adu-Gyamfi et al. (2019) suggest that, Social Studies “teachers can create structured and coherent learning experiences that support students’ academic and personal growth using lessons as a framework for their teaching. Also, Piaget’s theory of cognitive development provides insight into “how students’ thinking processes mature”, helping teachers to prepare their lesson to be “developmentally appropriate” (Ampofo, 2020).

As previously mentioned, “the key elements of Shulman’s conception of PCK are knowledge of representations of subject matter on the one hand and the understanding of specific learning difficulties and student conceptions on the other. Obviously, these elements are intertwined and should be used in a flexible manner: It is assumed that the more representations teachers have at their disposal and the better they recognise learning difficulties, the more effectively they can deploy their pedagogical content knowledge” (De Miranda, 2008).

In the context of Social Studies education, this suggests that teachers must possess a nuanced understanding of the conceptual challenges learners face when engaging with particular topics. Such knowledge enables teachers to design explanations, examples, and learning sequences that connect new ideas to prior knowledge. By foregrounding learners’ existing understandings and difficulties, teachers can support meaningful

conceptual integration and reduce the persistence of misconceptions. This underscores the need for further examination of the challenges Social Studies tutors encounter as they integrate content knowledge with pedagogical strategies in real classroom contexts.

2.9 Challenges in Pedagogical Content Knowledge Application

The integration of PCK in Social Studies education has long been recognised as a central to effective teaching. Shulman's (1987) conceptualisation of PCK positions it as the amalgamation of subject matter knowledge and pedagogical skill, enabling teachers to transform disciplinary knowledge into forms accessible to learners. Social Studies teacher education relies heavily on this capacity, given the field's breadth across historical, geographical, civic, cultural and economic domains. However, research consistently shows that teacher education programmes, particularly in low-resource context such as Ghana, face persistent obstacles that limit PCK integration and development. These challenges cut across from institutional constraints, pedagogical traditions, professional development structures, technological access and research engagement (Akyeampong, 2017; Kennedy, 2014; Osei, 2019; Zeichner, 2017).

A recurring issue in the literature is the chronic shortage of teaching and learning resources within teacher education institutions. Osei (2019) notes that many programmes lack up-to-date institutional materials and essential digital tools, which restricts teachers' ability to model contemporary, inquiry-oriented Social Studies pedagogy. Limited access to computers, digital archives and stable internet connectivity further undermines opportunities for student teachers to engage with current scholarship or use innovative institutional strategies.

Resource constraints alone, however, do not fully explain the problem. Akyeampong (2017) points out the influence of bureaucratic structures that confine teacher educators to rigid curriculum requirements. These administrative pressures often shift attention toward compliance rather than pedagogical innovation, creating an environment where PCK integration and development become secondary to procedural demands.

Another major strand in the literature concerns the uneven quality and relevance of professional development. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (2011) argue that continuous practice-embedded professional learning is a prerequisite for strengthening teachers' PCK because it enables the refinement of content knowledge, instructional strategies and assessment techniques. While the value of professional development is widely acknowledged, its implementation is frequently inadequate. Kennedy (2014) notes that many programmes adopt generic workshops that do not align with teachers' day-to-day classroom realities and often lacks sustained follow-up support. This critique is echoed by Guskey (2021), who attributes the limited impact of professional development to insufficient time allocation, minimal administrative support and weak evaluation mechanisms. Yaqub et al. (2020) reinforce the need for systematic assessment of professional development initiatives to ensure they genuinely contribute to the dual aims of content and pedagogy growth.

Pedagogical traditions within teacher education also present deeper structural challenges. Zeichner (2017) contends that traditional, lecture-based teaching techniques remain dominant in many teacher preparation programmes, which restrict opportunities for modelling learner-centred and inquiry-driven pedagogy. When teacher educators rely on conventional teaching techniques, student teachers receive limited exposure to the forms of reasoning, representation and assessment methods

that underpin robust PCK. The consequences extend into assessment practices. Black and Wiliam (2018) report that many teacher educators continue to rely on ‘standardised testing formats’ that do not capture higher-order thinking or disciplinary reasoning, thereby constraining the integration and development of assessment literacy as a major component of PCK.

Large class sizes further complicate efforts to foster PCK. With overcrowded classrooms, educators often default to highly transmissive teaching techniques, which restricts differentiation, formative assessment and personalised feedback, processes essential to PCK integration in lesson delivery. Al-Salmani et al. (2023) discovered that overcrowded instructional context tended to produce simplistic content delivery and limited opportunities for formative assessment. Mthethwa’s (2023) study supports this point, noting that while mentoring initiatives can mitigate some challenges, large classes still severely reduce the possibility for individualised pedagogical support.

The technological dimension introduces yet another layer. Gyamfi (2017) points out the digital divide as a persistent barrier, particularly for rural teaching institutions. Limited infrastructure, inadequate digital skills and insufficient technical support reduce the likelihood that Social Studies tutors will incorporate technology meaningfully into their pedagogy. Koehler and Mishra’s (2009) research on the TPACK framework suggests that without deliberate support, teachers often struggle to integrate technology with content and pedagogy in strategic ways. Resistance to technological change further compounds this challenge.

Some several studies highlight the limited research engagement of tutors as a structural impediment to PCK enactment in classrooms (Borg, 2023; Owusu-Agyeman (2019). Borg (2023) emphasises that teachers who do not engage with research have fewer opportunities to update their content knowledge, critique their

pedagogical assumptions, or introduce evidence-informed practices. Owusu-Agyeman (2019) attributes low research participation to heavy workloads, insufficient institutional support and] limited access to scholarly resources. The absence of research-oriented professional communities or platforms for sharing best practices further isolates teachers from peer learning. Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018) argue that without collaborative structures, educators lose the professional dialogue needed to refine their pedagogical reasoning and expand their PCK.

Time constraints during classroom instruction were also found to influence the enactment of PCK. Teaching approaches informed by PCK required flexibility, formative assessment, and opportunities for learner interaction. However, “fixed lesson durations and examination-oriented instructional schedules often limited teachers’ capacity to respond to learners’ difficulties or misconceptions as lessons progressed” (Berry et al., 2015). Consequently, instruction became more “teacher-directed, reducing opportunities for pedagogical adaptation” (Nilsson, 2008).

The enactment of PCK during teaching is also time-sensitive. Facilitating inquiry, guiding group work, and addressing individual misconceptions are pedagogical processes that require flexible, unrushed classroom time. The pressure to adhere to a “packed curriculum often leads teachers to curtail such interactive, student-led activities in favour of direct instruction to ensure curriculum coverage” (Wang, 2011). This tension is acute in Ghanaian classrooms, where large class sizes further exacerbate time management challenges, making it difficult for teachers to implement the formative assessment and differentiated instruction that are hallmarks of strong PCK (Akyeampong, 2017).

Empirical studies further showed that time pressure affected the use of instructional practices closely related to PCK. Teachers who perceived high levels of “time constraint reported less frequent use of inquiry-based and cognitively demanding strategies” (Teig et al., 2019). Although these studies were often framed in terms of “instructional quality”, the findings were relevant to PCK because such practices depended on the integration of content knowledge and pedagogy within available instructional time.

Within the Ghanaian educational context, “time challenges were compounded by factors such as large class sizes, heavy teaching loads, continuous assessment demands”, and additional administrative responsibilities (Akyeampong, 2017; Pryor et al., 2012). These conditions reduced opportunities for reflective lesson preparation and constrained teachers’ ability to implement PCK-informed instructional strategies consistently. In addition, curriculum density and pressure to complete curriculum further limited teachers’ flexibility in addressing learners’ conceptual difficulties (MoE, 2019; Rollnick et al., 2008).

Collectively, these studies point out to a “multidimensional set of constraints” that shapes the application of PCK for effective classroom deliberation in Social Studies education. The literature suggests that improvements will require more than isolated interventions, which will depend on systemic reforms that address resource disparities, institutional governance, pedagogical cultures and professional identities of Social Studies tutors.

2.10 Summary

The chapter has outlined the theoretical foundations of the study by examining Shulman’s Pedagogical Content Knowledge theory and Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory in relation to Social Studies education. The literature reveals that there is an

integration of theories in Social Studies education. For instance, constructivism emphasizes active socially embedded learning which aligned with Social Studies goal of preparing responsible citizens. Pedagogical Content Knowledge also empowers educators to use interactive teaching techniques in teaching Social Studies. Furthermore, a key gap in this literature is the lack of in-depth qualitative research examining how Social Studies teachers perceive, enact, and adapt subject-specific pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) in real classroom contexts. In particular, little is known about how teachers' stated philosophies, experiences, and professional learning translate into everyday instructional decisions and responses to students' misconceptions.

Despite extensive scholarship emphasising the importance of strong content (subject matter) knowledge in Social Studies, limited attention has been paid to how this knowledge is understood and enacted by Social Studies tutors, especially within teacher education contexts. Much of the literature treats content knowledge as stable and clearly defined, even as it acknowledges that Social Studies is characterised by conceptual ambiguity, contested purposes, and an expansive, ill-defined scope. What remains largely missing are qualitative, practice-based studies that explore how tutors make sense of this ambiguity in their everyday teaching. There is little empirical insight into how Colleges of Education Social Studies tutors interpret the nature, boundaries, and priorities of Social Studies content, how these interpretations shape instructional emphasis, and how they influence pedagogical decisions when preparing teacher trainees. This gap is particularly evident in Colleges of Education in Ghana, where tutors are expected to teach an integrated, citizenship-oriented subject without clearly articulated core content, raising unresolved questions about coherence, consistency, and depth in content delivery.

Similarly, although the literature clearly outlines what effective Social Studies pedagogy should entail and advocates learner-centred approaches, there is a lack of context-sensitive qualitative research exploring how tutors in the selected Colleges of Education in Ghana understand, interpret, and enact these pedagogical strategies in everyday practice. Much of the existing work remains prescriptive, offering idealised models rather than grounded accounts of Social Studies tutors' lived experiences, decision-making processes, and constraints. Consequently, there is limited understanding of how Social Studies tutors navigate the gap between recommended pedagogies and actual classroom enactment within specific institutional, cultural, and resource conditions. Another gap concerns assessment practices. There is limited qualitative research into how Social Studies tutors experience, interpret, and use assessment feedback in everyday Social Studies classrooms, particularly how contextual factors shape whether formative assessment meaningfully informs teaching decisions and student learning.

Although teachers' knowledge of learners' prior conceptions and misconceptions is widely recognised as a core component of PCK, existing research focuses largely on theoretical frameworks and learning outcomes. What remains underexplored is how Social Studies tutors perceive and integrate knowledge of learners' understanding in real classroom contexts. Many studies assume that awareness of misconceptions naturally leads to effective instructional responses, yet there is little qualitative evidence capturing tutors' lived experiences, in-the-moment judgments, and contextual constraints. In particular, little is known about how Social Studies tutors identify misconceptions during instruction, how institutional expectations and curriculum demands shape their responses, and how they balance subject content, pedagogy, and diverse learner needs. This highlights the need for qualitative research

that foregrounds classroom realities rather than abstract conceptions of learner knowledge.

Finally, despite research documenting systemic barriers to PCK integration, limited empirical attention has been given to how Social Studies tutors in Ghana themselves make sense of, negotiate, and prioritise PCK within resource-constrained, time-pressured, and policy-driven environments. Existing studies tend to catalogue structural challenges but offer little insight into tutors' professional judgments, adaptive strategies, and everyday practices. As a result, our understanding of how PCK is constructed, enacted, or compromised in teacher education classrooms remains incomplete. The main focus of this study is to fill these gaps in the literature. The succeeding chapter discusses the research methodology and methods adopted for this study.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The chapter three of this piece of work discusses the methodology that was employed for this study. The chapter basically covers the philosophical considerations, the research approach, the design employed for the study, the population, the sample and sampling procedures, the data collection instrument, data collection procedure and data analysis.

3.1 Philosophical Considerations

The researcher found interpretivism philosophy to be of greater relevance and applicability for this study. An important consideration in any research process is the study's philosophical underpinnings, which provide the foundation for the research. It therefore appears that, "the nature of research is often influenced by an investigator's philosophical" position (worldview). According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), every research work is built upon a foundation, "which can be explicit or implicit, and is derived from the researcher's chosen philosophical framework".

In the most fundamental sense, interpretivism is a philosophical ideology that promotes the idea that people are deliberate and creative in their actions and actively construct their social world (Cohen et al., 2017). According to Pervin and Mokhtar (2022), interpretivism philosophy posits that meaning is not inherent in the world, but rather is constructed through consciousness, thereby rejecting the objectivist perspective. This study's exploratory and contextual nature warrants the adoption of an interpretivism philosophy paradigm. This philosophical position is most suitable in situations where the "social contexts demand analysis informed by multiple and diverse perspectives" (Pulla & Carter, 2018; Van der Walt, 2020).

Philosophically, researchers are guided by foundational beliefs concerning the essence of existence (ontology), how to acquire knowledge, that is the relationship between the investigator and subject (epistemology), value of the research (axiology), language of the research (rhetoric) and, the methods used in the research process (methodology) (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This study represents the interpretivism worldview in that interpretivist researchers choose a study that uncovers inside perspectives or real meanings of social phenomena from its study participants as a good social knowledge (Wahyuni, 2012). In terms of axiology, interpretivist researchers take the stance of the insider's perspective, which means to study the social reality from the perspective of the people themselves (Moroi, 2021). During the study, the experiences and values of both research participants and the researcher substantially influenced the collection of data and its analysis thereon. This paradigm (framework) is relevant as it facilitated the exploration of matters that are pertinent to the subject of this investigation.

Additionally, interpretivists ontologically believe that multiple realities exist, subject to human experiences and interpretation and further espouses that reality is a social construct. Its correspondent epistemology, according to Moroi (2021), is that knowledge generated is subjective, time bound, and context-dependent, whilst its methodology is founded on the assumption that knowledge is created through a researcher's identification of the various interpretations and constructions of reality that exists, and attempts to establish patterns.

Thirdly, an interpretivist approach to social research was chosen by the researcher because interpretivism is widely used for qualitative studies, utilising methodologies such as "semi-structured interviews or non-participant observation" (Blaikie & Priest, 2022). Interpretivists, according to Blaikie and Priest (2022), further opine that individuals are not just puppets who react to external social forces as positivists

believe; rather, individuals are intricate and complex and different people experience and understand the same ‘objective reality’ in very different ways and have their own, often very different, reasons for acting in the world, thereby making scientific methods not appropriate or suitable.

The interpretivists often criticize ‘scientific sociology’ (positivism) because many of the statistics it relies on are themselves socially constructed (Blaikie & Priest, 2022). For the purpose of this study, the interpretivists’ worldview has been employed to understand Social Studies tutors’ conception or perspective on PCK.

According to this interpretive research paradigm (Tracy, 2024; Blaikie & Priest, 2022), the thinking, languages and explaining principles, people employ to study social phenomena must first be consistent with requirements that are fundamental and conventional to the field. Otherwise, it is impossible for people to make meaningful elaboration on the research subjects, let alone make exchanges with other parties. Moreover, this school of thought takes into account the researcher’s personal background, value orientation and perspectives, which would greatly affect the research.

This study adopted interpretivism paradigm in the sense that interpretivist believe in the social construction of reality (Blaikie & Priest, 2022). This is because, interpretivism paradigm holds the belief that there is not one observable reality but rather multiple realities, as individuals possess varied interpretations of a single event or their experiences. In this philosophical paradigm, individuals try to understand their world and develop personal interpretations of their lived experiences. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), “these meanings are diverse and numerous, prompting the researcher to explore the complexity of views”. The experiences, are however, informed by the historical and cultural norms and are discovered through interaction

with the individual. Researchers who believe in this worldview do not “find” knowledge they rather construct it (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

3.2. Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative approach which enabled the researcher to gather rich and in-depth data within its natural setting, aligning with the attributes of an interpretivist paradigm. Muzari et al. (2022) posit that “a qualitative approach is research that produces data of a descriptive nature”. The data generated is often from the participant’s written expressions, perceptions and experiences”. Furthermore, Muzari et al. (2022) argue that “research within this type of approach focuses on peoples’ real-life experiences and it allows the researcher to get to know people personally and see them for the way they are”. The choice of a qualitative research approach was principally guided by the interpretivist philosophy of knowledge acquisition (epistemological framework). This interpretivist epistemological framework posits that reality is not a fixed, objective entity, but rather is socially constructed and varies according to the diverse perspectives of participants (Blaikie & Priest, 2022). These participants or individuals assign subjective meanings to their experiences, thereby shaping their understanding of reality.

The choice of qualitative research approach for this study was firmly rooted in an interpretivist paradigm, which portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever-changing (Omodan, 2024). This philosophical stance aligns with the purpose of this study, which is to explore Social Studies tutors’ pedagogical content knowledge in preparing future effective teachers in the selected University of Cape Coast-affiliated colleges of education. A qualitative methodology, which emphasises depth, context, and subjective meaning, was therefore essential.

A methodological approach is a requisite to examine tutors working within their specific contexts. Advocates of qualitative research inquiry agree that, although such research primarily seeks to understand real-world settings or environments, a wide range of methodological approaches is available when conducting qualitative research. The emphasis placed on “natural settings is stressed by many researchers as a significant feature of qualitative research” (Muzari et al. 2022; Yin, 2015).

Qualitative research represents a mode of inquiry employed across various academic disciplines, particularly within the realms of the Human and Social Sciences, including the field of education. This study adopted Tracy (2024) description of qualitative research as explanation for the choice of qualitative methods for empirical research studies. The study was “multi-method in focus” since an array of data generation methods, including but not limited to interviews and observations were employed. The process of teaching is intensely personal, and through the conducted interviews, participants revealed their unique experiences and narrative structure. These narratives encompassed the spectrum of their teaching careers, highlighting both ups and downs, as well as routine problems encountered in the daily fulfilment of their tasks. The role of the researcher within the context of an interpretivist paradigm is therefore to “understand, explain, and clarify the social reality from the perspectives of the participants” (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 19).

Also, the study adopted qualitative approach because most of the qualitative researchers engaged in interpretive studies with the intention of deriving meaning from investigating phenomena within real-world settings (Hatch, 2023). The participants for this study, worked within their environments where they individually construct realities within their classrooms and collectively, through interactions with students and colleagues. This process of reality construction is inherently subjective,

varying from one individual to another. As mentioned earlier, PCK represents a complex construct that holds different interpretations and applications across individuals.

The qualitative research methodology adopted in this study is compatible with the researcher's ontological perspective, which acknowledges the existence of multiple realities rather than a singular, absolute truth. The researcher's goal was to closely capture the perspectives of the participants, that is, Social Studies tutors at the selected University of Cape Coast-affiliated CoEs, thereby generating evidence rooted in their unique perceptions. Knowledge, therefore, from an epistemological assumption, emerges through these subjective evidences. The researcher further contends that the participants' experiences must be contextualised within specific time and space, as these elements are inseparable from their lived experience. Embracing an axiological position, the researcher remained attuned to these contextual factors, recognising their potential impact on the participants' behaviour, beliefs, and values. Given that researchers' values invariably influence any study due to their deep involvement, the researcher adopted a non-judgmental stance throughout the research process.

Also, Yin (2015, p. 8) outlines five major features that can help to frame this qualitative research methodology as:

“studying the meaning of people's lives, under real-world conditions; representing the views and perspectives of the people in a study; covering the contextual conditions within which people live; contributing insights into existing or emerging concepts that may help to explain human social behaviour; striving to use multiple sources of evidence rather than relying on a single source alone”.

The first characteristic by Yin (2015) emphasises the exploration of individuals' lives within authentic conditions. This feature aligns with this study's objective to elucidate the PCK of Social Studies tutors within their natural classroom settings. The tutors'

classroom is their ‘real world’ thereby providing a substantive context for an in-depth examination of their knowledge base.

The second characteristic underscores the necessity to encapsulate the perspectives and viewpoints of participants. Correspondingly, this study was structured to afford Social Studies tutors many opportunities, via a series of interviews, to express views about their pedagogical approaches and various facets, encompassing planning, implementing, and self-assessment of their teaching practices.

The third feature pertains to the exploration of ‘contextual conditions that shape individuals’ experiences’ (Yin, 2015, p. 8). Within the scope of this study, the professional milieu of Social Studies tutors operating in CoEs is examined. These institutions embody distinct cultures and foster networks of relationships among tutors, parents, administrative staff, and the broader community they serve. An investigation into the contextual elements that influence the tutors participating in this study is deemed crucial.

With regard to the fourth characteristic, Yin (2015) posits that qualitative research should furnish ‘insights into extant or nascent concepts that may elucidate human social behaviour’. To this end, the present study endeavours to create awareness regarding the PCK of Social Studies tutors to build a deeper understanding of how the participants teach. It also helps to explain the phenomenon of PCK of Social Studies tutors in CoEs in the Greater Accra, Central, Ashanti and Western North Regions of Ghana. Lastly, Yin advocates for a multiple sources of evidentiary approach in qualitative research as opposed to reliance on a singular data source. This study adheres to this principle by integrating multiple evidence sources to construct a robust understanding of the phenomena under investigation.

Consequently, a qualitative research approach was deemed appropriate for this study, given that the sample population comprised only Social Studies tutors observed within their authentic classroom settings (Muzari et al., 2022). To deeply understand the participants' lived experiences, lesson observations and video-stimulated interviews were employed.

3.3 Research Design

The study adopted a case study design to explore the pedagogical content knowledge of Social Studies tutors in selected CoEs affiliated with the University of Cape Coast. Case study design has been defined by different authors and researchers. Creswell and Creswell (2017) described a case study as an investigation aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of a specific 'case' or bounded system, which involves understanding an event, activity, process, or one or more individuals in detail". In explaining a case study as a research design, Creswell and Poth (2018) opined that "case studies give clues that can lead to understanding the system in which the problem was found". Tracy (2024) also noted that "case studies typically employ a combination of methods, including in-depth interviewing and observation, to gain a comprehensive understanding of situations, events, or processes".

A case study design was employed because it allowed the researcher to gain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the PCK of Social Studies tutors in the CoEs. Tracy (2024) explains that case study design generates an in-depth understanding of a complex issue, event, or phenomenon as they unfold in their natural context. In this study, the purpose was not to identify what Social Studies tutors do, but to understand how and why they make certain instructional choices in everyday practice. The case study design therefore made it possible to observe,

question, and interpret these practices in ways that reflect the realities of their professional environment.

Additionally, Priya (2021) suggests that “case study design is employed to explain, describe, or explore events or phenomena within their everyday contexts. This design provides a detailed and nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics, relationships, and processes involved”. The researcher therefore adopted case study design in this study which facilitated an extensive exploration into the Social Studies tutors’ (participants) lived reality or experiences, allowing for careful documentation of their instructional encounters or lessons. In the context of this study, teaching and classroom practices serve as “real-life contexts”. This is in line with Omodan (2024) and Bertram and Christiansen (2014) explanation that “case studies aim to describe what it is like to be in a specific context and thus they are descriptive in nature”.

The researcher deemed it appropriate to employ a case study design for this study due to its suitability for the research objectives. Specifically, the design enabled an in-depth investigation into the PCK of Social Studies tutors in the selected CoEs in Ghana and their classroom practices. This type of case study was particularly conducive to answering the research questions posited in the study.

Yin (2015, p. 15) argues that “case study design is a widely used research design, and allows the researcher to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events. These ‘real-life events’ are not necessarily connected to culture”. A teacher’s approach is shaped by their professional identity, which constitutes integral part of their overall teaching persona. While the researcher specifically examined factors such as knowledge domains and professional identities of the individuals involved, these elements together contribute to a holistic understanding of the participants.

Case study design has been a subject of considerable debate among scholars due to the diverse range of research and evaluation reports that, despite employing different procedures, methods, and styles, are collectively labelled as ‘case studies’ (Tracy, 2024; Cohen et al., 2017). For instance, Cohen et al. (2017, p. 25) argue that a case study has several weaknesses:

“The findings may not be generalisable; they are not easily open to cross-checking, hence they may be selective, biased and subjective; and they are prone to problems of observer bias, despite attempts made to address reflexivity.”

In spite of these limitations, the strengths of a case study design in this study are particularly valuable, as it enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the research problem from the perspectives of the participants involved. In attempting to ascertain “the types of case study approaches”, various researchers (Stake, 2013; Cohen et al., 2017; Yin, 2014) have proposed distinct categorisations of case study approaches. However, Creswell and Poth (2018) and Yin (2018) have argued that “the case study approach comes in two varieties: single-case study and multiple-case study”.

For this study, the researcher adopted a single case study design. The single case study design was selected for its potential to generate an in-depth, contextual understanding of the phenomenon. Through sustained interaction with Social Studies tutors, their unique perspectives and experiences became central to the analysis, providing the particularistic data essential for developing the study’s findings. In addition, the single case study design enabled the researcher to explore Social Studies tutors’ PCK within the milieu of their real-life teaching environments.

Case study research design is a preferred methodology among researchers operating within the interpretive paradigm, which emphasizes the importance of understanding social phenomena through in-depth, contextual analysis (Omodan, 2024). This approach focuses on examining a single instance or case, situated within its natural environment, to gain a nuanced understanding of the complex interactions and meanings that shape the phenomenon being studied. By immersing themselves in the case setting, researchers can gather rich, qualitative data that reveals the complexities and subtleties of the case, allowing for a more comprehensive and contextualized understanding of the research phenomenon.

The second justification for choosing the case study design was its effectiveness in addressing research questions of a “how” nature. Most of the research questions used in this study were “how” nature of questions. According to Yin (2015), “a case study research is suitable for investigating research questions of a ‘how’ or ‘why’ nature, mostly where the researcher has little control over the actions of those involved in the study and where the focus is on contemporary events”.

Thirdly, employing a case study design was particularly appropriate for this work, as the researcher followed the conditions that justify its use. Yin (2015) asserts that “there are three conditions that determine the type of strategy to use, namely: (a) the type of research question asked; (b) the degree to which the researcher has control over actual behavioural events; and (c) the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events”.

In this study, fifteen Social Studies tutors were studied in-depth through the means of interviews and observations. It logically follows that findings based on these limited number of cases cannot be generalised to represent the entire Social Studies tutors. However, in his work, Yin (2014) explains “the frequently asked question: ‘how can

one generalize from a single case?’ and asserts that the exact same question can be asked of a scientific experiment, namely: ‘how can one generalize from a single experiment?’ Yin provides an explanation that:

“... case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes ... the case study does not represent a “sample,” and in doing a case study, your goal will be to expand and generalize theories ... and not to enumerate frequencies” (p.41).

Also, interpretivist research endeavours to understand a phenomenon and generate insights, rather than seeking broad generalisations (Dehalwar, & Sharma, 2023). The primary purpose of this study was to explore, describe and, to a lesser extent, explain the individual cases and their subjective perceptions of reality, without an explicit focus on generalisation.

A notable strength mentioned by Cohen et al. (2017, p.18) in the context of this study, is the accessibility of a case study results which are more easily understood, to a broad audience. Unlike specialised explanation, the language employed in a case study is less reliant on technical jargon. Levi and Weingast (2022), delve into “the narrative or stories aspects of case studies, emphasising that they offer accounts of human triumph and failures”. These narratives have the potential to enhance and enliven the reader’s self-understanding. Through the semi-structured interviews granted to the participants in this study, the Social Studies tutors had the opportunity to share their stories. However, it is important to recognise that these stories may be influenced by selectivity, reflecting what came to mind at the time of the interview, yet they still hold pedagogical value for Social Studies tutors.

Another rationale for employing a case study design in this study is its contextual specificity. By design, a case study is deeply embedded within a particular setting (place), time, and specific subject of investigation. According to Proffitt (2020, p.

464), “much of teacher education is generic ‘offering vague general principles’ that may be applied to a vast range of situations”. The cases examine in this study were intricately tied to particular setting (place), time, and contextual conditions. Consequently, they provided valuable insight into specific situations that transcended generic applicability. These cases present valuable opportunities for Social Studies tutors to engage in reflective analysis on different teacher cases and their professional practice. Proffitt (2020, p. 543) contends that “the case resides in the territory between theory and practice, between idea and experience”. In essence, the case study method offers insight into teaching practices while concurrently establishing meaningful connections to educational theory. Through careful examination of a case, it became feasible to discern how tutors connect the intricate interplay between theory and their instructional practice.

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) assert that notwithstanding the inherent limitations, many researchers have employed a case study design in PCK studies due to its descriptive and detailed nature. Although a case study exhibits certain weakness, their strengths in the context of qualitative research far outweigh these weaknesses. This therefore, led the researcher to select a case study design for this research.

3.4 Study Settings

The study was conducted in five CoEs affiliated with the University of Cape Coast. The profiles of the selected CoEs for the study are presented as follows.

3.4.1 Profile of OLA College of Education

OLA College of Education (OLCE) in Cape Coast has a long and influential presence in Ghana’s teacher-education system. Founded in 1924 by the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles, it stands among the oldest training colleges in the country. The college is known for its strong academic culture, emphasis on discipline, and commitment to

forming teachers with sound professional and personal values (OLCE, 2023). Its motto, *Semper Fidelis* (“Always Faithful”) reflects that identity.

The college is affiliated with the University of Cape Coast, which oversees the award of Bachelor of Education degrees and provides academic guidance for curriculum design, instructional standards, and quality assurance. OLA began with a small group of trainees and has developed over time into a vibrant learning community that serves several hundred students. Its history as a women’s college remains intact. OLA continues to operate as an all-female institution, focusing on the development of women educators for Ghana’s basic school system.

OLA offers a range of B. Ed. programmes across the basic-education spectrum. Students can specialise in Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, or various Junior High School subjects such as Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Religious and Moral Education, and Ghanaian Language. These programmes are structured to prepare trainees with strong pedagogical foundations, subject knowledge, and the practical skills needed for effective classroom teaching (OLCE, 2023).

Beyond its academic programmes, the college provides counselling and professional development support to help student teachers manage the demands of training and build confidence as they prepare for real classroom work (OLCE, 2023). This support contributes meaningfully to students’ growth and readiness for the teaching profession. With its long history, clear mission, and continued focus on women’s teacher education, OLA College of Education remains a major contributor to Ghana’s education sector and a significant training environment for future female educators.

3.4.2 Profile of Atebubu College of Education

The Atebubu College of Education (ATCE) serves as a premier beacon of teaching training in the Bono East Region of Ghana. The college was established in October 1963. It was founded with the mission to train professional teachers for basic schools. The college is currently affiliated to the University of Cape Coast. Over the decades, Atebubu College of Education has transformed from a small training centre into a vibrant tertiary community. It is a fully co-educational institution, fostering a collaborative environment where male and female trainees learn side by side to build the future of the nation. In line with the national transition to tertiary status, Atebubu College of Education offers a comprehensive suite of four-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree programmes. The curriculum is designed to equip trainees with modern pedagogical skills across various specialisation, including; Early Childhood Education, Primary Education and Junior High School (JHS) Education (with specialisms in areas such as Geography, History, and Social Studies).

At the heart of its educational mission, the college is guided by its motto, “Igniting minds beyond borders”. It focuses on the holistic teacher development by blending academic rigour with moral discipline. Through various initiatives, Atebubu College of Education ensures its graduates are intellectually competent and socially responsible, ready to become role models in their communities they will serve (ATCE, 2023).

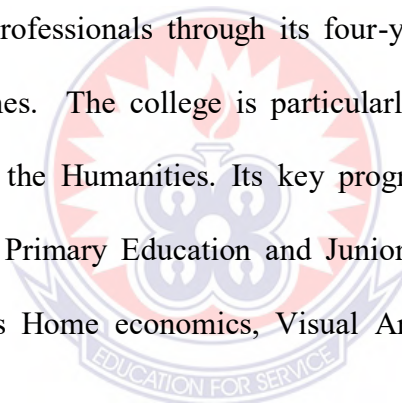
3.4.3 Profile of St. Teresa’s College of Education

St. Teresa’s College of Education (STCE) is affiliated with the University of Cape Coast. The institution has a rich history, having been established on November 1, 1961. The college was born out of the vision of the Catholic Church under the auspices of the late Rt. Rev. Anthony Konings, who sought to create a centre of

excellence dedicated to the education and empowerment of women in the Volta Region and Ghana at large. St. Teresa's maintains a unique identity as a female institution.

Rooted in Catholic educational philosophy and guided by its motto "Live the Truth in Charity", the college envisions becoming a world-class centre for the training female teachers who are both professionally competent and morally upright. Its mission is to provide quality teacher education through a holistic approach that ensures student teachers graduate with the discipline, spiritual grounding and professional skills needed to transform lives in basic schools across the country.

St. Teresa's College of Education has a distinctive record of moulding teacher trainees into refined professionals through its four-year Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.) degree programmes. The college is particularly renowned for its strength in Vocational Skills and the Humanities. Its key programme offerings include Early Childhood Education, Primary Education and Junior High School Education, with specialisations such as Home economics, Visual Arts and Social Studies (STCE, 2023).



3.4.4 Profile of Kibi Presbyterian College of Education

The Kibi Presbyterian College of Education (KPCE), a co-educational institution, was founded in October 1963. It is affiliated with the University of Cape Coast. Kibi Presbyterian College of Education offers a range of Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.) programmes. These include Early Childhood Education, Primary Education and Junior High School Education. The Junior High School specialisations cover subjects such as Science and Mathematics, ICT and Mathematics, Science and ICT, Technical and Vocational, and Social Studies. In addition to its academic programmes, the college provides counselling services specifically designed for its graduating teacher

trainees. These initiatives aim to enhance their professional development and support as they transition into the teaching field. As stated by the college (KPCE, 2023), these diverse programmes reflect the KPCE's commitment to preparing teachers across various disciplines and providing comprehensive support for their career growth and success.

3.4.5 Profile of St. Monica's College of Education

St. Monica's College of Education (SMCE) is affiliated with the University of Cape Coast. Steeped in history, it was founded in 1930 by the Sisters of the Order of the Holy Paraclete (OHP) from Whitby, England. Located in Mampong-Ashanti, it holds a prestigious place as the first female teacher training college in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

The college began with humble origins, driven by a mission to empower women through education. From a small pioneer class, St. Monica's has grown exponentially over the decades. This growth is supported by a serene campus environment that blends tradition with modern educational needs (SMCE, 2023).

St. Monica's College of Education offers a comprehensive range of Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.) programmes. While it offers robust training in Early Childhood Education, Primary Education and Junior High School Education, the college is particularly recognised for its excellence in Technical and Vocational Education, especially Home Economics. It also offers specialisations in Visual Arts and Social Studies (SMCE, 2023).

In addition, the college places strong emphasis on moral and spiritual development, guided by the Anglican tradition. Its curriculum is designed to create teachers and to mould disciplined and resourceful women who can serve as role models in their communities. As a female institution, St. Monica's demonstrates its enduring

commitment to the professional advancement and success of women in the teaching profession.

Table 3.1: Summary of University of Cape Coast-Affiliated Colleges of Education

Colleges	Year Established
Foso College of Education	1965
St. Francis College of Education	1908
OLA College of Education	1924
St. Ambrose College of Education	2009
Kibi College of Education	1963
Abetifi Presbyterian College of Education	1952
Holy Child College of Education	1946
St. Teresa's College of Education	1961
Jasikan College of Education	1952
Offinso College of Education	1955
S.D.A. College of Education, Agona	1960
Berekum College of Education	1953
St. Monica's College of Education	1930
Atebubu College of Education	1963

Source: Colleges Administrative Offices, 2023

3.5 Population

There were fourteen Colleges of Education affiliated with the University of Cape Coast as at the time of study. Therefore, the target population for this study consisted of all Social Studies tutors teaching Social Studies courses in Colleges of Education affiliated with the University of Cape Coast. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), the target population refers to the specific group of entities that a researcher intends to study or describe, and to which the findings is generalized. The target population for this included college of education-based tutors responsible for the training of Basic school Social Studies teachers. However, the accessible population for this study was eighteen Social Studies tutors in the selected CoEs namely, OLA

College of Education, Kibi Presbyterian College of Education, Atebubu College of Education, St. Teresa's College of Education and St. Monica's College of Education (Colleges Administrative Offices, 2023). This constituted the accessible population for the study. Below is a breakdown of the tutors responsible for the teaching of Social Studies courses at the selected CoEs.

Table 3.2: Number of Social Studies Tutors in the Selected Colleges of Education

College	Male	Female	Total Population
OLA College of Education	3	1	4
Atebubu College of Education	2	1	3
Kibi Presbyterian College of Education	2	2	4
St. Monica's College of Education	3	1	4
St. Teresa's College of Education	1	2	3
Total	11	7	18

Source: Colleges Administrative Offices, 2023

3.5.1 Justification for Selecting University of Cape Coast-Affiliated Colleges

The University of Cape Coast-affiliated colleges were chosen for the study based on their methodological homogeneity and control. Selecting colleges within a single affiliation network like University of Cape Coast helped established a context of methodological homogeneity that controlled for important extraneous institutional variables. This approach minimised variance stemming from differing university-wide curricula, supervision philosophies and assessment regimes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). By ensuring all sampled colleges operate under University of Cape Coast's uniform curriculum framework and quality assurance systems, the study isolated the phenomenon of PCK from the confounding effects of disparate institutional mandates. This homogeneity, in turn, enhanced the study's credibility (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

The selection of University of Cape Coast-affiliated colleges is grounded in their unique and consistent emphasis on Social Studies as a core, major and elective subject across teacher training programmes. This institutional characteristic ensured that the research settings are information-rich and directly aligned with the study's objectives (Patton, 2015). Tutors within these colleges engage deeply and repeatedly with Social Studies pedagogy across multiple programme streams, making their experiences and knowledge formations particularly salient for investigating discipline-specific PCK. This alignment between the institutional context and research subject guarantees that the data collected is contextually authentic and theoretically relevant to the phenomenon under investigation (Stake, 2013).

Also, University of Cape Coast was instrumental in pioneering the national transition from the Diploma to the four-year Bachelor of Education degree programme, positioning its affiliated colleges as the first institutions to fully operationalize the new, “standards aligned, degree level teacher training model” in the country. Consequently, this created a natural and coherent context for investigation, ensuring that findings were inherently aligned with the prevailing national educational policy and professional standards.

Colleges affiliated with the University of Cape Coast operate in close compliance with the National Teacher Education Curriculum Framework and National Teachers' Standards (MoE, 2017), under coordination of their mentoring university. This strategic selection ensured that the study explored PCK within “an environment” directly shaped by and responsive to prevailing national educational policies and professional standards.

University of Cape Coast is nationally and historically recognised as a centre of excellence in the teacher education and curriculum leadership in Ghana. The selection of its affiliated colleges situates this study within a well-established, research based system explicitly designed for high quality teacher preparation (Akyeampong, 2017). This affiliation reflects a shared exposure to University of Cape Coast's "pedagogical philosophy and research-informed practices". Thus, exploring PCK within this particular "ecosystem" enriched the conceptual depth and transferability of the findings.

3.6 Sample and Sampling Procedures

Ghana's forty-six (46) CoEs are affiliated with six (6) public universities. These universities are the University of Cape Coast, University of Education, Winneba, University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, University for Development Studies, and Akenten Appiah-Menka University of Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Development. The University of Cape Coast is renowned for its long-standing expertise in teacher education and educational leadership. The University of Education, Winneba, focuses on teacher training and curriculum innovation. The University of Ghana contributes its strong research culture and academic tradition to teacher preparation. The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology is recognized for promoting science, technology and applied education. The University for Development Studies stresses community development and local relevance, particularly in northern Ghana, while the Akenten Appiah-Menka University of Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Development supports colleges that specialise in technical, vocational and entrepreneurial education. Through purposive sampling, the University of Cape Coast

affiliates were selected because most of the colleges under this affiliation offer Social Studies as a core, major and an elective subject.

The colleges affiliated with University of Cape Coast were selected because they operate under a uniform curriculum framework, supervision system and assessment standards, which provided a consistent basis for comparison. Also, University of Cape Coast's long-standing leadership in teacher education and its central role in shaping Social Studies curriculum made its affiliated colleges an appropriate and conceptually grounded setting for examining pedagogical content knowledge. Focusing on these colleges ensured consistency in training philosophy and professional preparation structures, which strengthened the researcher's ability to generate deep and meaningful insights into how Social Studies tutors' PCK is perceived and practiced.

A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select Social Studies tutors for the study (Cohen et al, 2007). Among the CoEs affiliated with the University of Cape Coast, fourteen were identified, five of which offered Social Studies as a major course, an elective subject and as a core subject. These five colleges were purposively selected because they were the only ones relevant to the focus of the study. This sampling technique was deemed appropriate, as it enabled the researcher to deliberately choose institutions most aligned with the objectives of the study. At the time, these colleges were the only ones offering Social Studies as a major, core and an elective subject, making them the most suitable sources of information for exploring PCK among Social Studies tutors.

Table 3.3 Breakdown of Selected Colleges of Education

Name of College	Zone
OLA College of Education	CENTWEST
Atebubu College of Education	ASHBA
Kibi Presbyterian College of Education	EGA
St Monica's College of Education	ASHBA
St Teresa's College of Education	VOLTA

Source: Colleges Administrative offices, 2023

Fifteen Social Studies tutors were purposively selected in consultation with department heads in the selected colleges. Gender equality was a key selection principle to ensure the perspectives of both male and female tutors were integral to the design of the study and to prevent the perpetuation of gender-based inequalities in pedagogy (UN Women, 2020). Furthermore, tutors were chosen only if they had at least five years of teaching experience. Also tutors qualification was considered. Thus, in addition to gender factor and teaching experience, Social Studies tutors with a minimum qualification of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) or an equivalent postgraduate degree were primary to the selection. Hence, in each college, tutors who have Master of Philosophy or an equivalent postgraduate degree in Social Studies were selected. Social Studies tutors who voluntarily agreed to participate and provided informed consent were selected. The researcher selected kinds of people who can provide in-depth insights, rather than seeking to find a representative sample for wide generalisation.

Again, to protect the Social Studies tutors' real identities the researcher gave the fifteen participants pseudonyms such as "Participant #1", "Participant #2", "Participant #3", "Participant #4", "Participant #5", "Participant #6", "Participant #7", "Participant #8", "Participant #9", "Participant #10", "Participant #11", "Participant

#12”, “Participant #13”, “Participant #14” and “Participant #15”. The final participant pool consisted of fifteen tutors, comprising eight males and seven females. The breakdown of sample size (participants) is shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Sample of the Study

College	Male	Female	Total
OLA College of Education	2	1	3
Atebubu College of Education	2	1	3
Kibi Presbyterian College of Education	1	2	3
St. Teresa’s College of Education	1	2	3
St. Monica’s College of Education	2	1	3
Total Participants	8	7	15

Source: Field Data

Table 3.4 shows that the sample consists of eight males and seven females. This indicates a slight higher representation of males in the group.

3.6.1 Demographic Description of Participants

The demographic details of the tutors who participated in the study include their academic qualifications and teaching experience.

Table 3.5: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Tutor's Description	Highest Qualification	Years of experience in teaching Social Studies
Participant #1	MPhil. Social Studies	24
Participant #2	PhD Sociology of Education	20
Participant #3	MSc. Environmental Studies	17
Participant #4	MPhil. Social Studies	5
Participant #5	MPhil. Social Studies	11
Participant #6	MPhil. Social Studies	16
Participant #7	MPhil. Social Studies	10
Participant #8	MPhil. Social Studies	18
Participant #9	MPhil. Environmental Studies	7
Participant #10	MSc. Geography	6
Participant #11	MPhil. Social Studies	22
Participant #12	MPhil. Social Studies	16
Participant #13	MPhil. Geography	10
Participant #14	MPhil. Social Studies	9
Participant #15	MPhil. Social Studies	13

Table 3.5 shows that the tutors involved in this study have relevant academic qualifications and professional experience related to their teaching of Social Studies. Most tutors hold MPhil qualifications, particularly in Social Studies, indicating alignment between their academic preparation and subject they teach. Participants' teaching experience ranges from five to twenty-four years. This demographic profile situates the findings within the professional contexts of experienced Social Studies tutors.

3.6.2 Justification for the Chosen Sample Size

Selection of participants to form the sample size for a qualitative study like this was a crucial role in the sense that, qualitative research prioritized depth and richness of data. First, the researcher selected a sample size of fifteen participants because the

study aimed at obtaining a rich, nuanced understanding of the Social Studies tutors' PCK components and classroom practices, rather than to achieve broad statistical generalisation. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), "a qualitative research often prioritizes depth of understanding over breadth of sample size". Similarly, Guest et al. (2020) posited that "a smaller sample size allows the researcher to devote more time and attention to each participant, eliciting detailed narratives and gaining a thorough grasp of the complexities inherent in the phenomenon".

Furthermore, the "information power" of the smaller sample size, as proposed by Malterud et al. (2016), is given greater consideration in qualitative studies than the absolute number of participants. This study aimed to yield high information power with a sample size of fifteen participants, with its clearly articulated research questions, specific target population, and strong theoretical framework. Again, the case study research designs often employ purposeful sampling technique to select study participants- who have rich and relevant knowledge about the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2020). With this in mind, the researcher selected only Social Studies tutors who have taught not less than five years and can add significant value to the research findings.

Finally, a smaller sample size of participants, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, was not a deviation from normalcy. This means that there is confidence in the validity of smaller sample sizes in qualitative research and how they can yield meaningful and reliable insights (Patton, 2020). For instance, Guest et al. (2020) explore an in-depth study including designs focusing on small sample sizes, to investigate science teachers' PCK of genetics. Also, in a case study, Marco-Bujosa et al. (2017) selected a smaller number of middle school science teachers to explore teacher learning from a curriculum focused on educational reform-in science.

3.7 Data Collection Instruments

The researcher employed semi-structured interview guide and observation checklist to collect data for the study. These instruments were developed based on the study's purpose and research objectives, and aligned with a qualitative interpretivist design (Thompson et al., 2021).

3.7.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

For this study, interview guide was employed as one of the data collection instruments. According to Newman (2018), interviews are carefully designed to search for data from a relatively small group of individuals and which reveals facts, attributes, behaviour, preferences, feelings, attitudes, opinions, and knowledge. Newman further explained that interviews constitute the most effective technique for qualitative research. The study employed interviews to enhance the understanding and discover research participants' behaviour, knowledge, and skills about Social Studies tutors' PCK.

The researcher developed semi-structured interview questions in line with the study's purpose, research objectives, research questions, underlying theories and studies in the literature. The researcher created the item pool upon drawing expert perspectives on the items. Some of the items related to studies by Loughran et al. (2012) were adapted to be part of this semi-structured interview guide. The semi-structured interview items were designed to cover specific topics, following a sequence informed by the responses provided by the participants. Also, the interviews were conducted in a relaxed manner. The researcher employed semi-structured interview procedure to enable him to ask further questions. Also, probing questions were asked during the interviews to ascertain an in-depth analyse of the issue and to understand the motives behind participants' responses. This aligned with Creswell and Creswell (2017)

assertion that “use of probing questions enables researchers to ask their participants to elaborate, provide enough information and clarify any vague responses”.

The researcher conducted the individual interviews on one-on-one basis. The duration of each interview with the participants ranged from 45 to 50 minutes, as it depended on how thoroughly they explained their views or perspectives on the research topics. During the individual interviews, careful records were kept through both audio recordings and field notes. The audio recordings served as a supplement to the written notes because it was impractical for the researcher to capture every detail during the interview. Subsequently, during the playback, any missed information was diligently recaptured. Additionally, field notes helped the researcher to recall some specific expressions uttered by the participants. All fifteen participants had their interviews electronically recorded using a mobile application on my BLU cell phone. To protect participants’ real identities, the tutors were given pseudonyms such as Participant “#1”, “#2”, “#3”, “#4” up to “#15”.

One of the reasons for using semi-structured interview in this study was that it helped to obtain in-depth information about the tutors’ PCK as well as collecting rich and tangible data. This aligns with Knott et al. (2022), assertion that using “semi-structured interviews for collecting data helps to obtain thoroughly information”. This was explained as first-hand information from direct source.

Again, semi-structured interview was chosen because the method allowed the researcher to establish a framework for discussing predefined topics while exploring additional topics raised by the participants regarding their aspirations, concerns and challenges. In the same breath, the utilisation of this instrument of data collection allowed for deliberate question regulation and re-organisation. Moreover, it afforded the participants latitude to expand on various facets during interview. This is why it is

stated that the semi-structured interview method allows for “flexibility and without compromising the participant's freedom to elaborate on topics of interest to him/her” (Omodan, 2024; Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Relatively high response rates are often attainable and open-ended interviews furnish valuable information essential for researchers.

However, there were some problems in conducting interviews. Cohen et al. (2017) reported that, “most often the sources of bias are the characteristics of the interviewer, the characteristics of the participants, and the substantive content of the questions”. In this study, the interviewer and participants brought their own experiences and emotions into interviews, highlighting the influence of personal perspectives on the data. Despite this limitation, the researcher obtained useful information from the five Social Studies tutors on the issue.

According to Knott et al. (2022), a limitation of the semi-structured interview guide is that “in-person interviews usually are expensive and time-consuming due to the open-endedness of the data”. However, it proved convenient and valuable as it helped the researcher understand issues from the perspective of the participants.

The Social Studies tutors were asked thirty-eight (38) questions that cut across all sections of the guide. The semi-structured interview guide used for data collection is included in Appendix “A.”

3.7.2 Observations

Although “data collected through interviews endow with valuable and rich data, it is not a full description of the participants’ PCK. Therefore, for a complete picture of the situation, in addition to taking participants’ opinion, participants’ teaching was observed” (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher conducted classroom observations to ascertain first-hand information on how Social Studies was taught and

subsequently, these observations were juxtaposed with the statements provided by participants after the interviews. According to Cohen et al. (2017), “observational data are attractive as they allow the researcher to gather ‘live’ data from ‘live’ situations”. In the words of Yin (2018), “observation is a time-tested process of data collection techniques that is solely based on what is seen by the researcher as the main procedure of data collection”. Through observation, the researcher observes participants within their natural context, considering elements in relation to their inherent environment. Collecting observational data is crucial because individuals’ verbal statements do not always align with their actual behaviour (Asamoah-Gyimah, 2015). In employing observation, qualitative method of observation was considered in this study. Qualitative observation, as described by Asamoah-Gyimah, involves an investigative and open-ended approach, with the researcher diligently recording extensive field notes.

The researcher observed the fifteen Social Studies tutors using semi-structured observational protocol. For the observational protocol to be in line with teaching of Social Studies, it was based on the purpose, research objectives, research questions, underlying theories and studies in the literature. Some of the observational protocol items were created; others were adopted and modified to suit the nature of the research. During the observation process, the researcher paid particular attention to the class interaction between teacher trainees and reaction of the Social Studies tutors. The researcher also observed the social interaction among students as well.

In this study, lesson observations were conducted with the researcher position as a “non-participant observer”. This stance was deliberately adopted to align with interpretivist qualitative approach, in which the aim was not to intervene in practice but to understand how teaching was enacted and made meaningful by participants

within their natural classroom context. Observing without direct participation allowed the researcher to attend closely to interactions, pedagogical decisions and classroom dynamics as they unfold, while minimising disruption to the social setting being studied. As Rozsahegyi (2019) argues, the “non-participant observer” role enables researchers to remain focused on the set aims of the study while capturing a more authentic representation of events. Within this study, neutrality was therefore not understood as detachment from interpretation, but as a methodological positioning that foregrounded participants’ practices and meanings rather than the researcher’s influence on them.

In the classes, the researcher informed the Social Studies tutors of his presences aiming to dispel any doubt and create an atmosphere of openness. To maintain neutrality and avoidance of interference in the lesson preparation and delivery: “1) the researcher did not inform the Social Studies tutors what he would be looking for; 2) the researcher conducted interviews with participants after the observation session; and 3) the researcher did not give any comments on the teaching regardless of their performance”.

While completing the observation guide, the researcher closely observed Social Studies tutors and their lesson delivery. The participants were observed twice, on different occasions within a period of six weeks. A colleague of mine recorded the classroom observations with a digital audio recorder. During classroom observations, the audio-digital recorder captured verbatim participants’ interactions, allowing the researcher to focus on the visual aspects such as teacher-student interactions, student-student interaction, and content written on the board. The researcher wrote down salient points to facilitate the data analysis. This was done to be cross-checked with

feedback provided by Social Studies teachers when they were interviewed for clarification purposes.

From the fifteen Social Studies tutors, five were purposively selected based on their experience in lesson planning to prepare proforma lesson notes, with one tutor selected from each participating CoEs. Selection was “criterion-based”, with teaching experience serving as the primary criterion. In each college, the tutor with the longest continuous teaching experience was selected on the assumption that such individuals possess deeper pedagogical knowledge and more established instructional practices. The selected tutors were required to submit lesson notes using a standardised proforma for assessment, enabling systematic comparison within cases. To ensure analytic depth, tutors with the longest continuous teaching experience were selected to access well-established pedagogical practices, and the use of a proforma lesson notes supported analytic consistency by enabling systematic within-case comparison (Patton, 2015).

The selection of five tutors was driven by the need to achieve analytical depth rather than numerical coverage in the assessment of proforma lesson notes. The aim was to generate rich, context-sensitive understanding of practice rather than statistically generalisable claims (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Focusing on five tutors therefore enabled a more detailed and analytically robust examination of proforma lesson notes, without weakening the interpretive quality of the findings.

The observational guide was employed for the following reasons. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), “a combination of observation and interview data help researchers to gain more reliable and fuller estimates of individual teacher’s pedagogical content knowledge”. Therefore, classroom observations, in conjunction

with other instruments such as interviews, gave a more robust and comprehensive assessment of the PCK possessed by individual Social Studies tutors.

Furthermore, this study employed observation as a data collection technique due to its uses in the previous research on teachers' PCK (Eshun et al., 2019; Mbewe & Nkhata, 2019; Demoiny, 2018; Yusof & Zakaria, 2010). For instance, Mbewe and Nkhata (2019) employed observation as a data collection technique "when they studied the PCK of teachers by observing the examples that teachers gave while teaching quadratic equations". A study carried out by Eshun et al. (2019) employed observation method to "assess the implications of graduate teachers' knowledge base of Social Studies profile dimensions in the senior high schools". Also, Demoiny (2018) used the observation technique to "explore how Social Studies teachers incorporated race into their Social Studies methods courses".

The instructional content and verbal exchange provided by Social Studies tutors during class sessions constituted a rich source of information. Classroom observations enabled the researcher direct observations of the practical implementation of the planned instructional activities. The researcher employed the observation technique because it allowed direct observation of Social Studies tutors' actions, by passing the need to rely solely on their verbal accounts. Observation technique facilitated first-hand familiarity and provided relatively objective measurement of their behaviour.

Observation, as a data collection technique, has faced criticism due to the potential for participants to alter their behaviour when aware of being observed. Additionally, practical constraints prevent the observation of large or detached populations. However, despite these limitations, observation remains an effective instrument for gathering qualitative data, particularly when dealing with a small number of participants, as was the case in my study.

3.8 Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness is one of the most common criteria for accessing “the quality of qualitative interpretivist research” (Kusi, 2012). In this study, “the term trustworthiness was favoured over the terms in research. Therefore, the amalgamation of transferability, dependability, credibility, and conformability helped to establish the trustworthiness of this study.

Credibility in this study was enhanced through methodological and data triangulation. The researcher used varied instruments, methods and procedures for data collection, such as interview guides and non-participant observation. In this study, the use of triangulation was demonstrated by using audio-recording and field notes as part of the data collection. Data transcription as well as coding data was done by the researcher and another experienced research fellow at the Department of Social Studies in order to promote credibility. Transcripts and codes were compared with those of the experienced colleague researcher, followed by brainstorming until consensus was reached before analysis. To further enhance the credibility of the study, the researcher carried out member checking. At this stage, transcripts of interviews, along with data derived from observations and field notes, were returned to the participants for verification and clarification. These processes were carried out to ensure clarity and accuracy while collecting data

Dependability or consistency in this study was ensured through the involvement of experienced qualitative researchers such as my academic affairs officer and supporting supervisors in the assessment of the research instruments before the actual data gathering commenced. Furthermore, to enhance the dependability of this qualitative study, the researcher employed investigator and data triangulation (Adler, 2022; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Thus, through investigator and data triangulation,

the researcher reduced personal biases and prejudices by asking clear questions, transcribing participants' responses verbatim, and double-checking the transcriptions and codes. Analysis and reporting of finding were equally transparently done by the researcher in order to promote dependability of findings.

Transferability is related to what extent the findings can be generalised to different situations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This refers to the degree to which the findings of qualitative research can be generalised or transferred to other contexts (Kusi, 2012). To increase transferability in this study, the researcher employed a "thick description" of the methodology, covering every step from data collection to data analysis. Thus, the researcher kept all relevant information and documents regarding the study. This detailed descriptive account allowed readers to understand the participants' lives and contexts, which could have supported comparisons across different settings. Furthermore, sufficient background information was provided about the participants, the research context and the settings to enable others to assess the transferability of the findings. However, in this study, transferability was not a major objective; the research did not aim to 'generalise' the findings to 'other settings' or situations.

Finally, to ensure confirmability, the researcher differentiated primary data sources from secondary data sources, as well as descriptions from interpretations. Confirmability was also ensured in this study by maintaining an 'effective audit data trail'. The researcher provided the transcripts to experienced research fellows, who assisted in reviewing the field notes, interview transcripts, the research questions, data analysis, findings and conclusions. All participants received interview transcripts and accompanying notes, which they subsequently reviewed and provided feedback on. These steps were taken to ensure that the findings were not based on the researcher's

biases and prejudices but that themes and dimensions emerged naturally from the transcribed data. Thus, confirmability was achieved through a stance of neutrality, ensuring that data interpretation was grounded in the data collected rather than shaped by the researcher's own preferences and viewpoints.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The researcher realised the importance attached with ethical procedures when working with Social Studies tutors as subjects in this research work. As such, this study adhered to general research ethics guidelines, upholding high ethical standards throughout the entire research process. According to Lune and Berg (2017), “the concerns about research ethics revolve around salient issues of harm, consent, privacy, and the confidentiality of data”. In view of this, the researcher considered a range of ethical issues carefully during this study.

Among the main ethical issues considered in this study are anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent, and the right to withdraw. Permission was obtained from the appropriate authorities to seek the consent of participants and gain access to them. The researcher obtained a formal letter of introduction from the Social Studies Education Department at the University of Education, Winneba. This letter, duly signed by the principal, co-supervisors, and the head of department, facilitated the commencement of the research endeavour. Also, the Heads of Department of the selected CoEs were consulted and briefed on the study to be conducted within their departments. After receiving approval, the researcher proceeded to negotiate with the participants involved in the study and agree on the dates, times, and venues for the interviews and observations.

During the interaction with Social Studies tutors, the purpose of the study was explained to obtain their approval and support for the research. Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and it was emphasised that all information collected was strictly for academic purposes and would not be used in any way that could harm their personal identity. They were also assured of their right to privacy and of the researcher's commitment to adhere to the agreed times and periods for data collection. The responsibility for ethical conduct ultimately lies with the researcher, and care was taken to ensure that all ethical standards were met.

The research plans were submitted to supervisors for review in order to protect and respect participants. An informed consent form was also designed for participants to sign prior to participating in the study. The administration of the consent forms took place over a two-week period before data collection. This process ensured that participants' rights were acknowledged and protected, and reassured them that any information that could infringe on their rights would remain confidential. Respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Video recordings of observations audio recording of interviews were stored securely by the researcher. During the observations and interviews, participants were reminded that all recordings would be treated confidentially.

Ethical rigour was also maintained through a commitment to anonymity during data collection, ensuring that participant names were not written on data collection instruments. Confidentiality was guaranteed through the subsequent use of pseudonyms for all data files. The principle of research integrity was upheld through a commitment to fidelity to the data, ensuring honesty and accuracy in the presentation of results, with no manipulation of the data collected. The study also duly

acknowledged the works of others used by citing them in both the in-text and reference list.

3.9.1 Researcher's Positionality

A critical examination of the researcher's positionality was undertaken to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of this study. Positionality, according to Holmes (2020), refers to the researcher's social and professional identity and its potential influence on the research process. In an educational research like this, requires careful attention to personal, cultural, theoretical, and methodological biases.

Reflexivity was employed as a core methodological approach, involving continuous self-examination of the researcher's role throughout the study (Berger, 2015). The researcher occupied a dual identity as the insider (sharing a professional background as a Social Studies tutor) and the outsider (operating as an external investigator). This dual role necessitated continuous reflection on how the researcher's position might shape the generation and interpretation of data. A research journal was systematically maintained during the fieldwork to document thoughts, emotions, and decisions. This practice made the subjective nature of knowledge production transparent and accessible to the reader (Lincoln & Guba, 2011).

The study deliberately employed several strategies to mitigate potential bias and to ensure that ethical standards were upheld throughout the research process. In-depth interviews were conducted in a collaborative and respectful manner to reduce power imbalances and support open dialogue. The researcher committed to preserving data integrity by representing participant experiences honestly and avoiding any form of data manipulation. Credibility, confirmability, and transferability were reinforced through methodological rigour and regular peer debriefing. The presentation of findings foreground participants' voice by using illustrative quotations and clearly

articulated thematic patterns. Together, these practices demonstrate a sustained commitment to reflexivity, transparency, and ethical integrity, which strengthened the overall methodological quality of the study.

3.10 Data Analysis

The study employed a thematic analysis approach, guided by the framework of Braun and Clarke (2021), to interpret data collected from semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The purpose was to identify and analyse themes pertaining to participants' perceptions of pedagogical content knowledge and its enactment in practice.

The analysis of interview data was done iteratively, following Charmaz (2014) constructivism approach. Interviews were transcribed verbatim, preserving verbal nuances so that participants' meanings and expressions were captured as accurately as possible. Transcripts were imported into NVivo 11 software for systematic management because the software enabled efficient organisation and retrieval of large qualitative data set. A line-by-line coding technique was applied to the transcripts to ensure that no potentially relevant detail was overlooked during early analysis. This detailed, line-by-line process facilitated the identification of initial concepts relevant to the four research questions by allowing pattern to emerge directly from participants' accounts rather than being imposed in advance.

Analytical memos were maintained throughout to document emerging interpretations, ensuring codes remained data-grounded while developing analytical depth. Codes were clustered into preliminary themes and sub-themes. These themes underwent a rigorous, two-stage review (Byrne, 2022). First, the coherence of coded data within each theme was assessed to ensure logical patterns. Second, the entire thematic structure was evaluated against the complete dataset to confirm its relevance and

capacity to address the research questions. This process ensured themes were analytical rather than purely descriptive.

Observational data, recorded as structured field notes, were analysed interpretatively. This allowed the researcher to move beyond surface description and consider the underlying meanings embedded in observed actions and interactions. Field notes were reviewed and manually annotated multiple times to capture details of practice, interactions and context. Specifically, repeated engagement with the notes helped ensure that subtle cues, routines and classroom dynamics were not missed. The analysis specifically sought patterns in classroom practice that reflected the conceptual components of pedagogical content knowledge, enabling comparison with interview-derived data, so that convergences and divergences between what tutors said and what they enacted could be examined more rigorously.

The final stage of data analysis involved integrating the two data strands namely interview data and observational data. Themes from the interviews were juxtaposed and examined alongside patterns from the observations. This triangulation strengthened the trustworthiness of the findings and provided a richer, more nuanced understanding of the relationship between participants' stated perceptions and their observed classroom practices. The refined themes were clearly defined and substantiated with vivid data extracts from both interviews and observations. This culminated in a coherent interpretive narrative, grounded in the data and directly responsive to the research objectives that reflected the lived experiences of the participants.

3.11 Summary

This chapter has detailed the methodological framework that was employed for this study. The chapter showed that a qualitative approach and a case study design enabled the researcher to collect in-depth information on Social Studies tutors' pedagogical content knowledge. Through multi-stage sampling technique, fifteen tutors were selected from five CoEs affiliated with University of Cape Coast. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview guide and an observation guide. Trustworthiness was ensured through expert input from supervisors, while a third researcher reviewed transcripts and interpretations to check for consistency in the findings. All appropriate methods were rigorously followed to protect the anonymity of the participants. The next chapter presents the findings and discussion of this study, as gathered from the field.



CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents findings of the study following the laid down methods and research design explained in the preceding chapter. The main purpose of this study was to explore how Social Studies tutors perceive, enact and adapt pedagogical content knowledge for fostering effective teachers in selected CoEs in Ghana.

The findings are presented according to the processes of thematic analysis outlined in the preceding chapter. Through thematic analysis, four main themes were derived. Collectively, these four main themes directly address the research questions which the study sought to answer. Under each of these five main themes are sub-themes which emerged from coding and recoding as explained in Chapter Three. Moreover, after each theme and sub-themes are analysed, according to the research questions, the findings are discussed within the context of existing theoretical propositions and empirical studies which were discussed in Chapter Two. The research findings are compared and contrasted to explore their practical and theoretical implications. The main themes and their sub-themes developed after rigorous scrutiny data reduction were:

1. The Content Knowledge of Social Studies tutors in CoEs in Ghana
 - i. *Scope and Content of Social Studies Curriculum for Colleges*
 - ii. *Critical thinking and analytical skills*
 - iii. *Relevance of CoEs Social Studies Curriculum*
 - iv. *Desired Objectives of CoEs Social Studies Curriculum*
 - v. *Emphasis on Citizenship Education in CoEs Social Studies Curriculum*
2. Social Studies tutors' Pedagogical Knowledge in CoEs in Ghana
 - i. *Inquiry based learning*

- ii. *Differentiated Instruction*
- iii. *Effective Teaching in Social Studies*
- iv. *Criteria for Selecting Teaching Techniques*

3. Integration of Pedagogical Content Knowledge in Social Studies Lessons

- i. *Integration of content knowledge with pedagogical skills.*
- ii. *Integration of digital technology*
- iii. *Use of collaborative learning*
- iv. *Assessment with Feedback*
- v. *Drawing on developmental psychology*
- vi. *Creating and using Proforma Lesson Notes*

4. Challenges in Pedagogical Content Knowledge

- i. *Inadequate and Limited Access to Teaching and Learning Resources*
- ii. *Time Constraints*
- iii. *Large Class Size*

4.1 Social Studies tutors' Content Knowledge

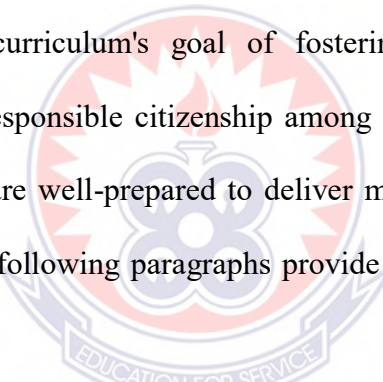
The first research question sought to explore Social Studies tutors' content (subject matter) knowledge in the selected CoEs in Ghana. The findings revealed that tutors demonstrated their subject matter knowledge through various dimensions, including the scope and content of Social Studies curriculum for the colleges, critical thinking and analytical skills, relevance of Social Studies curriculum in CoEs, desired objectives of Social Studies curriculum in CoEs, and emphasis on citizenship education in CoEs Social Studies curriculum. The findings have been presented in sub-themes as follows:

4.1.1 Scope and Content of Social Studies Curriculum for Colleges

The findings revealed that the Social Studies curriculum in the selected CoEs encompasses a wide scope and integrated content designed to address contemporary and persistent challenges in Ghana. The scope and content of Social Studies

curriculum for the colleges were found to be foundational for effective teaching in Social Studies. The Social Studies curriculum in the colleges draws heavily from the social sciences and arts and humanities, integrating themes from sociology, geography, economics, psychology, history, politics, and anthropology. It focuses on understanding both the social and physical environments and examines human interactions with these environments to address arising problems.

The curriculum's content spans levels 100 to 400, providing a broad yet cohesive structure that integrates knowledge from multiple disciplines. Topics include land and environmental issues, societal structures, economic systems, and governmental frameworks. Addressing contemporary issues crucial to human survival in Ghana, the content supports the curriculum's goal of fostering critical thinking, informed decision-making, and responsible citizenship among teacher trainees. This approach ensures that graduates are well-prepared to deliver meaningful and impactful Social Studies education. The following paragraphs provide detailed evidence of the above findings:



I think that the scope looks at both the social and the physical environment, examining man's interaction with these environments and the problems thereof. It covers themes like environmental education, citizenship education, and developmental issues [Participant #6]

Addressing the same issue, [Participant #8] also expressed as follows:

Social Studies has a wide scope, integrating themes and ideas from Sociology, Geography, Economics, Politics, Psychology, and History. It draws from the social sciences and humanities to address contemporary challenges in this country.

This was the perspective of [Participant #10]

With my experience on the subject of discussion, I would say that the content spans land issues, physical environment, and societal structures in an integrated manner. It addresses all contemporary issues of man's survival in Ghana, covering aspects of government, economics, and business.

The findings showed that there is also recognition of the depth and breadth of content knowledge associated with achieving the scope and content of Social Studies curriculum for the selected CoEs across such a broad field. Most of the Social Studies tutors indicated that a strong grasp of the subject matter is essential for effective teaching. This is rooted in the belief that teachers must be able to answer students' questions accurately, provide context for historical events, and draw connections between different social science disciplines.

The findings showed that examining the depth and breadth of content knowledge as perceived by Social Studies tutors on subject matter knowledge involves understanding how tutors' value and apply their expertise in teaching. Participants indicated that depth of content knowledge refers to the thoroughness and detailed understanding a tutor has about a specific topic within Social Studies. It involves not only factual knowledge but also the ability to connect concepts, explain underlying principles, and address complex questions. The implication was that tutors with deep content knowledge can provide richer, more comprehensive explanations, foster critical thinking, and engage teacher-trainees in higher-order thinking. One of the participants indicated

I believe that having deep content knowledge in Social Studies is crucial. It allows teachers to connect historical events to contemporary issues, making the subject more relevant and engaging for students. For instance, understanding the intricacies of the constitutional matters helps in drawing parallels with current social justice movements, fostering critical thinking. Without a thorough grasp of the subject matter, it becomes challenging to address students' questions and to stimulate meaningful discussions in the classroom [Participant #3].

The findings also defined breadth of content knowledge as the range of Social Studies topics a tutor has mastered. This includes an understanding of various historical periods, geographical regions, political systems, economic theories, and cultural

practices. Tutors with broad content knowledge can draw connections between different areas, provide a more integrated perspective, and adapt their teaching to cover interdisciplinary topics. Social Studies tutors often perceive depth of content knowledge as essential for effective teaching, as it enables them to address students' questions comprehensively, develop nuanced proforma lesson notes, and encourage deeper understanding. Breadth is crucial for teaching more advanced or specialized courses and for engaging students who are particularly interested in the subject matter. Commenting on how subject matter knowledge is perceived, one of the participants stated that

Breadth of content knowledge in Social Studies goes beyond memorizing dates and facts. It involves understanding the underlying causes and effects of historical events, the context in which they occurred, and their impact on present-day society. As teachers, we need to be able to dissect complex topics, such as the economic and political factors that led to World War II, and present them in a way that students can understand and relate to. This deep understanding enables us to create more comprehensive proforma lesson notes that cater to various learning style [Participant #2].

It was further revealed that breadth of content knowledge is highly valued, especially in the context of a general Social Studies curriculum. Tutors with broad knowledge can provide students with a well-rounded education, introduce them to a wide array of topics, and help them see the connections between different historical and social phenomena. This is particularly important for fostering a holistic understanding of Social Studies and for preparing teacher-trainees to think critically about complex, interconnected global issues. A participant stated that:

Breadth of content knowledge in Social Studies means being able to critically analyses and interprets historical sources and data. It also includes the ability to synthesize information from different time periods and geographical regions to provide a well-rounded perspective. For example, teaching about colonialism requires an understanding of not only the historical events but also the cultural, economic, and political ramifications that have shaped the modern

world. This depth of knowledge helps in developing students' analytical skills and encourages them to think critically about history and its relevance today [Participant #5].

The above responses indicate that the interdisciplinary nature of Social Studies means that tutors must strike a balance between depth and breadth.

4.1.2 Critical Thinking and Analytical Skills

In addition to deep content knowledge, digital technology and pedagogical skills, tutors emphasize the importance of critical thinking and analytical skills in Social Studies education. They perceive these skills as essential for helping students understand complex social issues, evaluate multiple perspectives, and engage in informed civic participation. Tutors often highlight the need for teaching strategies that promote inquiry, discussion, and debate. They advocate for a student-centred approach that encourages active learning and critical engagement with the content. The participants indicated that critical thinking and analytical skills are crucial components in the study and comprehension of Social Studies, playing a pivotal role in enhancing subject matter knowledge through their application and development. Social Studies, encompassing disciplines such as history, geography, civics, economics, and sociology, requires a multifaceted approach to understanding complex societal issues, historical events, cultural dynamics, and global interactions.

Explaining further, one of the participants stated that

Critical thinking in Social Studies enables students to analyse historical events from multiple perspectives, helping them understand the complexities of societies. When students develop analytical skills, they can deconstruct primary sources, evaluate biases, and form informed opinions about past events. This process not only deepens their subject knowledge but also enhances their ability to apply historical lessons to contemporary issues [Participant #1].

It was revealed from the findings that critical thinking involves the ability to objectively analyse information, evaluate arguments, and draw reasoned conclusions. In Social Studies, this skill enables individuals to assess historical accounts, evaluate the reliability of sources, and discern biases or perspectives that may influence interpretations of events. For example, when studying historical documents or analysing economic policies, critical thinking prompts students to question assumptions, consider alternative viewpoints, and make informed judgments based on evidence rather than mere acceptance of presented facts. Additionally, the findings pointed out that analytical skills complement critical thinking by facilitating the breakdown of complex ideas into manageable parts for deeper understanding. Participants emphasized that in Social Studies, these skills help teacher-trainees dissect societal issues, identify cause-and-effect relationships in historical contexts, and examine patterns in cultural behaviours or economic trends. For instance, when studying global conflicts, analytical skills aid in tracing the origins of disputes, examining the geopolitical implications, and predicting potential outcomes based on historical precedent and current events. One of the participants, in elaborating this stated that,

In Social Studies, critical thinking is foundational to interpreting cultural differences and societal norms. Analytical skills empower students to scrutinize data, assess the reliability of sources, and draw conclusions that are rooted in evidence. By encouraging critical inquiry, students not only understand the subject matter more comprehensively but also become adept at recognizing the nuances and complexities within different cultures and historical contexts [Participant #4].

Moreover, from the information gathered from the participants, it was deduced that critical thinking encourages intellectual curiosity and a willingness to explore diverse perspectives. Social Studies inherently involves examining different cultures, political

systems, and economic structures. Critical thinkers actively seek out varied viewpoints, engage in respectful discourse, and appreciate the complexities of multicultural interactions. By fostering open-mindedness and empathy, critical thinking enhances subject matter knowledge by broadening students' awareness of global interconnectedness and the interplay of factors shaping societies worldwide. Furthermore, critical thinking and analytical skills promote effective problem-solving in Social Studies contexts. Students learn to apply theoretical concepts to real-world situations, devise strategies to address societal challenges, and propose informed solutions grounded in evidence and logical reasoning. For instance, when exploring environmental issues, critical thinkers analyse data on climate change, evaluate policy options, and advocate for sustainable practices based on their understanding of ecological principles and social implications. An educator stated that

Critical thinking skills are essential for students to navigate the complexities of Social Studies content. Through analytical reasoning, students learn to connect historical events to broader societal trends and understand the impact of various factors on historical outcomes. This approach fosters a deeper understanding of how societies evolve and enables students to engage critically with diverse viewpoints, fostering empathy and a more holistic perspective on social issues [Participant #1].

Further deductions made from the responses were that cognitive benefits, critical thinking and analytical skills cultivate information literacy in Social Studies. Students learn to distinguish between reliable sources and misinformation, apply research methodologies to gather relevant data, and synthesize findings to form coherent arguments. This skill set is particularly valuable in an age of information overload, where the ability to critically assess online content and discern credible sources is essential for informed citizenship and academic rigor. Ultimately, the integration of critical thinking and analytical skills enriches subject matter knowledge in Social Studies by fostering a deeper appreciation of historical context, cultural diversity, and

global interconnectedness. By encouraging reasoned inquiry, independent thinking, and a systematic approach to problem-solving, these skills empower students to engage critically with complex social issues, contribute meaningfully to public discourse, and make informed decisions as responsible global citizens. One of the participants stressed that

In the study of Social Studies, critical thinking and analytical skills serve as the cornerstone for developing informed citizens. By teaching students to analyse historical data, critically evaluate conflicting narratives, and construct reasoned arguments, we equip them to understand the complexities of societal structures and historical developments. This skill set not only enhances their subject matter knowledge but also prepares them to actively participate in democratic processes and contribute meaningfully to society [Participant #2].

4.1.3 Relevance of the Social Studies Curriculum

The findings reveal that the Social Studies curriculum is highly relevant for teacher preparation in the selected CoEs due to its focus on preparing individuals to address contemporary and persistent challenges in Ghana. It equips teacher trainees with the knowledge and skills needed to understand and solve social problems, fostering responsible citizenship at both local and global levels. The curriculum emphasizes critical thinking and informed decision-making, enabling educators to guide students in navigating their environment, understanding Ghanaian values and history, and addressing societal issues effectively. Its relevance lies in preparing learners holistically to become productive and socially responsible citizens.

The findings further revealed that, the curriculum provides tutors with clear content, teaching methodologies, and assessment procedures, ensuring a structured approach to delivering Social Studies education. It enables educators to enhance their problem-solving and critical thinking abilities while promoting a comprehensive understanding of citizenship education. Through its focus on holistic thinking and knowledge presentation, the curriculum empowers educators to transform their students socially

and intellectually, preparing them to contribute meaningfully to societal development.

This perspective was echoed by [Participant #5], who highlighted the relevance of Social Studies in CoEs curriculum. She explained:

It prepares individuals to understand their environment and become responsible members of society. The curriculum is relevant because it equips learners with the knowledge and skills needed to solve personal and societal problems they may encounter in their lives, thereby fostering both individual and communal growth. [Participant #5]

In a similar response, [Participant #8] reported in these words:

The curriculum helps teacher trainees stay informed about Ghanaian values, history, and current affairs. It provides educators with the tools to teach learners how to become responsible citizens, fully aware of their roles within both their local and global communities.

Speaking on the same subject matter, [Participant #9] also made the following revelations:

The Social Studies curriculum is very relevant as it helps me improve my problem-solving and critical thinking skills, essential for both personal and professional growth. It also emphasizes citizenship education, ensuring that I am well-prepared to guide students in becoming responsible and informed citizens.

4.1.4 Desired Objectives of CoEs Social Studies Curriculum

The findings indicate that the primary objectives of the Social Studies curriculum in CoEs aim to address both contemporary and persistent challenges in Ghana. The curriculum is designed to develop competent, reflective citizens who are well-rounded in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Key goals include preparing teacher trainees to become responsible citizens, critical thinkers, and problem solvers. Additionally, the curriculum emphasises the importance of equipping trainees with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to adapt and contribute to the ever-changing Ghanaian society. It also prepares them to become educators who can transform students into responsible and reflective citizens. The desired objectives further aim to foster global awareness and social responsibility. The curriculum seeks

to cultivate learners' environmental consciousness, enabling them to recognize and address societal issues through critical thinking and problem-solving skills. It emphasizes the development of enquiry skills to help trainees identify emerging challenges and create appropriate strategies for resolving them. The study established that, the Social Studies curriculum is designed to equip teacher trainees with the necessary knowledge and skills to teach and guide the next generation in becoming responsible, informed citizens who can contribute meaningfully to society. In addition to the above, [Participant #6] reported in the following words:

The desired objectives should seek to produce a well-rounded person, equipping teacher trainees with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to fit into the society in which they live, making them reflective and critical thinkers.

Similarly, [Participant #8] narrated the following:

The curriculum aims to prepare learners to become conscious of their environment, emphasizing critical thinking, problem-solving, and the development of enquiry skills to identify emerging societal challenges and devise strategies for addressing them.

Furthermore, [Participant #10] made the following revelations:

The objectives of the curriculum are to equip teacher trainees with the required knowledge and skills to teach and transform young learners into responsible citizens, preparing them for a rapidly changing Ghanaian society.

4.1.5 Emphasis on Citizenship Education in the Social Studies Curriculum

The study also found that the Social Studies curriculum in CoEs emphasizes Citizenship Education through its focus on content related to civil education, citizenship roles, and responsibilities. The curriculum equips learners with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary to be responsible citizens in their communities. Topics such as franchising, the rights and responsibilities of citizens, and social issues, including human-environmental interaction, population and

socioeconomic development contribute to fostering good citizenship practices. By including various courses focused on these themes, the curriculum teaches learners the importance of patriotism and the responsibilities they bear as members of society.

However, the findings suggest that while the curriculum covers Citizenship Education, there is room for improvement. Inadequate resources and tight schedules often hinder effective teaching, with some tutors prioritizing teaching to test rather than focusing on fostering attitudinal change. Despite these challenges, the curriculum successfully introduces students to important aspects of citizenship education, but further enhancements are needed to ensure that the focus shifts more towards practical citizenship development and less on examination oriented teaching. The following quote provide details of the above findings:

The Social Studies curriculum emphasizes civil education, equipping learners with the relevant knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values to be responsible in the society they find themselves. [Participant #4]

Further interrogation with the participant revealed the following:

It deals with citizenry issues such as franchise, roles and responsibilities of a citizen, and imparts the right attitudes in citizens through teaching of topics like natural environment, population, socioeconomic development, and human-land issues [Participant #4].

Similarly, [Participant #9] explained:

While the curriculum addresses Citizenship Education to some extent, there is room for improvement due to inadequate resources and tight schedules, with tutors often teaching to test instead of teaching for attitudinal change.

The findings on tutors' subject matter knowledge have theoretical and empirical implications. The scope and content knowledge are fundamental to the effectiveness of Social Studies tutors. According to Shulman (2013), content knowledge encompasses understanding the structure of the subject matter, which includes substantive knowledge and syntactic knowledge. The depth of content knowledge allows tutors to present the material more effectively, facilitating student engagement

and comprehension (Demir & Pismek, 2018). The findings also support the assertion that teachers' views on their subject matter knowledge, within the framework of Shulman's PCK, encompass not just their grasp of the content itself but also their awareness of how students learn this content. This dual focus shapes their instructional strategies and interactions with students. The findings have shown that, teachers must deeply understand the content they are teaching. This involves a thorough grasp of the subject's concepts, principles, and structures. Teachers who perceive their subject matter knowledge as robust are better positioned to present the material confidently and accurately. They can identify the foundational ideas that students must grasp and build upon them effectively. Research by Ball et al. (2008) and Maba (2017) supports this, indicating that teachers with strong content knowledge are better equipped to address student misconceptions and provide deeper insights into the subject matter.

Critical thinking and analytical skills are essential competencies that Social Studies tutors aim to develop in their students. These skills enable students to analyse complex social issues, evaluate evidence, and construct well-reasoned arguments. According to Asare-Danso (2017), critical thinking involves interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. Social Studies education, with its focus on understanding human societies and their development, provides an ideal context for fostering these skills.

Theoretical implications of these findings suggest that effective Social Studies education requires a comprehensive understanding of content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and TPACK frameworks. Tutors must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to integrate content, pedagogy, and technology in ways that enhance student learning. Previous study supports the notion that tutors with strong

content knowledge and pedagogical skills are more effective in promoting student engagement and understanding. Furthermore, the integration of digital technology can enhance the teaching and learning process, provided that tutors have the necessary training and resources.

Furthermore, from the theoretical standpoint, the integration of multidisciplinary themes from the social sciences, arts, and humanities suggests the importance of constructivist and interdisciplinary approaches in curriculum design. This approach aligns with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural context in learning (Vygotsky, 1978). This theory supports the view that learning should be deeply rooted in social contexts and practical, real-world applications.

Empirically, the findings align with the work of Kankam (2016), who emphasized the critical role of citizenship education in preparing individuals to address real-world challenges. Kankam's study highlights the importance of an integrated Social Studies curriculum that promotes critical thinking and problem-solving skills essential for teacher trainees to navigate diverse teaching contexts. Also, Ayaaba et al. (2014) discussed how an effective Social Studies curriculum fosters responsible citizenship by focusing on issues such as environmental sustainability and civic responsibility. These studies corroborate the findings of this study, demonstrating that the integration of multidisciplinary content helps shape informed and responsible citizens.

4.2 Social Studies Tutors' Knowledge of Pedagogy

The second research question explores the pedagogical approaches employed by Social Studies tutors in the selected CoEs in Ghana to effectively deliver the Social Studies curriculum. This inquiry aimed to understand the specific teaching techniques used by tutors to facilitate learning and ensure that the curriculum's content is

effectively communicated to students (Alansari, 2010). The findings reveal that tutors in the selected CoEs employ a range of teaching techniques designed to engage students and support their learning in Social Studies. Drawing from the literature, it is clear that employing diverse teaching techniques is critical to delivering an effective Social Studies curriculum (Bordoh et al., 2021). The findings have been presented in sub-themes as follows:

4.2.1 Inquiry-Based Learning

The findings revealed that one of the main teaching techniques Social Studies tutors employed in their teaching was inquiry-based learning. From the participants, this technique of teaching encourages students to ask questions, conduct research, and explore Social Studies topics in depth. Techniques included project-based learning, where students investigate a specific question or problem, and Socratic seminars, which promote critical thinking through dialogue and discussion.

Drawing on the responses from the participants it was revealed that Inquiry-based learning (IBL) is a pedagogical approach that emphasises the students' role in the learning process, encouraging them to explore, ask questions, and engage deeply with the subject matter. In the context of teaching Social Studies, one of the participants indicated that "IBL serves as a powerful process through which tutors can conceptualize teaching techniques and methods, thereby enhancing the overall educational experience". This is in line with the constructivist theory, which posits that learners construct knowledge through their experiences and interactions with the world (Vygotsky, 2012). This approach shifts the focus from traditional teacher-centred methods to a more learner-centred model, where students actively participate in their own learning. By fostering a sense of curiosity and encouraging students to

inquire and investigate, IBL promotes deeper understanding and retention of knowledge. One of the participants stated that

Inquiry-based learning allows me to create a more engaging and interactive environment for my Social Studies classes. By encouraging students to ask questions and explore topics on their own, I can tailor my teaching techniques to facilitate deeper understanding and critical thinking. This approach helps me move away from traditional lecture-based methods and towards a more student-centred classroom where students take an active role in their learning [Participant #1].

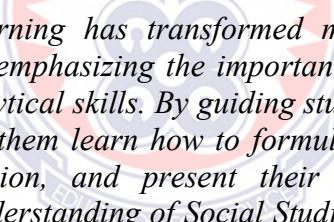
The findings showed that for Social Studies tutors, the process of implementing Inquiry-based learning requires a thoughtful conceptualization of teaching techniques and methods. One of the key elements of Inquiry-based learning is the development of open-ended questions that stimulate critical thinking and inquiry. The implication was that teachers must design these questions to be broad enough to allow for multiple perspectives and answers, yet specific enough to guide students in their investigations. This requires a deep understanding of the subject matter and the ability to anticipate the various directions students' inquiries might take. A participant stressed that

Using inquiry-based learning in Social Studies enables me to develop teaching techniques that are more focused on the students' interests and curiosities. When students are actively involved in the learning process, they are more motivated and invested in the material. This method also allows me to incorporate diverse resources and materials, making the lessons more dynamic and relevant to real-world issue [Participant #5].

The participants showed that incorporating Inquiry-based learning also necessitates a shift in the teacher's role from a dispenser of knowledge to a facilitator of learning. This involves guiding students as they navigate their inquiries, providing support and resources, and helping them develop the skills needed to conduct effective research and analysis. Teachers must be adept at creating a classroom environment that encourages exploration and risk-taking, where students feel safe to ask questions and

make mistakes. This supportive atmosphere is crucial for fostering a spirit of inquiry and discovery.

The use of Inquiry-based learning in Social Studies allows tutors to integrate various teaching techniques in a cohesive manner. For example, tutors can incorporate primary source analysis, where students examine historical documents, artefacts, and other sources to gather evidence and draw conclusions. This teaching technique not only helps students develop critical thinking and analytical skills but also provides them with a deeper understanding of historical events and contexts. Additionally, tutors can use simulations and role-playing activities to help students explore complex social and political issues from different perspectives. These activities encourage empathy and understanding, as students must consider the viewpoints and experiences of others.



Inquiry-based learning has transformed my approach to teaching Social Studies by emphasizing the importance of developing students' research and analytical skills. By guiding students through the process of inquiry, I help them learn how to formulate questions, gather and evaluate information, and present their findings. This not only enhances their understanding of Social Studies content but also equips them with essential skills for lifelong learning and problem-solving [Participant #3].

The emphasis on collaborative learning was further revealed as an important aspect of IBL. Through group projects and discussions, students learn to work together, share ideas, and build on each other's knowledge. This collaborative process mirrors the way knowledge is constructed in the real world and helps students develop important communication and teamwork skills. For teachers, facilitating collaborative learning requires careful planning and management to ensure that all students are actively engaged and contributing to the group's efforts. Assessment in an Inquiry-based learning framework also differs from traditional methods. Rather than relying solely on standardized tests and quizzes, teachers use formative assessments to gauge

student understanding and progress throughout the inquiry process. This might include observations, student reflections, and project-based assessments, which provide a more comprehensive view of student learning. Teachers must be skilled in designing and implementing these assessments to effectively measure the outcomes of inquiry-based learning activities. Commenting on the collaborative need for inquiry-based learning, one of the participants stated that,

Incorporating inquiry-based learning in my Social Studies classes has allowed me to design lessons that are more collaborative and experiential. Students work together to investigate questions and solve problems, which fosters a sense of community and shared responsibility for learning. This collaborative approach also helps students develop communication and teamwork skills, which are crucial for their future academic and professional success [Participant #4].

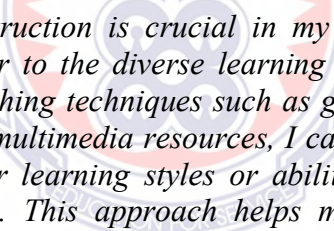
The findings on inquiry-based learning revealed that it was one of the teaching techniques that contribute to how tutors conceptualise their teaching techniques. However, from the conversations, it was further revealed that differentiated instructions played crucial role.

4.2.2 Differentiated Instructions

Recognizing that students have diverse learning needs, Social Studies tutors' use differentiated instruction to tailor their teaching technique. This might involve providing varied reading materials, using multimedia resources, or offering different types of assessments to accommodate different learning styles and abilities. The findings showed that participants view differentiated instruction as a pedagogical approach that addresses the diverse needs of students within a classroom, allowing tutors to tailor their teaching techniques to accommodate various learning styles, abilities, and interests. In the context of Social Studies in the selected CoEs, the participants demonstrated that differentiated instruction plays a crucial role in enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes. This approach is particularly

relevant in Social Studies, where the complexity of Social Studies curriculum and content requires a nuanced and flexible teaching strategy.

It was revealed that Social Studies tutors in selected CoEs affiliated with the University of Cape Coast, employ differentiated instruction to portray their knowledge of teaching techniques in several ways. In the first instance, they recognize the importance of understanding their students' individual needs, backgrounds, and learning preferences. This understanding is fundamental to creating an inclusive and effective learning environment. Tutors use various assessment tools, such as diagnostic tests, surveys, and informal observations, to gather information about their students. This data helps them to identify students' strengths, weaknesses, and interests, which in turn informs their instructional planning. One of the participants stated that



Differentiated instruction is crucial in my teaching approach as it allows me to cater to the diverse learning needs of my students. By using various teaching techniques such as group work, individualised assignments, and multimedia resources, I can ensure that all students, regardless of their learning styles or abilities, can engage with the content effectively. This approach helps me to create an inclusive classroom environment where every student has the opportunity to succeed [Participant #5].

Another participant indicated by saying that

In my experience, differentiated instruction is an essential framework that guides how I design my Social Studies curriculum. It involves modifying my teaching techniques to address the varied needs of my students. For instance, I use formative assessments to gauge students' understanding and adjust my instruction accordingly. This might involve providing additional support for struggling students or offering enrichment activities for advanced learners. This process ensures that all students are challenged appropriately and can progress at their own pace [Participant #2].

From the conversation, another technique employed by Social Studies tutors within the context of differentiated instructions was flexible grouping. This involves organizing students into diverse groups based on their skills, interests, or learning preferences. Grouping can be fluid, with students moving between groups as their needs and abilities change. In Social Studies, this might involve collaborative projects, discussions, or problem-solving activities that require students to work together and learn from each other. By participating in heterogeneous groups, students can benefit from peer support and gain exposure to different perspectives and ideas. This collaborative approach also helps to develop important social and communication skills, which are essential for success in Social Studies and beyond.

From participants' perspective, the use of differentiated instruction further emphasizes the importance of varied instructional strategies. Social Studies tutors might use a combination of direct instruction, inquiry-based learning, and project-based learning to engage students in different ways. For example, a teacher might begin a unit on the Environmental Protection with a lecture to provide background information, followed by a research project where students investigate specific events or figures in more depth. This allows students to take ownership of their learning and pursue topics that interest them. Inquiry-based learning, where students explore questions and problems related to the subject matter, encourages active learning and critical thinking. By using a mix of instructional strategies, tutors can address different learning preferences and keep students engaged and motivated. A participant stated that

Differentiated instruction plays a pivotal role in how I conceptualize teaching techniques in Social Studies. By recognizing and addressing the unique needs of each student, I can employ a variety of instructional strategies such as scaffolding, peer tutoring, and hands-on activities. This approach not only enhances students' engagement and motivation but also promotes deeper understanding and retention of the material. It allows me to create a dynamic and responsive learning environment where all students can thrive [Participant #1].

The findings showed that in addition to these instructional techniques, differentiated instruction in Social Studies involves creating a supportive and inclusive classroom environment. Tutors strive to build strong relationships with their students, fostering a sense of community and belonging. They encourage student voice and choice, allowing students to have a say in their learning process. This empowerment helps to motivate students and increase their engagement with the subject matter. Furthermore, tutors use culturally responsive teaching practices to ensure that all students feel represented and valued in the curriculum. Corroborating on the use of differentiated instructions, a participant said

Differentiated instruction is an integral part of my teaching philosophy. It allows me to create a learning environment that respects and values the diversity of my students. By using a variety of instructional strategies such as tiered assignments, flexible grouping, and differentiated assessments, I can meet the individual needs of my students and help them achieve their full potential. This approach not only enhances students' academic performance but also fosters a positive and inclusive classroom culture [Participant #1].

The findings illustrated that differentiated instruction serves as a vital process through which Social Studies tutors in the selected CoEs show and implement their techniques of teaching. By understanding their students' diverse needs and employing a variety of instructional materials, grouping strategies, instructional methods, and assessment techniques, tutors can create a dynamic and inclusive learning environment.

4.2.4 Effective Teaching in Social Studies

The study found that effective teaching in Social Studies is characterised by the application of diverse and engaging techniques aimed at addressing real-world challenges faced by Ghanaians. The findings revealed that tutors emphasized a learner-centred method, where students actively engage in learning through hands-on activities and critical thinking. This technique not only connects theoretical concepts

to practical issues but also promotes active citizenship and holistic knowledge acquisition. The study brought to the fore that effective teaching involves using interactive strategies and appropriate teaching resources to facilitate learning, enabling students to develop their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains effectively.

In addition, the study found that effective teaching is achieved when the instructional process leads to the desired changes in learners, with the teacher acting as a facilitator guiding students toward problem-solving. The findings further revealed that employing varied teaching techniques enhances the teaching and learning process, ensuring that students use all their senses during and after teaching. The study also revealed that effective teaching in Social Studies fosters the development of critical thinking skills and equips learners with the ability to address societal issues, thereby aligning the teaching process with the overarching goals of Social Studies education.

The following responses provide details of the above findings:

Effective teaching of Social Studies focuses on using the knowledge gained to address problems affecting Ghanaians. For me, this represents the practical application of Social Studies education, emphasizing the importance of equipping learners with knowledge to solve real-world issues [Participant #4].

In a similar way, [Participant #7] said that:

Effective teaching is where the teacher acts as a facilitator by directing learners to solving problems. This emphasizes the role of the teacher in guiding students through a problem-solving approach, fostering independence and critical thinking.

Speaking on the same subject matter, [Participant #11] also made the following revelations:

It is when a topic taught brings about the desired change in the learners. This illustrates the outcome-oriented nature of effective teaching, where the success of instruction is measured by its impact on students' understanding and behaviour.

The findings revealed that effective teaching techniques for Social Studies educators emphasize learner-centred methods that actively involve students in the learning process. According to the data gathered, these methods include problem-solving, inquiry-based learning, and interactive strategies such as discussions, group activities, and brainstorming. Educators frequently employ techniques such as role play, demonstrations, and project-based learning to foster critical thinking and engagement. Field trips, collaborative learning, and cooperative group work enable students to connect theoretical concepts with real-world experiences. Techniques like "think-pair-share," the KWL approach (Know, Want to Know, Learned), and scaffolding support the gradual development of understanding, ensuring that students actively participate in constructing their own knowledge.

The findings also highlight the flexibility in teaching techniques, as there are no strict rules for effective teaching. The key is to tailor techniques to the needs and understanding of students. Techniques like simulation, concentric approaches, differentiation, and "talk for learning" are widely used to address diverse learning styles. Presentations, small group discussions, and the integration of videos further enhance the learning experience, making it more engaging and relatable. These techniques collectively underscore the importance of centring teaching around students' learning needs and promoting meaningful interaction to achieve educational objectives. The following quotes provide details of the above findings:

Teaching to the understanding of students requires employing relevant teaching techniques, methods and strategies. This statement emphasizes the importance of tailoring teaching techniques to suit students' comprehension levels, ensuring effective knowledge transfer [Participant #9].

In a similar response, [Participant #8] explained as follows:

Per my experience, effective teaching involves tailoring techniques, methods, and strategies to the specific needs and understanding levels

of students, ensuring that lessons are delivered in a way that facilitates meaningful learning and comprehension for all learners.

Addressing the same issues, [Participant #13] also made these revelations:

In fact, there is no fast rule when it comes to the methods of teaching but the most effective teaching techniques are the ones that place learners at the centred in the teaching learning process for the learners to create their own knowledge. It also includes the adaptability of teaching techniques and stresses the importance of learner-centred approaches in fostering student-driven learning. This can also involve small group discussions, field trips, videos. This succinctly identifies specific techniques that enhance engagement and connect students with practical, visual, and collaborative learning experiences.

The study further revealed that employing innovative teaching techniques in Social Studies enhances student engagement and fosters active participation in the teaching and learning process. Findings showed that these techniques enable students to better understand complex concepts and relate them to real-life situations. By integrating approaches such as role-playing, discussions, and presentations, the findings showed that learners develop critical thinking skills, share diverse opinions, and make informed decisions. Additionally, the study established that these techniques make lessons more interactive, helping students take ownership of their learning and building their confidence in expressing ideas.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that activity-oriented techniques, including brainstorming and field trips, allow students to experience practical applications of their knowledge, further strengthening their understanding. The study established that integrating ICT tools and other modern methods promotes leadership skills and problem-solving abilities, encouraging learners to actively seek knowledge and incorporate lessons into everyday life. Findings revealed that these strategies not only make the teaching and learning process more interesting but also prepare students to

tackle real-world challenges effectively. The following quotes relate to the above findings:

It makes students to own the learning and participate actively in the teaching and learning process. I must stress that this shows how innovative teaching techniques encourage students to take responsibility for their learning, fostering a sense of ownership and engagement. [Participant #7]

In another response, [Participant #10] explained:

Discussions get students much involved and own the study, while presentation builds confidence in them. This emphasizes the importance of discussions and presentations in making students more engaged while helping them develop self-assurance in expressing their ideas. I believe that by employing activity-oriented techniques and using ICT tools, they help them understand the real-life scenarios and how to incorporate them into everyday lifestyles. This emphasizes the role of practical, technology-enhanced teaching techniques in bridging classroom learning with real-world applications.

4.2.5 Criteria for Selecting Teaching Techniques

The study also sought information from the participants regarding the criteria for selecting teaching techniques. The data gathered revealed that teaching techniques are chosen primarily based on the content to be taught, the objectives of the lesson, and the nature of the students. The topic at hand plays a critical role in determining the most appropriate method, with consideration given to both the learning outcomes and the learning indicators of relevant strands and sub-strands. In addition, the lesson's objectives and the learning environment are key factors in choosing the most suitable teaching approach. In some cases, adherence to course coordinator instructions or pre-established proforma lesson notes also guides the selection process.

Furthermore, the diversity of student needs is a significant consideration, ensuring that the teaching technique caters to varying learning styles and abilities. The resources available for teaching and learning, along with the topic's specific requirements, also influence the choice of technique. Moreover, the selection of

teaching techniques is a dynamic process that integrates a clear understanding of the topic, the learners, and the instructional goals to facilitate effective teaching and learning outcomes. The following responses provide details of the above findings:

I base it on the topic, level of my learners, the objectives of the lesson, and teaching and learning resources available. The focus begins with the topic, ensuring that the teaching method is relevant to the subject matter. It also takes into account the learners' level, emphasizing the importance of tailoring instruction to their abilities and developmental stages. The objectives of the lesson are highlighted as a guiding framework, ensuring that the chosen techniques facilitate achieving the intended outcomes. Finally, the availability of teaching and learning resources is acknowledged, recognizing their role in supporting or limiting the effectiveness of the chosen methods. [Participant #6]

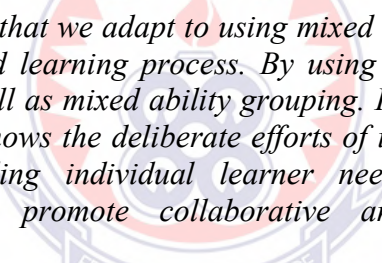
Speaking further on the subject matter, [Participant #9] made the following revelations:

They are selected based on the learning outcomes and learning indicators of the strands and the sub-strands. In relation to the topic to be taught and objectives for the lesson, for me, this is a systematic approach to selecting teaching techniques that align with educational standards. It emphasizes the role of learning outcomes and indicators as benchmarks for identifying appropriate methods. The reference to strands and sub-strands indicates a curriculum-based perspective, ensuring that the techniques are consistent with broader educational goals. Again, the importance of the topic to be taught is acknowledged, ensuring that the content delivery is aligned with its specific requirements. The lesson objectives are also central, guiding the choice of techniques toward achieving clearly defined educational aims [Participant #9].

The findings revealed the importance of adopting diverse teaching techniques to cater for varying learning styles and needs. Teachers employ strategies such as mixed-ability groupings, gender and intellectual inclusivity, and conducting needs assessments to better understand their learners. Differentiation, which involves tailoring instruction to meet individual abilities, and the integration of ICT tools, enhance adaptability. The interactive nature of ICT tools fosters engagement and inclusivity, enabling all learners to actively participate in the learning process. Teachers also blend techniques with varied examples and adjust methods based on the

learners' levels and abilities, ensuring that the teaching process is both effective and equitable.

The data gathered indicated that, varying teaching techniques, including discussion, presentations, scaffolding, and individual support, creates an inclusive learning environment. These approaches encourage collaboration and cater to diverse learning needs by using group formations and personalized attention. The deliberate use of differentiated methods, complemented by teacher-learner activities and ICT tools, ensures that instruction aligns with the unique abilities and needs of learners. Through such adaptive strategies, educators effectively engage students, promote inclusivity, and enhance the overall learning experience. The following responses provide details of the above findings:



Well, I must say that we adapt to using mixed ability groupings during the teaching and learning process. By using gender and intellectual inclusivity as well as mixed ability grouping, I do needs assessment of the learner. It shows the deliberate efforts of incorporating inclusivity and understanding individual learner needs to create effective groupings that promote collaborative and adaptive learning.
[Participant #8]

In a similar response, [Participant #10] narrated:

Using of ICT tool make it easy for me to adopt to different styles. Since they are interactive in nature, they seek to involve all learners in the teaching and learning process. This approach demonstrates the role of ICT tools in fostering interactivity and inclusivity, making it easier for educators to adapt to the diverse learning styles and needs of their students.

These findings show that pedagogical knowledge significantly shape Social Studies tutors' PCK in both perception application. The findings revealed that Inquiry-based learning is pedagogical strategy that emphasizes the importance of students' questions, ideas, and observations in the learning process. This teaching technique aligns well with the goals of Social Studies education, which often include fostering critical thinking, promoting active citizenship, and encouraging a deeper understanding of

societal issues (Evans, 2021). Through inquiry-based learning, Social Studies tutors can create a classroom environment where students are encouraged to explore complex topics, ask meaningful questions, and develop their own interpretations based on evidence. This technique of teaching not only enhances students' engagement and motivation but also helps them develop important skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and information literacy (Keddie, 2019). Prior research has shown that inquiry-based learning can lead to improved academic outcomes and a deeper understanding of content, making it a valuable strategy for Social Studies tutors in college of education in Ghana (Gallifa, 2018; Schutz, 2017).

The findings revealed that inquiry-based learning is particularly valuable in teacher education programmes because it models the type of teaching that pre-service teachers are expected to implement in their own practice. By engaging in inquiry-based learning themselves, pre-service teachers experience first-hand, the benefits and challenges of this approach. They learn how to facilitate student-led investigations, develop effective questioning techniques, and create a classroom culture that values curiosity and exploration. This experiential learning helps pre-service teachers internalize the principles of inquiry-based learning and prepares them to create inquiry-driven classrooms that promote critical thinking and active learning.

The findings on differentiated instruction also had practical implications on the study. Differentiated instruction is another crucial element in the conceptualization of teaching techniques for Social Studies tutors (Rodríguez & Swalwell, 2023). Differentiated instruction involves tailoring teaching techniques, materials, and assessments to meet the diverse needs of students. In Social Studies classrooms, students come from varied backgrounds and possess different levels of prior knowledge, skills, and learning preferences (Keddie, 2019). Differentiated instruction

allows tutors to address these differences by providing multiple pathways for students to engage with content, process information, and demonstrate their understanding. This approach ensures that all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, have the opportunity to succeed and reach their full potential. Studies indicate that differentiated instruction can lead to increased student achievement, greater engagement, and improved attitudes towards learning. By incorporating differentiated instruction into their teaching practices, Social Studies tutors can create more inclusive and effective learning environments. The findings highlighted that it prepares future teachers to meet the diverse needs of their students. Pre-service teachers learn how to assess students' readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles, and how to design instruction that accommodates these differences (Kromydas, 2017). They explore various strategies for differentiating content, process, product, and learning environment, and practice implementing these strategies in their teaching. By developing a deep understanding of differentiated instruction, pre-service teachers are better equipped to create inclusive classrooms that support the success of all students.

In addition, the findings of the study are consistent with existing literature emphasizing the importance of diverse teaching techniques in fostering effective Social Studies instruction. The identified learner-centred methods, such as problem-solving, inquiry-based learning, and interactive strategies, resonate with Appau et al. (2022), who highlight the participatory nature of discussion techniques in actively engaging students. By involving students in debates, group work, and role-playing, educators facilitate democratic learning environments that encourage critical thinking and respect for diverse perspectives. Similarly, Adu-Yeboah (2011) and Pufaa et al. (2023) affirm the effectiveness of project-based learning in integrating theoretical and practical knowledge, fostering collaboration, and cultivating problem-solving skills.

These approaches, as highlighted in the study, not only address the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains but also prepare students to apply their learning to real-world issues, thereby achieving the overarching goals of Social Studies education.

The study's emphasis on flexibility and tailoring teaching techniques to students' needs is also corroborated by the concept of differentiated instruction outlined in the literature. Rodríguez and Swalwell (2023) advocate for varied instructional techniques, including flexible grouping, multimedia integration, and assessments that cater to individual learning styles and abilities. The use of ICT tools and activity-oriented strategies, as noted in the findings, further supports Morgan's (2014) assertion that aligning teaching approaches with students' preferences enhances focus and engagement. These adaptive strategies are critical in addressing the diverse needs of learners, as they promote inclusivity and ensure active participation

Moreover, the use of lessons as a process for conceptualizing teaching techniques is an important aspect of Social Studies education. Lessons serve as the primary means through which tutors deliver content, facilitate learning activities, and engage students in meaningful discussions. Well-designed lessons are aligned with curriculum standards, incorporate diverse instructional strategies, and provide opportunities for students to interact with content in meaningful ways. Lessons can include a variety of activities such as lectures, discussions, group work, simulations, and multimedia presentations, all of which contribute to a rich and engaging learning experience. Empirical studies suggest that well-planned and thoughtfully executed lessons can enhance student understanding, motivation, and achievement (Unterhalter et al., 2018). Using lessons as a framework for their teaching, Social Studies tutors can

create structured and coherent learning experiences that support students' academic and personal growth (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2019).

4.3 Integration of Pedagogical Content Knowledge in Social Studies Lessons

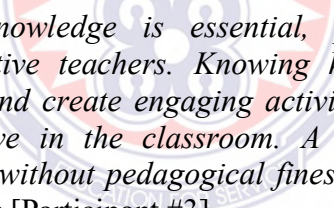
The third research question sought to explore how Social Studies tutors integrate pedagogical content knowledge into Social Studies lesson delivery. To respond to this question, tutors were observed and interviewed. Through observations and interviews, the study revealed that tutors systematically understand how PCK components are integrated into Social Studies lesson delivery. The findings have been presented in sub-themes as follows:

4.3.1 Integration of Content Knowledge with Pedagogical Skills

The findings showed that the Social Studies tutors were of the view that pedagogical content knowledge should be interspersed with integration of content knowledge and pedagogical skills. The responses from the tutors emphasize that content knowledge alone is not sufficient for effective teaching; it must be coupled with pedagogical skills. Pedagogical content knowledge involves knowing how to teach specific content in ways that are accessible and engaging for students. This includes the ability to design proforma lesson notes, use appropriate teaching strategies, and assess student understanding. The tutors' consensus was that for training programmes to be effective, they should be designed with integrated theoretical and practical components, as these are crucial in helping future teachers build PCK. On the integration of content knowledge and pedagogical skills, one of the participants indicated that

Effective teaching in Social Studies demands a deep understanding of both content knowledge and pedagogical skills. Without a solid grasp of the subject matter, teachers struggle to engage students meaningfully. Pedagogical skills are crucial in translating this knowledge into accessible lessons that foster critical thinking and civic engagement [Participant #1].

It was further indicated from the participants that pedagogical skills involve the methods and strategies teachers use to facilitate learning. This includes ‘tutors’ proforma’, classroom management, assessment techniques, and the ability to adapt teaching techniques to meet diverse student needs. Effective pedagogy also involves understanding how students learn and what approaches can make the material more accessible and engaging. For Social Studies tutors, the perception of the integration of content knowledge with pedagogical skills often hinges on their ability to make historical events, geographical concepts, and civic principles relevant and interesting to students. This requires a command of the subject matter and an ability to relate it to students’ lives and current events. Tutors must use storytelling, critical thinking exercises, and interactive activities to bring the subject matter to life. A participant stated that



While content knowledge is essential, pedagogical skills truly differentiate effective teachers. Knowing how to adapt content to diverse learners and create engaging activities is what makes Social Studies come alive in the classroom. A strong grasp of content supports this, but without pedagogical finesse, students may not fully grasp its relevance [Participant #3].

Another participant corroborated that:

In my experience, mastering content knowledge lays the foundation for effective teaching in Social Studies. Pedagogical skills enhance delivery, but without deep content understanding, teachers risk oversimplifying or misrepresenting complex historical or societal concepts. Both are important, but content knowledge should be prioritized [Participant #5].

However, it was revealed through the conversation that the perception of this integration can vary among tutors. Some may feel confident in their content knowledge but struggle with pedagogical techniques, while others might excel in creating engaging lessons but need to deepen their subject matter knowledge.

Professional development opportunities, collaborative teaching strategies, and continuous learning are essential for tutors to balance and enhance both areas.

The integration of content knowledge and pedagogical skills is symbiotic in Social Studies education. Teachers need a solid grasp of historical facts and cultural contexts, coupled with the ability to scaffold learning effectively. This synergy ensures that students not only absorb information but also develop critical thinking and citizenship skills essential for informed participation in society [Participant #4]

4.3.2 Integration of Digital Technology

The findings showed that Social Studies tutors perceive that the use of digital technology plays significant role in subject matter knowledge. The participants stressed that integrating digital technology into Social Studies education enhances subject matter knowledge in several ways. It was revealed that it facilitates access to a vast array of primary sources, historical documents, and multimedia resources, allowing students to engage directly with historical artefacts and diverse perspectives. This interactive approach deepens their understanding of historical events and encourages critical thinking and analysis. The findings further showed that digital tools enable simulations and virtual field trips, transporting students to historical sites or events that may otherwise be inaccessible physically. This immersive learning experience helps contextualise historical events within their geographical and cultural settings, fostering a more holistic understanding. A tutor stated that

As a teacher, digital technology has revolutionised how I present historical events and geographical civic education concepts. Interactive maps, virtual tours of historical sites, and access to primary source documents through online archives have transformed my lessons. Students can now engage with history in a more immersive and contextualised manner, which enhances their understanding and retention of key concept [Participant #1]

Moreover, digital technology promotes collaborative learning through platforms that facilitate discussions, debates, and group projects. Students can engage in real-time exchanges with peers globally, gaining diverse viewpoints and enhancing their ability to communicate effectively. Commenting on how digital technology promotes collaborative learning, one participant stated that

Using digital tools in Social Studies has made learning more engaging and accessible. Instead of just reading about civilizations or political systems, we can explore timelines, watch videos, and participate in online simulations. These tools help me visualize concepts and connect them to real-world situations, making Social Studies more relevant and interesting [Participant #5].

Another participant noted that as follow

Integrating digital tools in Social Studies encourages interactive learning experiences. Platforms like virtual tours, interactive maps, and simulations immerse students in historical contexts, making abstract concepts more tangible. This hands-on approach not only boosts engagement but also reinforces comprehension of complex topic [Participant #2].

Moreover, the findings showed that digital technology supports differentiated instruction, allowing tutors to personalise learning experiences based on students' interests, learning styles, and proficiency levels. Adaptive learning platforms and multimedia presentations cater to individual needs, ensuring that all students can grasp complex historical concepts and develop a deeper appreciation for Social Studies as a dynamic field of study.

The use of digital technology facilitates collaborative learning among students. Online forums, collaborative projects, and digital portfolios enable them to share findings, debate historical interpretations, and collectively construct knowledge. This collaborative approach not only enriches their understanding of Social Studies but also develops essential teamwork and communication skill [Participant #5].

The participant blended content knowledge of historical debate with pedagogical strategies such as digital forums and projects to foster collaboration among learners.

4.3.3 Use of Collaborative Learning

Through interviews, the study shows that collaborative learning is a pedagogical approach that emphasizes group-based activities and interactions among students to achieve educational objectives. The study revealed that participants integrate aspect of PCK construct such as content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge into their lessons through the use of collaborative learning methods. To them, collaborative learning methods enhance students' conceptual understanding and foster a deeper engagement with the material. This technique supports core Social Studies objectives, including the development of critical thinking skills, civic engagement and an understanding social dynamics. It was revealed that one of the key ways collaborative learning benefits Social Studies education is through its ability to create a more interactive and participatory classroom environment. By working in groups, students are encouraged to discuss, debate, and question the material. This interaction helps them to develop a more nuanced understanding of Social Studies concepts as they are exposed to multiple perspectives and interpretations. One of the participants stated that

Group activities and discussions serve as formative assessments, giving me real-time feedback on students' understanding. By observing these interactions, I can identify areas where students struggle and tailor my instruction to address their needs [Participant #4].

It was further found that through collaborative learning, Social Studies tutors can better gauge students' existing conceptions and misconceptions about the material. When students articulate their thoughts and reasoning during group discussions, teachers can observe their thought processes and identify areas where they may need further clarification or support. This immediate feedback loop is invaluable for tutors,

allowing them to adjust their teaching strategies in real-time to address any gaps in understanding. Additionally, students often learn from each other during these interactions, as peers can sometimes explain concepts in ways that are more relatable or understandable than traditional teacher explanations. Another significant advantage of collaborative learning in Social Studies found from the participants was its alignment with the subject's inherent focus on social interaction and community. Social Studies often deals with topics related to history, geography, economics, and civics, all of which are deeply intertwined with human interactions and societal structures. By working collaboratively, students can simulate these social processes and develop a more practical understanding of the content. For instance, group projects on historical events can encourage students to explore different viewpoints and consider the diverse experiences of people involved, fostering empathy and a deeper appreciation for the complexity of historical narratives. A participant said:

Creating a collaborative learning environment encourages students to support and learn from one another. This peer support system helps me see how students build on each other's knowledge, promoting a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of Social Studies content [Participant #2].

The role of the educator in a collaborative learning environment is also transformed. Rather than being the sole source of knowledge, the teacher becomes a facilitator who guides and supports students in their learning journey. This shift can help create a more student-centred classroom where learners take greater ownership of their education. Teachers can design activities that require students to research, analyse, and present information, thereby promoting higher-order thinking skills. By providing support, tutors can help students navigate complex tasks and develop confidence in their abilities. In addition, the findings showed that collaborative learning can enhance students' motivation and engagement with Social Studies. When students work

together, they often find the material more interesting and relevant. The social aspect of learning can increase their intrinsic motivation, as they are more likely to be invested in activities that involve interaction with their peers. This increased engagement can lead to better retention of information and a more positive attitude towards the subject.

Collaborative learning is a highly effective method for Social Studies tutors to enhance students' conceptual understanding and engagement with the material. By enhancing active participation, providing immediate feedback, promoting social interaction, developing essential soft skills, transforming the educator's role, increasing motivation and engagement, and promoting equity, collaborative learning aligns perfectly with the goals and objectives of Social Studies education.

Observation Data

Classroom observations on lessons delivered by Social Studies tutors confirm their responses during the interview sessions. It was observed that most of the tutors used small group discussion, group project work and peer learning techniques during the lesson presentation stage. In a lesson on Family and Functioning under the course, Social Structure of Ghana, the researcher observed that Participant #5 put teacher trainees into groups of four to find out meaning and functions of family from other sources. These techniques foster students' understanding and engagement with the material.

4.3.4 Assessment with Feedback

The findings revealed that assessment is a critical means through which Social Studies tutors integrate PCK into their teaching. Tutors employ a variety of formative and summative assessments to evaluate student learning and provide constructive feedback. Participants indicated that formative assessments, such as quizzes,

assignments, and group work, allow them to monitor students' progress and adjust their instruction accordingly. Summative assessments, such as essays, examinations and projects, provide a comprehensive evaluation of student understanding.

Again, the participants highlighted that assessment in Social Studies education involves evaluating students' understanding of concepts, their ability to apply knowledge, and their critical thinking skills. This can be done through various methods, including quizzes, essays, projects, and classroom discussions. From the tutors' perspective, effective assessment provides valuable insights into students' progress and identifies gaps in their understanding. Feedback, on the other hand, serves as a crucial mechanism for guiding students and tutors alike. For students, feedback helps them understand their strengths and weaknesses, providing them with specific guidance on how to improve. To tutors, feedback from students, peers, and self-reflection offers a mirror to their teaching practices. It allows them to see the impact of their methods and make informed decisions about how to refine their approach. Constructive feedback encourages a growth mind-set, fostering an environment where continuous improvement is valued. One of the participants indicated by saying that

Assessments with feedback provide invaluable insights into the effectiveness of our teaching techniques. When I see how students perform on assessments, I can identify which concepts they grasp well and which ones they struggle with. This allows me to tailor my teaching techniques to address these gaps. For example, if a significant number of students are missing important concept in a particular lesson, I might incorporate more interactive activities or visual aids to reinforce that concept [Participant #4].

Another tutor narrated that

Feedback from students, both through formal assessments and informal channels, is crucial for refining my teaching strategies. It helps me understand how students are engaging with the material and whether my instructional methods are resonating with them. This

continuous loop of assessment with feedback informs my approach, enabling me to introduce more effective teaching techniques that cater to diverse learning styles in Social Studies [Participant #3].

It was found through the interviews that the process of integrating PCK through assessment with feedback into teaching of Social Studies begins with the establishment of clear learning objectives. Tutors need to define what they want students to achieve and how they will measure success. These objectives guide the development of assessment tools and criteria, ensuring that they are aligned with the desired outcomes. By having a clear framework, tutors can design assessments that accurately capture student learning and provide meaningful data for feedback. Once assessments are conducted, the analysis of findings becomes a pivotal step. Tutors need to systematically review the data to identify patterns and trends. This analysis can reveal common misconceptions, areas of confusion, and topics that require further emphasis. By understanding these trends, tutors can adjust their teaching techniques to address specific challenges to incorporate additional resources, and to modify their explanations to enhance teacher trainees' understanding.

Again, the findings revealed that assessment with feedback is most effective when it is timely, specific, and actionable. Timely feedback allows students to make immediate adjustments and reinforces their learning while it is still fresh. Specific feedback highlights particular areas of strength and areas for improvement, providing clear direction for students. Actionable feedback offers practical suggestions that students can implement to enhance their performance. For tutors, feedback should be similarly specific and actionable, allowing them to make targeted changes to their teaching techniques. A participant stated by saying that

Using assessments with feedback as a guide, I can experiment with different teaching techniques and see which ones yield the best outcomes. For instance, if an assessment reveals that students are struggling with understanding historical events, I might incorporate

more project-based learning or use primary source documents to make the learning experience more engaging. Feedback from these activities then helps me refine my approach further [Participant #2].

The iterative nature of assessment with feedback creates a cycle of continuous improvement. Tutors assess student learning, provide feedback, reflect on their teaching practices, and make needed adjustments. This cycle promotes a reflective practice where tutors are constantly evaluating the effectiveness of their methods and seeking ways to enhance student learning. It encourages a culture of professional growth and development, where tutors are committed to refining their craft. Assessments with feedback are fundamental processes through which Social Studies tutors conceptualize and refine their teaching techniques in the Colleges. By establishing clear learning objectives, systematically analysing assessment data, providing specific and actionable feedback, and engaging in reflective practice, tutors can continuously improve their methods.

4.3.5 Drawing on Developmental Psychology

Interview and observation data suggested that participants integrate PCK components into their lesson delivery by employing developmental psychology. Participants emphasised the importance examining how learners' developmental stages relate to the instructional techniques used to teach major Social Studies concepts, given the evolving nature of learners' cognitive abilities. Expressing their opinions, the participants indicted that one of the primary contributions of developmental psychology to Social Studies education is the understanding of cognitive development stages, as proposed by Lev Vygotsky. Social Studies tutors indicated that, drawing on this understanding, they designed their lessons to focus on concrete examples, such as historical events and geographical facts, to align with the cognitive abilities of their students.

Explaining further, one of the participants indicated that Vygotsky's theory of social development enriches this understanding by emphasizing the importance of social interactions and cultural context in cognitive development. Vygotsky introduced the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the range of tasks that a learner can perform with the help and guidance of others but cannot yet perform independently. Social Studies tutors therefore leverage on this concept by creating collaborative learning environments where students work together and receive support from their peers and teachers. This approach, the participant noted, not only facilitates cognitive development but also fosters social skills and a deeper understanding of the subject matter through social interaction and shared experiences.

An educator categorically stated that

Drawing on Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) has significantly influenced my approach to teaching Social Studies. By identifying what students can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance, I can better scaffold their learning experiences. This involves providing appropriate support and gradually increasing complexity as students become more competent. Understanding the ZPD allows me to design collaborative activities and discussions that challenge students just beyond their current capabilities, fostering growth in their conceptual understanding of Social Studies topics [Participant #1].

Another participant stated that

Using Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences has transformed my approach to assessing and engaging students in Social Studies. Recognizing that students have diverse strengths and preferred learning styles, I incorporate a variety of instructional methods and assessment tools. For example, I use visual aids, storytelling, music, and hands-on activities to cater to different intelligences. This approach helps students connect with the material in ways that resonate with them personally, leading to a deeper and more personalized understanding of Social Studies concepts [Participant #3].

Moreover, it was revealed that developmental psychology provides insights into the emotional and social development of learners, which are crucial for creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment in Social Studies education. One of the participants stressed that Piaget's theory, for example, outlines the stages of emotional and social growth that individuals go through from infancy to adulthood. Understanding these stages allows tutors to address the emotional and social needs of their students, creating a classroom atmosphere that promotes emotional well-being and positive social interactions. Furthermore, developmental psychology highlights the importance of considering individual differences in learners' developmental trajectories.

Not all students progress through developmental stages at the same rate, and there is considerable variation in cognitive, emotional, and social development within any given age group. By drawing on developmental psychology, Social Studies tutors can adopt a more personalized approach to teaching, recognizing and accommodating these individual differences. Differentiated instruction, which involves tailoring teaching techniques and materials to meet the diverse needs of students, becomes a key strategy in this regard. Tutors can provide varying levels of support and challenge to different students, ensuring that each learner can engage with the content at a level that is appropriate for their developmental stage. Additionally, developmental psychology informs the assessment practices in Social Studies education. Traditional assessment methods, such as standardized tests, may not fully capture the breadth of students' understanding and skills. Developmental psychology advocates for more holistic and formative assessment approaches that consider the on-going development of learners. Portfolio assessments, project-based learning, and performance tasks are examples of alternative assessment methods that align with developmental principles.

These methods allow tutors to assess students' progress over time, providing a more comprehensive picture of their cognitive, emotional, and social development.

Observation Data

This finding was corroborated with lesson observation. However, classroom observations from the various lesson presentations by Social Studies tutors contradict their responses during the interview sessions. During the lesson presentations, the researcher observed that three out of fifteen tutors who often ensured that students are challenged and supported. This implies that most tutors do not offer support to their students when teaching.

4.3.6 Creating and Use of Proforma Lesson Note

An observational assessment of tutors' proforma lesson notes from participants highlighted how the use of tutors' proforma lesson notes aided in the pedagogical knowledge of the Social Studies tutors.

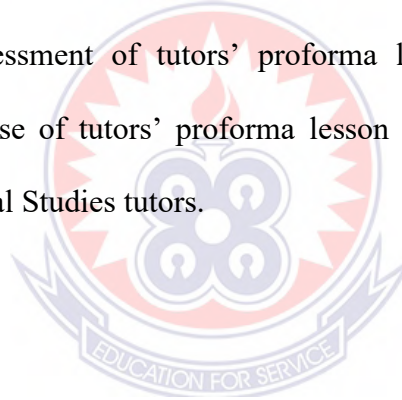


Table 4.1: Analysis of Tutor's Proforma Lesson Note [Participants #3]

Items	Observation	Categorization/Theme
Item 1: Are the specific learning indicators that teacher-trainees are expected to demonstrate or attain clearly stated in the proforma lesson note?	<p>The learning outcome was indicated that the teacher-trainee should be able to demonstrate knowledge on the two main approaches in the design of Social Studies curriculum.</p> <p>Also, the learning indicators were indicated in the lesson that the teacher-trainee should be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. describe the nature of the two main approaches to the design of Social Studies curriculum (NTS 1a, b, f; 2c, d, e, f; 3b, c, e, f, g, h, i, j). 2. discuss in two ways, the difference between Concentric and Spiral approaches (NTS 1a, b, f; 2c, d, e, f; 3b, c, e, f, g, h, i, j). 3. show evidence of the application of the two concepts in Social Studies curriculum. NTECF p. 7-17. P 41- 46 NTS 1 b p 12, 2a, b and 2c p 13 	Tutor has required knowledge of College of Education Social Studies curriculum.
Item 2: Does the proforma lesson note outline any fundamental concepts?	Some of the major concepts that were to be taught on the approaches for designing of Social Studies programmes were indicated in the proforma lesson note. These include Concentric and Spiral approaches.	Tutor proforma lesson note reflects knowledge of the subject matter, that is, knowledge of Social Studies content
Item 3: Does the proforma lesson note indicate possible procedure to be taught to the teacher-trainees?	The lesson preparation indicates that the teacher will help teacher-trainees to determine the processes through which Social Studies curriculum is	Procedures to be taught indicated in the plan by Teacher-educator

<p>Item 4: Are there concepts and information presented in the lesson preparation accurate and relevant to the topic under consideration?</p>	<p>designed. The proforma lesson note adequately reflects accurate concepts related with approaches for designing Social Studies programmes.</p>	<p>Tutor has strongly demonstrated a good knowledge of the subject matter.</p>
<p>Item 5: Are the teaching techniques that will be utilized in the lesson clearly outlined in the preparation?</p>	<p>The Tutor will first lead whole class discussion on how to arrange the four main concepts (Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication, and Division) orderly from easier to learn, to a complex one. Teacher-trainees will be then assisted to link the analogy to the design of Social Studies curriculum, where key concepts are arranged in a magnitude of difficulty to reflect the intellectual growth of teacher-trainees. Secondly, through whole class deliberation, teacher-trainees will differentiate between concentric and spiral Curricula to establish the two main differences. In a mixed ability groups of four, consisting of eight members, the Tutor will let teacher-trainees peruse the basic school curriculum to establish the evidence of application of the concentric and spiral approaches in Social Studies curriculum.</p>	<p>Tutor used a variety of techniques of teaching (instructional strategies): example, demonstration, discussion, oral probing questioning and group work.</p>
<p>Item 6: Are the proforma lesson note explicitly outlining alternative teaching approaches and differentiated instruction techniques to ensure an inclusive learning environment?</p>	<p>The proforma lesson note indicated that oral probing questioning and group work as alternative teaching techniques to be used to ensure an inclusive learning.</p>	<p>Tutor indicated that she has good knowledge of the teaching techniques and also demonstrated sufficient in flexibility in her teaching method.</p>

<p>Item 7: Does the preparation explicitly incorporate illustrative examples to facilitate conceptual understanding among teacher-trainees?</p>	<p>The proforma lesson note indicated examples to be used during the lesson: 1) The basic school curriculum document.</p>	<p>Tutor prepares her examples in advance. She also indicated to use real-life example to make concepts meaningful to teacher-trainees.</p>
<p>Item 8: Does the proforma lesson note anticipate and explicitly account for potential misconception that may arise during the instructional process, and outline strategies for their remediation?</p>	<p>The proforma lesson note reflected possible teacher-trainees' misconceptions that will be addressed during the lesson. For example, Teacher trainees are unaware of the two main approaches to the design of the Social Studies curriculum.</p>	<p>Tutor has knowledge of teacher-trainee preconceptions or misconceptions to be addressed in the proforma lesson note.</p>
<p>Item 9: Are the proforma lesson note indicating teacher-trainees' prior knowledge?</p>	<p>The required teacher-trainees' prior knowledge was reflected in the proforma lesson note for the topics to be taught. For instance, "Teacher trainees have been exposed to several strategies, techniques, and methods of teaching since year one in the college" was written as teacher-trainees' prior knowledge.</p>	<p>Tutor knows the required teacher-trainees' prior knowledge before teaching the topic: Approaches for designing Social Studies programmes</p>
<p>Item 10: Are possible teacher-trainees' difficulties reflected in the preparation?</p>	<p>Possible teacher-trainees' difficulties were not indicated in the lesson preparation.</p>	<p>Tutor lacks knowledge of possible teacher-trainees' difficulties on the topic, "Approaches for designing Social Studies programmes".</p>
<p>Item 11: Does the proforma lesson note accurately specify the assessment tools and strategies that the teacher will use to measure teacher-trainees learning outcomes in the classroom?</p>	<p>The proforma lesson note did not indicate any clear assessment tools or strategies that the teacher-educator intends to use in the classroom.</p>	<p>Tutor may not have knowledge of topic-specific assessment.</p>

Table 4.2: Analysis of Tutor's Proforma Lesson Note (Participant #1)

Items	Observation	Categorization/Theme
Item 1: Are there specific learning indicators that teacher-trainees are expected to demonstrate or attain clearly stated in the proforma lesson note?	The learning indicators were indicated that the teacher-trainee will be able to: 1. Differentiate in two ways the Productive and Dependent components of the population. 2. Examine four (4) effects of dependent population on development.	Tutor has knowledge of College of Education Social Studies curriculum.
Item 2: Does the proforma lesson note outline any fundamental concepts?	Major concepts that were to be taught on the topic were indicated in the proforma lesson note. Example, Dependent and Productive populations.	Teacher-Educator proforma lesson note reflects knowledge of the subject matter.
Item 3: Does the proforma lesson note indicate possible procedure to be taught to the teacher-trainees?	The lesson preparation indicates that the teacher will help learners to determine the Dependant population and Productive population.	Tutor indicated the procedures to be taught in the plan
Item 4: Are the concepts and information presented in the lesson preparation accurate and relevant to the topic under consideration?	The plan did not reflect accurate concepts related to the topic, Components of population.	Tutor did not demonstrate a good knowledge of the subject matter.
Item 5: Are the teaching techniques that will be utilized in the lesson clearly outlined in the preparation?	The Tutor will first lead teacher trainees through brainstorming to establish the import of dependency theory to mean an unequal relationship between two states where the imperial state relies on the resources and labour of the colony for development but the colony remains poor and dependent. Secondly, through whole class interaction, teacher-trainees will discuss two differences between Dependent and Productive populations. Also, through think-pair-share, teacher-trainees orally present their views on the positive and negative effects of higher dependent population.	Tutor used a variety of techniques of teaching such as brainstorming, whole class discussion, oral probing questioning and think-pair-share.

<p>Item 6: Are the proforma lesson note explicitly outlining alternative teaching approaches and differentiated instruction techniques to ensure an inclusive learning environment?</p>	<p>Alternative teaching techniques that were indicated in the proforma lesson note include brainstorming, oral probing questioning and think-pair-share.</p>	<p>Tutor indicated that she has good knowledge of the teaching techniques and also demonstrated sufficient in flexibility in her teaching techniques.</p>
<p>Item 7: Does the preparation explicitly incorporate illustrative examples to facilitate conceptual understanding among teacher-trainees?</p>	<p>The proforma lesson note does not indicate examples to be used during the lesson.</p>	<p>Tutor proforma lesson note did not reflect the examples to be used to enable concept understanding. Also, no indication of using real-life example to make concepts meaningful to teacher-trainees.</p>
<p>Item 8: Does the proforma lesson note anticipate and explicitly account for potential misconception that may arise during the instructional process, and outline strategies for their remediation?</p>	<p>The proforma lesson note reflected teacher-trainees' misconceptions that will be addressed during the lesson. For example, there was a statement that, "it appears teacher-trainees have not averted their minds on how the components of population affect development".</p>	<p>Tutor has knowledge of teacher-trainees' misconceptions or preconceptions that need to be addressed in the proforma lesson note.</p>
<p>Item 9: Do the proforma lesson note indicate teacher trainees' prior knowledge?</p>	<p>Yes, this is because the required teacher-trainees' prior knowledge was stated in the proforma lesson note for the topics to be taught as; "Teacher trainees have been exposed to several lectures on population-related topics".</p>	<p>Tutor knows the required teacher-trainees' prior knowledge before teaching the topic, "Components of population".</p>
<p>Item 10: Are possible teacher-trainees' difficulties reflected in the preparation?</p>	<p>Teacher-trainees' possible difficulties were not indicated in the lesson preparation.</p>	<p>Tutor has no knowledge about the possible teacher-trainees' difficulties before teaching the topic, "Components of population".</p>
<p>Item 11: Does the proforma lesson note accurately specify the assessment tools and strategies that the teacher will use to measure teacher-trainees learning outcomes in the classroom?</p>	<p>No clear assessment tool was stated in the proforma lesson note to assess learning on the topic, "Components of population".</p>	<p>Tutor may not have clear knowledge about how to assess teacher-trainees' learning on the topic, "Components of population".</p>

The tutors' proforma lesson notes serve as indispensable tools for Social Studies tutors in the selected colleges of education, facilitating the conceptualization and execution of effective teaching techniques. These documents outline the structure, objectives, activities, and assessments for each class session, offering a roadmap that guides tutors through the instructional process. It is observed from the Tables that tutors' proforma lesson notes provide clarity and organization. For Social Studies tutors, who often cover vast and diverse subject matter, a well-structured tutor's proforma lesson note ensures that essential content is covered in a logical sequence. This organization helps tutors to conceptualize how to introduce complex historical events, cultural contexts, political theories, and geographical concepts in a coherent and engaging manner. Moreover, proforma lesson notes encourage strategic thinking and alignment with educational goals. Social Studies tutors in the selected CoEs use these plans to align their teaching techniques with specific learning objectives and educational standards. For instance, when designing a lesson on the productive populations, Participants #1 integrated state standards on historical analysis and critical thinking skills, ensuring that their teaching techniques not only convey factual information but also foster higher-order cognitive abilities in students.

It was also learnt that tutors' proforma lesson note fosters creativity and innovation in teaching. While they provide a structured framework, they also allow room for tutors to incorporate diverse teaching techniques, resources, and activities. For example, tutors may incorporate primary source analysis, debates, simulations, or multimedia presentations to enhance student engagement and deepen understanding of Social Studies concepts. This flexibility encourages tutors to experiment with different pedagogical approaches, adapting their techniques to meet the diverse learning needs of their students. Additionally, tutors' proforma lesson notes promote reflection and

improvement in teaching practice. After implementing a proforma lesson note, tutors can reflect on its effectiveness through student feedback, self-assessment, and peer evaluation. This reflective practice enables tutors to identify strengths and areas for improvement in their teaching techniques. For example, an educator may realize through reflection that certain activities or explanations were unclear to students, prompting them to adjust their approach in future lessons to enhance clarity and comprehension.

However, although proforma lesson notes support collaboration and communication among tutors, in the colleges selected, where tutors often collaborate with colleagues to share proforma lesson notes, resources, and best practices, this was not found among the participants. However, as noted by Yesiltas (2016) this collaborative process allows tutors to benefit from each other's expertise and experiences, fostering a supportive learning community where innovative teaching techniques can be developed and refined.

The findings on how Social Studies tutors integrate pedagogical content knowledge into Social Studies lesson delivery have theoretical and empirical implication. The integration of content knowledge with pedagogical skills, termed pedagogical content knowledge, is a critical aspect. Shulman (1987) introduced the concept of “PCK to describe the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to diverse learners”. This integration is crucial in Social Studies education, where tutors must present complex social, historical, and cultural phenomena in ways that are accessible and engaging for students. The findings underpin the reason why Shulman's PCK emphasised the importance of understanding students' preconceptions and misconceptions. Teachers need to anticipate areas where students might struggle

and plan their instruction to address these challenges. Tutors' views on their subject matter knowledge thus include an awareness of common difficulties and misconceptions related to the content. This awareness allows them to design lessons that pre-emptively address these issues, using analogies, examples, and explanations tailored to their students' needs. A study by Hashweh (2005) found that teachers who possess high levels of PCK are more effective in promoting student understanding and engagement. They can tailor their instructional strategies to the unique demands of the content and the specific needs of their students.

The integration of digital technology in Social Studies education is increasingly recognized as vital. The rapid advancement of digital tools offers new opportunities for teaching and learning, allowing tutors to present information in dynamic and interactive ways. Research by Koehler and Mishra (2009) on “Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) highlights the importance of integrating technology with pedagogy and content knowledge”. TPACK extends Shulman's PCK framework by incorporating technological knowledge, emphasizing the need for tutors to understand how to use technology effectively in their teaching.

Moreover, the current study has established that collaborative learning technique enables Social Studies education tutors through its ability to create a more interactive and participatory classroom environment. This finding aligns with social constructivist theory, which asserts that knowledge is constructed through social interactions and collaboration (Vygotsky, 2012). The current study has established also established that collaborative learning significantly enhances critical thinking and problem-solving skills among students. This finding is in line with Goetz's (2000) proposition that when students engage in group discussions and problem-solving

activities, they are exposed to diverse perspectives, which fosters deeper understanding and critical analysis of Social Studies content.

Again, studies have found that collaborative learning positively impacts academic achievement in Social Studies (Bordoh et al., 2021; Johnson et al., 2019). For instance, Johnson et al. (2019) conducted a meta-analysis of cooperative learning's effects and found substantial evidence that students participating in collaborative learning activities achieved higher academic outcomes compared to those in traditional instructional settings. This improvement is attributed to the increased engagement and motivation that collaborative learning fosters. Indeed, collaborative learning also supports the development of social and emotional skills, which are essential for students' overall development. According to a study by Bordoh et al. (2021), group work in Social Studies classes helps students develop empathy, communication skills, and the ability to work effectively in teams. These skills are critical for understanding and analysing social issues, a key component of Social Studies education.

The findings revealed that assessment with feedback are integral components of integrating PCK into teaching and learning Social Studies. This aligns with Angyagre, and Quainoo's (2019) assertion that, effective assessment with feedback is timely, specific, and constructive, helping students understand their strengths and areas for growth. In Social Studies education, assessments can take various forms, including formative assessments and summative assessments. Formative assessments provide on-going feedback to students and tutors, allowing them to monitor progress, identify areas for improvement, and adjust instruction accordingly. Summative assessments, on the other hand, evaluate students' overall understanding and mastery of content at the end of a unit or course. Research highlights the importance of assessment with

feedback in promoting student learning and achievement (Addo, 2020). By incorporating a variety of assessment methods and providing meaningful feedback, Social Studies tutors can support students' development and ensure that they are meeting learning objectives.

The findings demonstrate that by drawing on developmental psychology, tutors can design collaborative activities that are developmentally appropriate. For instance, during the early stages of cognitive development, activities that involve hands-on learning and concrete examples are more effective. As student progress to higher stages of cognitive development, more abstract and complex collaborative tasks can be introduced. A study by Kirschner et al. (2019) suggest that aligning collaborative activities with students' developmental stages enhances the effectiveness of group work and promotes deeper learning. Furthermore, developmental psychology highlights the importance of considering individual differences in learners' developmental trajectories. Collaborative learning can be tailored to address these differences by grouping students with varying strengths and needs. Research by Tomlinson (2017) shows that “differentiated instruction, which considers students' developmental stages, can be effectively implemented through collaborative learning”. This approach ensures that all students are engaged and challenged at their appropriate level of development.

Integrating insights from developmental psychology into collaborative learning also helps in creating a supportive learning environment. Understanding the social and emotional development of students allows tutors to foster a classroom atmosphere that encourages collaboration and mutual support. A study by Martin and Dowson (2019) support the findings that integrating collaborative learning and developmental psychology has positive impact on student engagement and motivation. According to

Martin and Dowson (2019), “students involved in collaborative learning activities that are developmentally appropriate exhibit higher levels of motivation and engagement in Social Studies classes”. This increased engagement is crucial for fostering a deeper understanding and long-term retention of Social Studies content. However, while the benefits of integrating collaborative learning and developmental psychology are well-documented, there are also challenges to consider. A study by Kirschner and Hendrick (2020) points out that implementing these approaches requires careful planning and on-going professional development for tutors. Teachers need to be well-versed in both collaborative learning strategies and developmental psychology principles to effectively integrate them into their teaching practices.

The findings further echo Kilic’s (2011) assertion that strong subject matter knowledge alone is insufficient for effective teaching. The integration of pedagogical content knowledge, as demonstrated by the tutors in this study, ensures that instruction is tailored to students’ learning needs. This aligns with Halim, Mansor, and Osman’s (2011) findings that PCK positively influences conceptual understanding. Additionally, Tanner et al. (2003) and Ryan and McCrae (2009) emphasize the significance of addressing learners’ misconceptions to bridge the gap between existing and new knowledge. Tutors in this study addressed misconceptions and learning difficulties through interactive activities and varied teaching techniques, reinforcing the importance of adapting instructional strategies based on students’ needs. This proactive approach aligns with Larkin’s (2012) recommendation that confronting misconceptions with clear and compelling evidence enhances conceptual clarity and knowledge retention, ultimately contributing to more effective teaching and learning outcomes in Social Studies.

4.4 Challenges in Pedagogical Content Knowledge Application

The fourth and last research question sought to explore challenges that Social Studies tutors face in applying PCK during teaching Social Studies in the selected CoEs in Ghana. Data was obtained by the use of interviews and observations. The data gathered showed that tutors face several challenges in applying their PCK. The following subtheme emerged from the responses:

4.4.1 Inadequate and Limited Access to Teaching and Learning Resources

This subtheme finds answers to research question five (5). Participants were asked to highlight challenges they face in apply pedagogical content knowledge. Key among these challenges mentioned was inadequate teaching and learning resources for delivering Social Studies lessons. Most of the participants have the view that teaching and learning resources is a great way to sustain teacher trainees' interest in Social Studies. The following quotes relate to the above findings:

How to get current materials to enhance my pedagogical content knowledge, this suggests a concern about the challenge of accessing up-to-date resources to improve and refine one's teaching practices in the field of Social Studies. The lack of current materials limits the ability to develop deeper pedagogical content knowledge that could support effective teaching [Participant #7].

In addition, [Participant #11] narrated that:

When you teach without teaching and learning resources, you don't expect learners to understand up to your expectation. You can only do so when you employ resources. But the fact is that, some resources are not available for us to use [Participant #11]

In a similar response, [Participant #4] narrated:

The teaching and learning resources at the college are seriously lacking. There is a shortage of essential equipment such as projectors, which makes it challenging for tutors to deliver lessons effectively and for students to engage with the material. This impacts my overall ability to apply PCK in the implementation of the Social Studies curriculum.

Again, participants mentioned the unavailability of stationery, such as globes, flip charts, course packs, course manuals and cardboards, library books and textbooks for teaching Social Studies courses. This was highlighted by a principal in the following words:

When it comes to our resources for teaching Social Studies, we face some challenges. We do have some material resources available, but they are not enough. Take our teaching resources, for example, you will really see that we are lacking in digital tools such as projectors and laptops. Please, we are short of stationery and textbooks, and our library doesn't have all the recommended reading materials by the course coordinators [Participant #8].

The participants stressed the inadequacy of textbooks for teaching Social Studies. One participant hinted:

Even though the college management have tried to provide resources to aid the teaching and learning, there are still inadequate reading materials for both tutors and student-teachers. The library is not well equipped with the recommended textbooks for the teaching of the Social Studies courses [Participant #2]

4.4.2 Time Constraints

Another challenge identified by participants was the time constraints involved in applying PCK in the Social Studies classroom. The findings indicated that time constraints significantly limit tutors' ability to focus on applying PCK through activity-based approaches in the classroom. Some of the respondents indicated that, the time meant for teaching was not enough. According to one participant:

The learner-centred pedagogies involve a variety of activities that require a significant amount of time to implement effectively. However, I often face time constraints that make it difficult to fully engage in these activities. For example, a complex activity such as a role-play necessitates ample time for planning, execution, enactment, and debriefing. This poses a substantial challenge for me as I strive to deliver high-quality instruction within limited time frames.” [Participant #13]

In addition, [Participant #7] narrated:

I think that the time allocated to Social Studies periods at the Colleges should be increased a little bit. That way, I think would help to achieve meaningful learning. Sometimes, learning becomes interesting but before you realise time up.

Furthermore, [Participant #11] stated:

What I can remember is that, time constraints is one of the factors that hinder my ability as a Social Studies educator in this college to apply pedagogical content knowledge or update myself to stay informed of best practices in the field.

4.4.3 Large Class Size

The nature of the classroom also poses a challenge to the application of PCK through learner-centred approaches. As remarked by a [Participant #10], “dealing with large numbers of students in smaller spaces - classrooms, is a great challenge...” Another participant stated that “large class sizes make the application of PCK via learner-centred approaches quite difficult” [Participant # 2].

The study also found that Social Studies tutors’ challenges in assessing student learning are mainly due to large class sizes, which hinder the ability to assess students frequently. The findings indicated that large class sizes and limited credit hours per week make it difficult for teachers to attend to each student on one-on-one basis. The following paragraphs provide details of these findings:

The large class size, coupled with limited credit hours per week, makes it difficult for me to attend to the learners individually as I should. This challenge is particularly evident when I need to assess their understanding regularly. To manage this, I often develop multiple-choice items to make the marking process easier and more efficient, allowing me to handle the large number of students more effectively [Participant #6]

Similarly, [Participant #10] narrated:

The numbers in the class are always huge, which presents challenges in assessment. To address this, I use group work as a strategy to manage the large group while still engaging students effectively. I also run short tests for them each week, which helps keep them engaged in continuous learning and provides regular feedback. Additionally, I organise remedial classes to offer extra support to students who need additional help to catch up or improve their performance.

Therefore, it is clear that the effective application of PCK in Social Studies lessons depends on the availability of essential resources. The Social Studies curriculum is supported by a range of resources that facilitate teaching and learning. The availability of varied teaching and learning resources, a well-resourced library, computers, and course packs contributes to an enriched learning environment for both tutors and teacher trainees.

The findings from the interviews revealed that the resources needed for the effective application of PCK were inadequate to support tutors in their teaching. A recurrent finding was that the college libraries were without sufficient reading materials for Social Studies. This suggests that, during the teaching and learning process, Social Studies tutors are unable to utilise relevant resources to meet teacher trainees' learning needs. To support this finding, the researcher observed that tutors rarely used teaching and learning resources to facilitate Social Studies lessons.

The research findings on the challenges to the application of tutors' PCK align with Osei (2019) and Gyamfi (2017), emphasizing common themes such as limited resources, time constraints, insufficient professional development opportunities, and the need for tailored support to enhance teaching practices. The findings highlight the major effect of inadequate teaching and learning resources (TLRs) on the ability of educators to develop and apply PCK effectively. The current study found that tutors struggle with a lack of localised instructional materials, which hampers the ability to

teach abstract concepts effectively in Social Studies. Similarly, studies by Osei (2019) and Gyamfi (2017) identify “insufficient access to updated resources and technology as a major barrier to effective teaching”. Osei emphasises that “teachers often cannot get their hands on up-to-date materials or digital tools, making it hard to integrate teaching techniques” as observed in this study.

Moreover, the finding that large class sizes hinder effective application of PCK aligns with prior literature on contextual constraints in pedagogy. Mthethwa (2023) and Al-Salmani et al. (2023) describe similar difficulties in managing large classrooms and addressing diverse learner needs, which hinder teachers' ability to apply PCK and engaging teaching strategies. This shared finding highlights the need for more targeted support to address these contextual challenges. The study further indicated that time constraints limit tutors' ability to focus on applying PCK. This is supported by Wang (2011) that, adherence to a packed curriculum often leads teachers to curtail interactive and student-led activities in favour of direct instruction to ensure curriculum coverage. This implies that insufficient time constitutes one of the most significant barriers to tutors applying PCK, which ultimately compromises teaching quality.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the concluding components of the study and serves as an executive summary for readers. It is structured into four main sections. The first section provides a summary of the study, offering a synopsis of the entire thesis and presenting the major findings in relation to each research question. The second section deals with conclusions drawn from the key findings of the study, which are also organised according to research questions. The third section presents recommendations for Social Studies tutors in Colleges of Education, administrators, policy makers, and other key stakeholders within the education sector. The fourth section presents the limitations of the study and suggests areas for further research.

5.1 Summary of the Study

The study contended that PCK is a crucial concept in education, representing the blend of content and pedagogy that is unique to teachers' understanding of how to teach specific subjects effectively. For Social Studies tutors, PCK involves not only mastery of Social Studies content but also the ability to convey this content in ways that are accessible and engaging to students. In view of this, exploring Social Studies tutors' PCK is vital for several reasons. Firstly, it enhances the effectiveness of teaching by enabling tutors to tailor their instructional strategies to the specific needs of their students. This includes understanding the historical, cultural, and social contexts that shape the content of Social Studies and finding ways to make these contexts relevant to students' lives. It was further conceived that PCK helps tutors to identify and address common misconceptions that students may have about Social Studies topics. By being aware of these misconceptions, educators can develop

targeted interventions to help students build accurate and nuanced understandings of the material. Furthermore, awareness of PCK could encourage reflective practice among Social Studies tutors. It prompts them to continuously evaluate and refine their teaching techniques based on student feedback and learning outcomes. This reflective approach fosters a culture of continuous improvement and professional growth.

Therefore, this study was conducted to explore Social Studies tutors' PCK in selected CoEs affiliated with University of Cape Coast in Ghana. To achieve this broad purpose of the study, four research objectives were formulated from which four research questions were developed.

To fully answer these research questions, the study was grounded on constructivism theory by Vygotsky, that is sociocultural theory and Shulman's theory of PCK. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory indicates that learning occurs through socio-cultural mediation, meaning that individuals construct new knowledge through their active participation within a social context and via interactions with its signs and tools. Shulman's theory of PCK also demonstrates how teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge interact with one another to produce effective teaching.

From philosophical consideration, interpretivism was adopted due to its ability to uncover inside perspectives or real meanings of social phenomena from its study participants as a good social knowledge. With the use of the interpretivist's philosophy, qualitative approach was adopted, together with a case study design in order to gain a comprehensive and an in-depth understanding of intricate phenomena within their real-life context. The use of an exploratory case study design in this study facilitated an extensive exploration into the Social Studies tutors' (participants) lived reality or experiences, allowing for careful documentation of their instructional encounters or lessons. Using multi-stage sampling technique, fifteen Social Studies

tutors were sampled for the study while data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews and observations. From analytical perspectives, data was imported into NVivo 11 qualitative data analysis software for analysis. This “software allows the researcher to import transcripts as text, create codes. Codes were later put into themes. Thematic analysis, which is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within a data, was employed. In all, four main themes and twenty-four (24) subthemes emerged from the data as could be seen in the preceding chapter.

Major Findings of the Study

The summary of the main findings was drawn from the analysis and discussion presented in chapter four and these are examined according to the research questions.

The findings revealed the varied perspectives on content knowledge displayed by Social Studies tutors at the selected CoEs. On the scope and content of the Social Studies Curriculum in CoEs, the findings indicated that the Social Studies curriculum in the colleges incorporates a broad and integrated approach designed to address contemporary and long-standing challenges in Ghana. Drawing extensively from the Social Sciences, Arts, and Humanities, the curriculum integrates ideas from disciplines such as Sociology, Geography, Economics, Psychology, History, Political Science, and Anthropology. The findings also revealed that there is recognition of the depth and breadth of content knowledge associated with achieving the scope and content of Social Studies curriculum for CoEs.

The findings suggest that tutors’ content knowledge plays a significant role in promoting critical thinking and analytical skills, particularly in supporting teacher trainees’ ability to analyse sources, evaluate evidence, and construct well-reasoned arguments. The findings revealed that the Social Studies curriculum for colleges is

highly relevant for teacher trainees due to its emphasis on preparing individuals to address both contemporary and enduring challenges. The study found that Social Studies curriculum provides teacher trainees with structured content, teaching methodologies, and assessment procedures. This alignment between curriculum design and societal needs reinforces its relevance and effectiveness for tutors.

Concerning the desired objectives of the subject, the findings revealed that the Social Studies curriculum in CoEs is structured to address contemporary and persistent challenges by developing well-rounded, competent, and reflective teacher trainees to educate and guide future generations. The study findings also indicated that the Social Studies curriculum for CoEs places important emphasis on citizenship education. It addresses critical areas such as civil education, the roles and responsibilities of citizens, and pressing social issues.

The second research objective examined the pedagogical knowledge of Social Studies tutors in the subject. Data analysis revealed that tutors at the selected Colleges of Education employed various pedagogical approaches to deliver Social Studies lessons. Social Studies tutors commonly employ inquiry-based learning techniques to encourage students to engage in critical thinking, exploration, and problem-solving by posing questions, investigating scenarios, and constructing their own understanding of facts and concepts. Findings from the study also showed that tutors utilised differentiated instruction techniques to accommodate the diverse learning styles, abilities, and interests of students. Social Studies tutors indicated that they teach effectively by employing varied pedagogical approaches and appropriate instructional resources, which enable learners to engage meaningfully at the cognitive, affective and psychomotor levels. The study revealed that effective teaching of Social Studies, which is oriented towards achieving the subject's fundamental goals, provides an

opportunity to develop critical thinking skills and prepares learners to solve societal problems. The tutors indicated that the lesson content, the scope of the topic, and the specific interests of the students primarily guided their choice of pedagogy.

Furthermore, the study found that Social Studies tutors in the selected Colleges of Education demonstrated expertise in integrating pedagogical content knowledge into their instructional practice. Tutors skilfully moved between concepts, catered for gender differences and integrated multiple instructional skills within single lessons. They promoted professional values and attitudes by fostering a friendly and tension-free atmosphere, and established order and responsibility within the classroom. The tutors also exhibited strong classroom management by promoting a conducive learning environment. In addition, tutors encouraged teacher trainees to access information in multiple formats and explored concepts outside the classroom to enrich discussions and presentations. Therefore, the expertise and diverse approaches the tutors used to integrate PCK into teaching Social Studies included integration of content knowledge and pedagogical skills, incorporation of digital tools, collaborative learning approaches, assessment with feedback, and insights from developmental psychology. However, classroom observations revealed that tutors showed limited awareness of students' misconceptions and learning difficulties during lessons.

The final and last research objective explored Social Studies tutors' challenges in pedagogical content knowledge application at the selected CoEs. The data gathered through interviews and observations revealed that tutors faced challenges when applying pedagogical content knowledge in their instructional delivery. These were inadequate teaching and learning resources, time constraints and large class size. Another key finding was the insufficiency of Social Studies resources in college

libraries. The study further revealed that financial constraints compounded Social Studies tutors' efforts to apply their PCK.

5.2 Conclusions

Social Studies tutors in the selected University of Cape Coast affiliated Colleges of Education had adequate content knowledge for teaching Social Studies courses. This is not surprising since tutors in the selected colleges showed key content knowledge needed to effectively nurture teacher trainees into well-informed and actively engaged citizens. They displayed similar representations of content knowledge (subject matter) in the teaching of Social Studies topics. These findings are critical to tutors' content knowledge in teaching Social Studies since they provide a better understanding of the extent to which these tutors are working to provide quality Social Studies education within preparation programmes to produce effective teachers in the future. It is therefore clear that Social Studies tutors demonstrated mastery of the subject matter.

Social Studies tutors in the selected Colleges of Education affiliated with the University of Cape Coast perceived Social Studies pedagogical knowledge as inquiry-based learning and differentiated instruction techniques. They therefore employed pedagogical approaches aligned with inquiry-based learning and differentiated instruction. This commitment to teaching techniques fits well with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which states that cognitive development is fundamentally shaped by social interaction and cultural context.

Moreover, Social Studies tutors in the selected University of Cape Coast affiliated Colleges of Education integrated PCK constructs into their classroom practices through processes such as integration of content knowledge with pedagogical skills, incorporation of digital tools, collaborative learning approaches, assessment with feedback, and developmental psychology. However, Social Studies tutors in the

selected Colleges of Education often exhibit limited knowledge of teacher trainees' misconceptions and learning challenges, which constrains their ability to design targeted lessons and adapt pedagogical approaches accordingly.

In conclusion, this study reveals that Social Studies tutors in the selected CoEs encounter significant challenges in applying Pedagogical Content Knowledge. These obstacles, rooted in limited teaching and learning resources, inadequate instructional hours and large class sizes, underscore a persistent gap between theoretical ideals of teacher education and realities of classroom practice. The findings, therefore, call for targeted professional development initiatives and strengthened institutional support to bridge this gap and enhance pedagogical integration.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are proposed.

As the Social Studies tutors in the selected Colleges of Education showed adequate content knowledge for teaching Social Studies, it is recommended that the University of Cape Coast and Principals of these Colleges provide sustained support for Social Studies tutors to explicitly model and emphasise the importance of content depth in their instructional practices. This focus should be embedded within professional development programmes, mentorship structures and institutional teaching standards to help teacher trainees recognise the direct link between academic mastery and pedagogical effectiveness in the Social Studies classroom. In addition, given the Social Studies curriculum's emphasis on citizenship education, it is recommended that University of Cape Coast and Principals of these Colleges ensure that content

related to civic responsibilities, social issues and national development remains clearly embedded within Social Studies courses.

As Social Studies tutors employ inquiry-based and differentiated pedagogical approaches, guided by lesson content, topic scope and teacher trainees' interests, it is recommended that University of Cape Coast and Principals of these Colleges provide sustained, subject-specific professional development to further strengthen tutors' pedagogical decision making. To support effective practice, University of Cape Coast should continue to allow pedagogical flexibility within the Social Studies curriculum, while ensuring alignment with stated curriculum objectives. Also, the University of Cape Coast and Colleges of Education management should organise professional development sessions for the Social Studies tutors to learn other teaching techniques. Needs assessment can be conducted to identify tutors' key interests and challenges.

The study further recommends that Social Studies tutors continue to explore and adopt modern pedagogical approaches, blending them with content knowledge in their teaching. In addition, Principals of these Colleges should mandate structured reflection sessions in which Social Studies tutors analyse assessment data to identify patterns in student errors. This approach addresses the identified gap in awareness of misconceptions by redirecting tutors' pedagogical skills towards the trainees' underlying conceptual misunderstandings.

As the study revealed that inadequate instructional resources and limited library holdings restricted Social Studies tutors' ability to apply PCK, it is recommended that college principals and management, in collaboration with the University of Cape Coast, should take steps to improve the availability of teaching resources for Social Studies education. Also, the Ministry of Education, the University of Cape Coast as the mentoring university and Colleges of Education management should make efforts

to resource college libraries with required textbooks, reading materials, globes, charts, maps and other physical resources needed for the effective application of PCK in Social Studies lessons delivery. Furthermore, Colleges of Education management, with oversight from University of Cape Coast, should review instructional arrangements for Social Studies tutors. Adjusting workload and timetabling arrangements may help reduce large class sizes and alleviate time constraints within existing instructional structures.

5.4 Implications for the Theory and Practice

The findings of this study reinforce the relevance of Shulman's (1987) Pedagogical Content Knowledge framework in non-Western contexts, demonstrating that Social Studies tutors in the selected CoEs in Ghana align their teaching practices with core components of PCK. However, the research highlights critical gaps in existing theoretical models. While PCK frameworks emphasise individual tutor competencies, this study reveals that systemic and contextual factors such as resource scarcity, institutional constraints, and examination-oriented curricula profoundly influence the development and application of PCK. These findings suggest that PCK framework should integrate contextual variables, particularly in resource-constrained environments.

Secondly, the study bridges socio-cultural learning theories, particularly Vygotsky's (2012) emphasis on collaborative and inquiry-based techniques, with the realities of teacher education in the selected Colleges of Education in Ghana. The Social Studies tutors' use of techniques like group work and simulations aligns with Vygotskian principles. Yet, their struggles to implement these due to resource limitations suggest that sociocultural theories must integrate pragmatic considerations of infrastructure and support systems.

Furthermore, for educational practice, the selected Colleges of Education must prioritise the provision of adequate teaching resources, including ICT tools and updated materials, to enable Social Studies tutors to implement innovative techniques like differentiated instruction and technology integration. Policymakers and college administrators should advocate for increased funding and partnerships to alleviate financial constraints, which currently limit access to essential resources.

In addition, the apparent examination-oriented nature of the Social Studies curriculum in the selected colleges of education, based on rote learning and sustainable practical training in citizenship education, requires reform in the curriculum. The stakeholders should be called upon to design an assessment paradigm that promotes critical thinking and civic engagement, ensuring it reasonably aligns with the objectives of Social Studies. This shift would free tutors from the monopoly of examinations and allow them to explore all areas of holistic student development.

Finally, the finding that tutors lack awareness of teacher trainees' misconceptions and learning difficulties underscores the need for integrating diagnostic assessment strategies training into professional development programmes. Social Studies tutors should use formative assessments and reflective journals to identify and address learning gaps, aligning with Vygotsky's (2012) emphasis on scaffolding.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

The study sought to explore views and perceptions of Social Studies tutors on PCK in Social Studies education in the selected CoEs, and therefore, its findings cannot be generalised to other colleges. Also, the findings of this qualitative study would lack generalisation to all Social Studies tutors in the selected CoEs, as the sample size involved was purposively picked to arrive at the conclusions drawn.

During the data collection, some tutors expressed initial reluctance in providing some information and limited access to classroom observations out of fear of judgment. The researcher therefore employed member checking (participant validation) to foster openness; defensiveness reduction which resulted in openness and frank interaction.

However, despite these limitations, the study findings were valid, significant and useful, particularly in the area of Social Studies tutors' knowledge of teacher trainees' misconception and learning challenges in the selected CoEs. The above limitations however did not affect this study's credibility in any way. Also, study can serve as the foundation for quantitative and mixed-method research, enabling a large sample size to generalise the final result.

5.6 Suggestions for Future Studies

For future studies, increasing the sample size and including a more diverse range of institutions could enhance the generalizability of the findings. Employing mixed methods research could provide a more comprehensive understanding by combining the depth of qualitative data with the breadth of quantitative data. Longitudinal studies could offer insights into how pedagogical content knowledge evolves over time. Additionally, incorporating observational data or student performance metrics could provide a more objective assessment of the educators' pedagogical content knowledge. Exploring the impact of professional development programmes on Social Studies educators' pedagogical content knowledge could also provide valuable insights for improving teacher education.

This study could be replicated in other subject areas in CoEs. Also, the future researchers could consider participants characteristics such as gender, age, years of teaching, among other factors as variables to be explored.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR SOCIAL STUDIES TUTORS

Section A: Background Information

1. Please tell me about yourself / (I will like to know a little more about you).
2. When did you join the department as a teacher educator?
3. How long have you been teaching as a Social Studies teacher educator?
4. Share your reasons why you chose to teach Social Studies?

Section B: Subject Matter Knowledge or Content Knowledge

1. How would you describe your own understanding of Social Studies in terms of its meaning?
2. What are the scope and content of the Social Studies curriculum in teacher training/ colleges of education?
3. How relevant is the Social Studies curriculum for you as a tutor in the College of Education?
4. What are the desired objectives for a Social Studies Curriculum in colleges of education?
5. In your view, how does the Social Studies curriculum for Colleges of Education adequately emphasize Citizenship Education?

Section C: Knowledge of Pedagogical (Teaching Techniques)

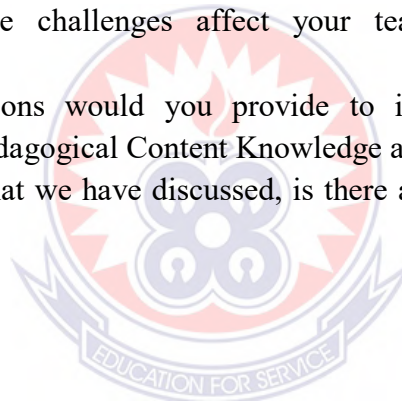
1. What is your understanding of effective teaching in Social Studies as a tutor in the College of Education?
2. As a Social Studies teacher educator, what teaching techniques do you use or find most effective in delivering the Social Studies curriculum?
3. How do these teaching techniques influence the teaching and learning of Social Studies? Or (how do these teaching techniques convey the concepts you teach to your students?)
4. How do you select your techniques of teaching?
5. Do you have knowledge about any other teaching techniques that could be used in your teaching? If yes, mention them
6. How do you adapt your teaching techniques to cater to different learning styles and the needs?
7. Can you share with me some innovative teaching techniques you have employed in your Social Studies lessons?
8. How do you ensure your teaching practices are aligned with the objectives of Social Studies curriculum?
9. Are you aware of the philosophy of Social Studies curriculum for the colleges of education? If yes, how this is portrayed in your teaching?

Section D: Knowledge of Students' Understanding /Learning

1. What learning difficulties do your students encounter during Social Studies lessons?
2. What misconceptions do your students have about Social Studies topics you teach?
3. How do you assist or address students' learning difficulties or misconceptions?
4. How do you assess your students' understanding in Social Studies?
5. How do you use students' feedback to improve teaching?
6. What challenges do you face in assessing students' learning and how do you address them?

Section E: Challenges in Pedagogical Content Knowledge Application

1. What challenges do you encounter in applying your Pedagogical Content Knowledge?
2. What challenges do you encounter in applying your Pedagogical Content Knowledge?
3. How do these challenges affect your teaching and students learning outcomes?
4. What suggestions would you provide to improve the development and applying of Pedagogical Content Knowledge among Social Studies tutors?
5. Apart from what we have discussed, is there anything else you would like to add?



APPENDIX B

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION GUIDE

Teacher (pseudonym).....

Date

Time

Course Code

Course Title

Topic

Level

Component of PCK and items to be Observed	Observation Made/Notes	Yes/No/Partial
Subject Matter Knowledge: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Displays accurate and in-depth knowledge of Social Studies content 2. Educator explains Social Studies contents clearly and logically 3. Educator uses relevant examples and illustrations 4. Educator connects Social Studies subject matter to broader contexts. 		
Educator's Knowledge of Method and Teaching Techniques: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Educator uses varied and appropriate teaching techniques 2. Educator adapts teaching techniques to suit lesson indicators and classroom dynamics 3. Educator uses effective questioning techniques to promote critical thinking 		
Knowledge of Students' Understanding: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Educator anticipates teacher-trainees misconceptions varied and appropriate teaching techniques 2. Educator monitors teacher-trainees understanding through appropriate assessment tools 3. Educator adjusts teaching based on teacher-trainees responses and difficulties 		

APPENDIX C

PROFORMA ANALYSIS TOOL

Items	Outcome
Are the specific learning indicators that teacher-trainees are expected to demonstrate or attain clearly stated in the proforma?	
Does the proforma outline any fundamental concepts	
Does the planning indicate possible procedure to be taught to the teacher-trainees?	
Are the concepts and information presented in the lesson preparation accurate and relevant to the topic under consideration?	
Are the teaching methods and techniques that will be utilized in the lesson clearly outlined in the preparation?	
Are the proforma explicitly outlining alternative teaching approaches and differentiated instruction techniques to ensure an inclusive learning environment?	
Does the preparation explicitly incorporate illustrative examples to facilitate conceptual understanding among teacher-trainees?	
Does the proforma anticipate and explicitly account for potential misconceptions that may arise during the instructional process, and outline strategies for their remediation?	
Are the proforma indicating teacher-trainees' prior knowledge?	
Are possible teacher-trainees' difficulties reflected in the preparation?	
Does the proforma accurately specify the assessment tools and strategies that the teacher will use to measure teacher-trainees learning outcomes in the classroom?	