

# Methods Of Teaching Geography Lessons In Social Studies Curriculum At Colleges Of Education In Ghana

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*Abstract: Colleges in Ghana are mandated by laws to admit and train students to replace their colleagues that have been graduated. The graduates go through the mail and finally get posted by G.E.S to their stations. These newly trained teachers are believed to have acquired the needed pedagogical content knowledge that would help them impart similar ideas to the younger once at the basic schools.*

*This article seeks to make readers understand some of the methods college tutors use in teaching geography content of social studies curriculum. The sample population was sixty-two (62) with sample size of seven public and five private institutions. The study employed the non –experimental research and questionnaires as a study design and instrument respectively.*

*Index Items: G.E.S, Instrument, Curriculum, Pedagogy, content*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Method refers to the various ways by which knowledge, skills, concepts, principles among others are imparted to learners by an instructor. This article seeks to bring to readers some of the common methods college tutors normally use in teaching geography topics in social studies at the college of education in Ghana. These methods are categorized into learner-centred and teacher-centred approaches (Tamakloe, Amedahe, & Atta, 2005). This section contains a review of some these methods that are used for the purpose of teaching and learning at the colleges of education.

### LECTURE METHOD

Aggarwal (1982) stresses that the lecture method is the oldest teaching method given by philosophy of idealism. He went on to say that the lecture method refers to the teaching procedure involved in clarification or explanation to the student some major idea. It lays emphasis on the presentation of content. In this method, the teacher is more active while

students are passive but the teacher uses questions to keep them attentive in class. The teacher selects a topic which is based on current problem or issue which he thinks is of importance in any aspect of human behaviour. He states his own view points on the issue and substantiates and also criticizes them with other viewpoints taken if the lecture is to be informative, motivating and challenging.

A study conducted by Benson, Schroeder, Lantz and Bird (n.d.) provides evidence that students may place greater emphasis on lecture material than on textbooks. Lecturing is not simply a matter of standing in front of a class and reciting what you know. The classroom lecture is a special form of communication in which voice, gesture, movement, facial expression, and eye contact can either complement or detract from the content (Davis, 1993). McCarthy (1992) in article "Common Teaching Methods" stated strengths of lecture method that it presents factual material in direct, logical manner, contains experience which inspires, stimulates thinking to open discussion, and useful for large groups.

## DISCUSSION METHOD

Kochhar (2000) stated that; a problem, an issue, a situation in which there is a difference of opinion, is suitable for discussion method of teaching. McCarthy (1992) stated strengths of class discussion as; pools ideas and experiences from group, and allows everyone to participate in an active process. Tamakloe (1996) says that in discussion the teacher raises a number of pertinent issues for students to wrestle with. This presupposes that the teacher has taken into consideration the fact that students will be able cope with the issues. He stresses that to ensure effective discussion; the assumption should be that students assimilate data from experience gained on field trip, through experience from a field and from a reading assignment.

A study by Qualters (2001) suggests that students do not favour active teaching methods. They assign reasons such as the use of in-class time for other activities; fear of not covering all of the materials in the course; and anxiety about changing from traditional classroom expectations to the active structure, for their preference. Germanou (2007) in Cyprus, it was revealed that the lecture and discussion methods of teaching were the most frequently used methods for teaching in Cyprus secondary education. The study which involved 185 respondents had mean scores of 3.85 and 3.84 for the lecture and discussion methods respectively. Here, the teacher raises a number of pertinent issues for the students to wrestle with. This presupposes that the teacher has taken into consideration, the fact that the students will be able to cope with the issue. The students are asked a series of questions to stimulate discussion on the information required. The teacher provides riders and clues he guides the discussion through the question he poses.

Brandt (1998) advocates group assessment since cognitive psychologists now recognize the social nature of learning and that some students have become accustomed to working in cooperative groups and some teachers have incorporated small group processes in some performance tasks. He gives the example of the Maryland assessment programme, which allows students, before writing their responses in an assignment, to discuss the passage in small groups.

## PROJECT METHOD

Clark and Star (1986) defined project as a natural, life learning activity involving investigation and solving of problems by an individual or small group. The "project method" is an idea of the famous American educationist and philosopher, John Dewey. "Project method" in the words of Dewey (1996) "The project method is not really a specific method. Rather it is a general name for the form of the teaching and learning process that consists of students working on some tasks with relatively little direct interaction with the teacher" (p.132)

Aggarwal (1982) has the following, as essentials for a good project.

- ✓ **TIMELY:** Project should be related directly to the lesson and vocational interest. Project should suit particular mental and chronological ages of the student.

Environmental and seasonal factors should also be taken into consideration.

- ✓ **USEFULNESS:** Practical aim of the project should not be lost sight of. It must fulfill a long-standing need. The learning experience in a project must be capable of being applied in life.
- ✓ **INTERESTING:** Projects should be interesting to students. They must make an appeal to the emotional hungers or drivers of the students.
- ✓ **CHALLENGING:** Projects should neither be too simple and easy nor too long and difficult. They should be challenging. It is an admitted fact that the youth wants to do tasks which they are challenging in nature.
- ✓ **ECONOMICAL:** The project should be economical. They should not unnecessarily tax the energy and pocket of the students. There should be the least wastage of time also.
- ✓ **RICH IN EXPERIENCE:** Many experiences of the social nature should be provided in a project. The project selected should be capable of correlating different subjects and practical activities of life.
- ✓ **CO-OPERATIVENESS:** The student should be allowed to think and plan independently and co-operatively. The project should be executed in such a way as the students are kept active both physically as well as mentally (p. 107).

## PROBLEM SOLVING METHOD

To Aggarwal (1996), problem solving is an instructional method of technique whereby the teacher and pupils attempt in a conscious, planned and purposeful effort to arrive at some explanation or solution to some educationally significant difficulty. In this method, the student is guided to use certain skills to solve real life problems which may be bothering him or society as a whole.

## ROLE PLAY

Role play occurs when participants take on differentiated roles in a simulation. These may be highly prescribed, including biographical details, and even personality, attitudes and beliefs; or loosely indicated by an outline of the function or task. These techniques have already demonstrated their applicability to a wide range of learners, subjects and levels. (Singh & Sudarshan, 2005, p 238, 239). It is a memorable and enjoyable learning method. To gain maximum benefits from this method, the incidents selected for enactment should be as realistic as the situation allows. Before the role play, the teacher should brief participants about the roles they will play, give them time for preparation, confirm confidentiality of role play, and ask participants to behave naturally. The following guidelines are suggested for effective use of role play by teachers:

- ✓ Teacher should select & brief observers about their roles.
- ✓ During the role play, the teacher must keep quiet, listen & take notes, avoid cutting role play short, but give time warning if previously agreed.

The teacher should be prepared for some action if participants dry up and can intervene as a last resort.

- ✓ After the role play, the teacher thanks participants, ask for feed back from lead participants, take comments from observers, ask other participants to comment,
- ✓ The teacher should use role names not those of participants, summarize, drawing out learning points, leaving the participants with positive comments and feelings.

## FIELD WORK

Another noteworthy method of instruction in social studies is the field work method. Researchers opine that the role of the teacher in planning and organizing field work is in the objectives he/she sets, the learning experience he/she designs and the teaching strategies he adopts. According to Pritchard (1984), fieldwork is a scientific, technical or social investigation which is conducted outside the classrooms or laboratories and is undertaken by individuals or groups who visits specific places. Field work varies in terms of location, duration and phenomena studied. He enumerated two types of field work as field teaching or structured field work and field research or unstructured field work.

## QUESTIONING

In the words of Ryburn as cited by Aggarwal (1996) "it is not exaggeration to say that the success of a teacher in general depends upon his ability to question well". In the literature of Ornstein (1995)," Good teaching involves good questioning especially when large group of students are taught". Struck. F. Theodore supports this assertion by saying that "Good questions by their very nature, are educative and they have a very prominent place in all lands of learning" (cited in Aggarwal 1996). Ornstein and Lasley (2000) postulate that "Good teaching involves good questioning, especially, when teaching large groups of students. Skillful questioning can arouse the students' curiosity, stimulate their imagination and motivate them to search out new knowledge" (p. 179).

## II. METHODS

This research which was non-experimental in nature sought to explore and describe the frequently used teaching and learning resources that are used by tutors who teach geography component of the social studies curriculum at the Colleges of Education, in the Central, Eastern and Ashanti Regions of Ghana. The descriptive survey design was employed to help observe and describe the state of affairs regarding the teaching of the geographical aspect of the social studies curriculum. This descriptive study was a cross-sectional survey in which aggregated data were collected from different respondents at different points in time. A survey design was used because of its flexibility as expose by Babbie (2007); He states that surveys are flexible and hence allows many questions to be asked on a given topic. Descriptive studies look at individuals, groups, institutions, methods and materials in order to describe, compare, contrast, classify, analyse and interpret the entities and the events that constitute their various fields of inquiry" (p. 205). Similarly, other

researchers (Pilot & Hungler, 1995; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000) hypothesise that descriptive studies describe a given state of affair of phenomenon as fully and carefully as possible by asking the same set of questions from a large number of individuals. This design helps to produce a good amount of responses from a wide range of people. The target population for the study comprised 62 social studies tutors in the 12 Colleges of Education in the Ashanti and Central Regions of Ghana. Out of the total number of 62 tutors, 10 social studies tutors were teaching in three private institutions while the remaining 52 social studies tutors were teaching in nine public Colleges of Education. The target group was made up of both male and female social studies tutors who have been teaching the subject in their various colleges for a number of years and hence possessed relevant information on factors that affect the teaching and learning of the geography component of the social studies curriculum at the college level. The sample size that was used to conduct this study consisted of 62 social studies tutors in the Colleges of Education

## III. DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS

Out of a total number of sixty- two, respondents representing one hundred percent (100%) forty- six of these respondents (74.2%) answered Yes that they employ various methods in teaching geography topics in social studies lessons whereas sixteen (25.8) of college tutors answered No that they don't use different methods in teaching geography topics in social studies. Is quit alarming looking at the sample to have such a huge number of tutors accepting the fact that they don't use different methods in their daily teaching, is of great concern bearing in mind the significance of the use of multiple methods in teaching? The study revealed that most college tutors use methods that are not familiar with their students. Out of sixty-two (62) participants, fifty-seven (57) representing 91.9% of tutors agreed that they use methods that their students do not know.

Only five (5) tutors representing 8.1% agreed that they use methods that are familiar to their students. On the issue of what kind of teaching style tutors use, the study revealed that teacher centered and student centered of teaching existed. It is clear from the figures that fifteen (15) tutors representing 24.2 use teachers centered of teaching methods. Also sixteen (16) representing 25.8% agreed that they have used the teachers centered methods of teaching before and thirty-one (31) representing 50.0 % use both teachers centered and students centered methods of teaching. The results discussed so far, indicates that tutors use various methods in their instructional periods to meet learner needs. The effectiveness of teaching and learning process depends on the kind of teaching methods adopted

## IV. CONCLUSION

- The study concluded that;
- ✓ Tutors in the various colleges of education in Ghana use teaching methods that are teacher centered instead of student centered; that is methods tutors use in their daily

teachings involves much of the teacher than student. In an ideal situation, students should be seen playing active roles in the teaching process than tutors.

- ✓ Lecture method, question and answer method, and demonstration methods are the methods colleges' tutors use most in their lesson delivery.

#### V. RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Seminars, workshops, short refresher courses, and other professional development opportunities should be made readily available so that all geography tutors would have the chance to sharpen their academic and professional competence.
- ✓ Ghana Education Service (G.E.S) and the National Council of Tertiary Education (NCTE) should organized regularly and timely in-service training for college tutors. By so doing the G.E.S and NCTE should make it a mandatory for all tutors to use students centered practical teaching methods in their daily lesson delivery.

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