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Gender-based perspectives on the effectiveness of instructional methods in teaching social studies for national development in Ghanaian Senior High Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study examines gender-based perspectives on the effectiveness of instructional methods employed in teaching Social Studies for national development in Ghanaian Senior High Schools. Anchored in Social Constructivism and the Pedagogical Effectiveness Theory, the research adopts a quantitative, descriptive survey design involving 245 teachers (163 males and 82 females) in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana. Results indicate a shared perception among both male and female teachers that current instructional methods such as group work, discussions, and inquiry-based strategies are generally effective in fostering critical thinking and aligning with national development goals. Nonetheless, a majority of respondents expressed low confidence in integrating technology into instruction, revealing significant gaps in digital competence. Chi-square tests showed no statistically significant gender differences across the research variables. The study concludes that while instructional approaches promote civic learning and curriculum alignment, challenges in digital pedagogy and teacher confidence remain. It recommends ICT-focused professional development, gender-sensitive training, and curriculum reforms to enhance teaching quality and digital integration. The findings contribute to ongoing discourse on gender and pedagogy by highlighting the complex interplay between instructional practices, teacher agency, and educational outcomes in the context of national development.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

For a nation to develop, Social Studies education is crucial in equipping students with the mental, emotional, and physical abilities necessary to be engaged and responsible citizens (Owusu-Mensah & Twum, 2021; Yidana & Mensah, 2023; UNESCO, 2022). Ghana's Senior High School (SHS)

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Social Studies curriculum aims to instill values such as civic responsibility, environmental consciousness, socioeconomic awareness, and democratic participation. The primary goal of Social Studies education is to produce development-focused and responsible citizens (MoE, 2010; Osei & Mensah, 2023). However, the extent to which these curriculum aims are achieved is largely determined by the pedagogical approaches employed by teachers (Boateng & Owusu, 2021; Teye & Essuman, 2022).

Because teachers influence how content is delivered, how students interact with the curriculum, and the extent to which critical thinking and problem-solving are fostered, instructional methods remain central to the teaching-learning process (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Saldana & Fraser, 2022). However, limited research exists in Ghana on the effectiveness of instructional approaches, particularly from a gendered perspective. In Social Studies classrooms, teachers' gender may shape their pedagogical choices, comfort with technology integration, and strategies for nurturing critical thinking among students (Boateng & Osei-Poku, 2021; Asare & Essuman, 2023). These factors are essential for equipping students to understand national issues and actively participate in social transformation. Additionally, there is the need to examine how competent and confident teachers are in employing various teaching methods or modalities in light of the shift to learner-centred instruction and the integration of technology in twenty-first-century classrooms (Laurillard, 2021; Mishra & Warr, 2020; Redecker & Punie, 2020). However, not much has been done about the way Social Studies is taught in Ghanaian SHS schools, particularly when considering it from a gendered perspective. According to the current Social Studies curriculum, teachers are expected to adopt interactive and participatory teaching methods such as group discussions, case studies, debates, and simulations to foster critical thinking and civic engagement (Naami & Hayford, 2022; MoE, 2020). However, research shows that many teachers still rely heavily on traditional lecture-based methods, which may hinder students' ability to critically engage with national development issues (Amponsah & Abrokwa, 2021; Boateng & Osei-Poku, 2023).

In order to shape civic behaviour, national identity, and sustainable development, Social Studies is crucial. This is why it is both important and timely to examine how classroom teachers of Social Studies employ and think about various teaching methods in a way that considers gender. By examining the opinions of male and female teachers in Ghanaian senior high schools regarding the contribution of Social Studies to national development, this study aims to close this disparity.

1.2 Statement of the research problem

There are still concerns over the quality of Social Studies instruction in Ghana's senior high schools, despite the fact that it is crucial for fostering development-focused citizenship and national awareness. Numerous studies have demonstrated that in Social Studies classes, rote learning, a lack of interactive techniques, and a lack of digital teaching resources are all issues (Boakye & Ampiah, 2017; Amissah, 2020). However, there is a dearth of empirical data regarding how gender differences among teachers impact their perceptions of their own teaching effectiveness, their use of curriculum-relevant techniques, and their use of technology.

It is more difficult to comprehend how male and female teachers see and use instructional strategies intended to advance the nation when there is a lack of distinct data for male and female. Additionally, it makes it more difficult to focus on professional development activities that could raise teaching standards and provide more equitable teaching methods for both sexes. Furthermore, it is unclear if the current teaching strategies are sufficiently demanding to encourage students to engage in critical thinking and contribute to national development issues, which is a key objective of Social Studies instruction.

It might be impossible to improve teacher preparation, alter the way the curriculum is taught, and accomplish the revolutionary objectives of Social Studies in Ghana if these gaps are not filled. The purpose of this study is to examine the gender-based perspectives of SHS teachers regarding their methods of instruction, with particular attention to their effectiveness, their relevance to national development issues, their use of technology, and their ability to foster critical thinking in their students.

1.3 Research purpose

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the gender-based perspectives of male and female teachers regarding the effectiveness of instructional methods used in the teaching of Social Studies at the Senior High School level in Ghana, particularly in relation to their contribution to national development. Specifically, the study seeks to explore teachers' confidence in utilizing technology-enhanced instructional tools, assess the extent to which current teaching methods effectively address the Social Studies curriculum content, and examine their capacity to foster critical thinking and active student engagement with issues of national development.

1.4 Research objectives

1. To investigate male and female teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of instructional methods used in teaching Social Studies for promoting national development.

2. To determine the extent to which current instructional methods address key curriculum topics related to national development.

3. To assess the confidence level of male and female teachers in incorporating technology-based tools in Social Studies instruction.

4. To examine whether instructional methods adequately engage students in critical thinking about national development issues.

1.5 Research questions

1. What are the perspectives of male and female teachers regarding the effectiveness of instructional methods in promoting national development through Social Studies?

2. To what extent do current instructional methods address key topics in the Social Studies curriculum related to national development?

3. How confident are male and female teachers in their ability to integrate technology-based teaching tools into Social Studies instruction?

4. Do current instructional methods adequately engage students in critical thinking about national development issues?

1.6 Research hypotheses

1.6.1 Null hypotheses (H_0)

1. H_{01}: There is no significant difference between male and female teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of instructional methods in promoting national development through Social Studies.

2. H_{02}: There is no significant difference between male and female teachers regarding the extent to which current instructional methods address key curriculum topics for national development.

3. H_{03}: There is no significant difference in confidence levels between male and female teachers in incorporating technology-based teaching tools into Social Studies instruction.

4. H_{04}: There is no significant difference between male and female teachers' views on whether instructional methods adequately engage students in critical thinking about national development.

1.6.2 Alternative hypotheses (H_1)

1. H_{11}: There is a significant difference between male and female teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of instructional methods in promoting national development through Social Studies.

2. H_{12}: There is a significant difference between male and female teachers regarding the extent to which current instructional methods address key curriculum topics for national development.

3. H_{13}: There is a significant difference in confidence levels between male and female teachers in incorporating technology-based teaching tools into Social Studies instruction.

4. H_{14}: There is a significant difference between male and female teachers' views on whether instructional methods adequately engage students in critical thinking about national development.

1.7 Significance of the study

This study adds significantly to Ghanaian and global educational research as well as practice. First, it addresses a significant gap in the literature on teaching methods by providing empirical

examples of how male and female perceive the effectiveness of Social Studies education (UNESCO, 2016). By contrasting the opinions of male and female teachers, the study helps us understand how gender influences teachers' choices about how to teach, their comfort level with technology, and their capacity to engage students in national development conversations.

Second, the findings will aid policymakers, curriculum developers, and teacher education institutions in determining what kind of support and training are required to enhance effective and gender-sensitive teaching strategies. Reaching Sustainable Development Goal 4, which demands that everyone have access to high-quality education that is equitable and available to all, depends heavily on this (UN, 2015).

Third, the analysis demonstrates the degree to which current teaching strategies align with the curriculum goals of utilising Social Studies to advance national development. Future initiatives to enhance student performance and the way the content is delivered will be shaped in part by this. Finally, the study provides a scientific foundation for enhancing the gender sensitivity of teacher professional development programmes. It supports evidence-based recommendations for the use of technology-enhanced, interactive, and critically engaged teaching methods that can help students develop their analytical abilities, increase their awareness of their national identity, and become more conscious of their civic responsibilities.

2. Review of related literature

2.1 Overview

Social Studies education is often seen as an excellent means of fostering national development, particularly in developing nations such as Ghana. The subject aims to equip students with the knowledge, abilities, and attitudes necessary to support national development, as well as to teach them how to be critical citizens and increase awareness of national issues (Boakye & Ampiah, 2017). In order to achieve these objectives, Social Studies teaching strategies are crucial. Understanding teachers' perspectives from a gendered perspective is crucial as educational institutions worldwide strive to become more productive and inclusive. With an emphasis on gender-based perspectives, this review compiles research on the effectiveness of various teaching strategies, the relevance of the material, the use of technology, and the amount of critical thinking in Ghanaian Social Studies classes.

2.2 Conceptual framework

The study's foundations include gender theory and constructivist learning theory. Constructivism holds that experiences and reflections help people learn about the world and develop their own knowledge of it (Vygotsky, 1978). Teachers must therefore employ techniques that engage learners and motivate them to investigate, ask questions, and work through issues. Gender theory, particularly the feminist educational framework, demonstrates how men's and women's experiences impact one's thinking, confidence, and teaching style (Connell, 2009). These theories give the researcher insight into how both male and female teachers perceive the effectiveness of senior high school Social Studies instruction and how it could contribute to the development of the nation.

2.3 Thematic review of literature: An overview

A robust understanding of instructional effectiveness in Social Studies education, particularly within the framework of gender-based pedagogical analysis, necessitates a thematic review that integrates empirical evidence, theoretical perspectives, and contextual realities. The thematic literature review presented in this section synthesizes relevant research and scholarly discourse to illuminate how gender differences shape the implementation, perception, and outcomes of instructional methods in Senior High School (SHS) Social Studies in Ghana.

Guided by Social Constructivist Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and the Pedagogical Effectiveness Framework (Shulman, 1987; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020), the review explores four interrelated thematic areas: gender and pedagogical effectiveness, instructional alignment with curriculum goals on national development, teachers' confidence in technology integration, and the capacity of instructional approaches to cultivate students' critical thinking skills. These themes are interrogated within the socio-educational context of Ghana, where Social Studies is not merely a subject but a transformative tool for

shaping democratic citizenship, civic responsibility, and national consciousness (Boakye & Ampiah, 2017; UNESCO, 2022).

Despite policy recommendations that encourage participatory and learner-centered methodologies, evidence suggests that many teachers continue to rely heavily on didactic approaches, potentially undermining the goals of the curriculum (Amponsah & Abrokwa, 2021). Gender dynamics further complicate this pedagogical landscape, influencing teachers' instructional preferences, confidence levels particularly with regard to digital pedagogy and responsiveness to critical thinking as a pedagogical goal (Osei & Koomson, 2021; Asare & Essuman, 2023).

This thematic review therefore provides a critical foundation for understanding how instructional strategies shaped by gendered experiences and beliefs contribute to or inhibit the realization of Social Studies' developmental objectives. By thematically organizing the literature, this section not only situates the current study within the broader academic conversation but also identifies significant research gaps, justifying the need for a gender-disaggregated empirical investigation into teaching effectiveness, curriculum alignment, digital integration, and the promotion of critical citizenship education in Ghanaian SHSs.

2.3.1 Gender and pedagogical effectiveness in social studies

According to research, male and female Social Studies teachers frequently have different objectives and instructional philosophies (Mfum-Mensah, 2018). These differences may influence their perceptions of the efficacy of various teaching methods. According to some research, female teachers are more likely to employ student-centered and student-involved teaching strategies, whereas male teachers are more likely to employ lecture-based approaches (Sosu & Kuama, 2015). However, the effectiveness of these tactics should not be solely based on the teacher's gender. According to Kankam and Twum-Danso (2020), their evaluation should be based on how successfully they assist students in achieving their learning objectives and inspire them to think critically and independently about national issues.

Social Studies education is considerably more successful when teachers purposefully emphasise civic values, promote civic engagement, and highlight the practical implications of national development (Essuman, 2019). Teachers' perceptions and applications of these strategies may be influenced by their own experiences with gender. This emphasises the significance of the first research goal, which is to examine the perceptions of male and female teachers on the effectiveness of various teaching strategies.

2.4 Instructional methods and curriculum alignment with national development

A lot of individuals suggest teaching Social Studies using inquiry-based learning, problem-solving, role-playing, case studies, and cooperative learning (Agyei & Voogt, 2014). These tactics facilitate students' engagement with the curriculum and help them comprehend national development topics such as civic engagement, environmental sustainability, and governance.

However, research indicates that there is a discrepancy between what is taught in the classroom and what is outlined in the curriculum. This is typically caused by teachers' over-reliance on antiquated methods such as teacher-centered instruction and rote learning (Amissah, 2020). It is possible that these methods might not increase learners' curiosity or critical thinking skills about social and economic issues. Antwi (2017) adds that factors including teacher preparation, resource availability, and school culture affect how much these methods address national development issues.

This directly supports the study's second purpose and research question, which is to determine how well current methods cover significant Social Studies topics that are critical to the advancement of the country.

2.5 Technology integration and teacher confidence

Schools everywhere must embrace technology-based resources as they transition to teaching digital literacy. However, in Ghana, disparities in training and access to digital resources continue to hinder teachers' use of technology in the classroom (Boateng, 2019). Differences between males and females have also been reported; female instructors frequently claim that they lack confidence when

using digital tools due to a lack of experience, cultural expectations, or a lack of opportunities to acquire new skills (Osei & Koomson, 2021).

Technology integration in Social Studies can improve students' comprehension of complex concepts, provide them with access to diverse viewpoints from around the globe, and enable them to solve real-world issues through simulations, movies, and online debates (Tamakloe, 2020). Finding out how male and female teachers feel about their capacity to use these resources effectively is the third objective of the study.

2.6 Instructional methods and student critical thinking on national development

Social Studies aims to develop students' critical thinking skills in addition to imparting knowledge (Mensah, 2016). As a result, effective teaching strategies should encourage students to consider, assess, and develop solutions to national issues. According to research, discussions, inquiry-based learning, and problem-based training are more effective at this than conventional lecture methods (Obeng, 2018).

However, in practice, many teachers regardless of gender tend to employ passive teaching methods due to factors including large class sizes, a lack of resources, or a lack of time (Oppong, 2022). According to gender research, female teachers may be better at encouraging candid conversations because they are more nurturing and caring, whereas male teachers could be more concerned with control and structure (Akyeampong, 2017). Students may find it more difficult to think critically about national growth as a result of these disparities.

The fourth goal and hypothesis, which examine how instructional strategies could encourage students to think critically about Ghana's development goals, are supported by this research.

2.7 Synthesis and gap in literature

Previous research emphasises the significance of Social Studies teaching strategies for the advancement of the country, but it rarely examines the differences in teachers' perspectives by gender. Furthermore, there has not been much discussion of how gender influences teachers' confidence in their use of technology or how well their instructional strategies align with curriculum objectives. By examining how male and female teachers at Ghanaian Senior High Schools view various teaching philosophies and how they impact the nation's development, this study closes these discrepancies.

The literature review demonstrates the complexity of the interaction between critical thinking, curriculum relevance, technology use in the classroom, gendered teaching experiences, and teaching styles. It provides a theoretical and empirical foundation for investigating the perceptions of male and female regarding the contribution of social studies teaching methods to Ghana's national development. This study aims to significantly impact educational research and policy development by examining these issues from the perspectives of gender theory and constructivism.

3. Research methodolgy
3.1 Introduction

The section on methodology outlines the systematic procedures used to examine how male and female perceive Social Studies teaching strategies for national development in Ghanaian Senior High Schools (SHSs). In order to ensure that the procedures are reliable and valid, it provides the study paradigm, theoretical framework, design, population, sampling strategy, data collection, analytical plan, and ethical considerations. This study aims to determine if teaching strategies contribute to national development and how gender influences teachers' perspectives. This section facilitates the systematic examination of the stated study objectives and hypotheses.

3.2 Research paradigm

The positivist paradigm, which emphasises quantifiable elements, objective reality, and results that can be applied to many contexts, is used in this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Because it employs statistics to examine trends and relationships between gender and opinions on instructional strategies, the positivist paradigm is appropriate for this research. It makes the assumption that you

can learn things by seeing them in action and applying reasoning to solve problems. Because of this, it is a useful method for testing the theories derived from the research questions.

3.3 Theoretical framework

This study is grounded in two interrelated theoretical perspectives Social Constructivism and the Pedagogical Effectiveness Theory which offer critical lenses for understanding effective instructional strategies in Social Studies education, particularly within the context of promoting national development.

Social Constructivism, originally advanced by Vygotsky (1978), remains a foundational theory in contemporary educational research. It posits that knowledge is co-constructed through social interaction and cultural mediation, emphasizing the importance of collaborative learning environments where learners actively engage with content and peers. Modern scholars have expanded on Vygotsky's principles, underscoring the need for learner-centered approaches that promote critical thinking, inquiry, and dialogic teaching (Palincsar, 2021; Hammond, 2020). In the context of Social Studies education, this theory validates the use of instructional strategies that prioritize engagement, problem-solving, and real-world relevance, thereby nurturing reflective and socially responsible citizens.

Complementing this view is the Pedagogical Effectiveness Theory, which focuses on the impact of instructional decisions on student learning outcomes. Rooted in the work of Shulman (1986), the theory emphasizes the integration of content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), and curricular knowledge as essential components of effective teaching. Recent research has reinforced this framework, highlighting how effective instructional strategies are shaped not only by what teachers know but also by how they adapt their methods to meet the diverse needs of learners, including considerations of gender, socio-cultural background, and motivation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Hattie, 2023). This theory is particularly relevant to the present study as it explores how Social Studies teachers perceive and implement instructional methods to promote national development and how these practices are influenced by gender dynamics and professional identity.

Together, these theories provide a robust framework for analyzing teachers' instructional strategies, offering insight into how pedagogical choices affect student engagement and learning outcomes in Social Studies. They also illuminate the socio-cultural dimensions of teaching, advocating for reflective, inclusive, and contextually relevant pedagogical practices in Ghanaian classrooms.

3.4 Research approach

The quantitative research approach used in this study enabled the researcher to quantify variables and examine correlations through statistical techniques (Babbie, 2021). When examining large populations, quantitative approaches are effective in providing solid data for testing theories. The study used structured questionnaires to collect numerical data that illustrates the attitudes of male and female teachers towards various teaching philosophies.

3.5 Research design

A descriptive survey design was employed. This strategy works well for collecting data that describes events and examines the relationships between various variables (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019). The survey approach is a practical and cost-effective way for the researcher to quickly examine a large and geographically dispersed sample of Senior High School Social Studies teachers in the Ashanti Region.

3.6 Population for the study

All 629 Social Studies teachers in senior high schools in Ghana's Ashanti Region which encompasses the Kumasi Metropolis and its municipalities were the study's target audience. This group includes teachers from both public and private schools, both male and female. The results are more generalisable to other groups because the metropolis has several schools and its residents come from a variety of backgrounds.

3.7 Sample and sampling techniques

The researcher selected 245 teachers from the population using a stratified random selection technique. To ensure that male and female teachers were equally represented, the stratification was done by gender. From each stratum, schools were selected at random, and teachers from those schools were also selected at random to participate. The sample is less biased and more representative in using this technique (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). The sample was distributed as follows:
- Male teachers: 163
- Female teachers: 82

The Yamane (1967) formula was used to determine the appropriate sample size:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:
- n = sample size
- N = population size (629)
- e = margin of error (0.05)

Substituting the values, the sample size arrived at:

$$n = \frac{629}{1 + 629(0.05)^2} \qquad n = 245$$

3.8 Data collection instruments

In order to gather data, the researcher developed a structured, self-administered questionnaire based on the objectives of the study and previous research. The following areas were covered by the tool's closed-ended questions, which were scored on a 4-point Likert scale (1 being ineffective and 4 being extremely effective):
- The effectiveness of the instructional strategies
- Discussion of the course material
- Knowing how to use tools that rely on technology
- Fostering critical thinking in students

The questionnaire was validated by three leading education scholars, and 30 Social Studies teachers who were not part of the sample participated in a pilot research. The instrument's Cronbach's alpha was 0.87, indicating strong internal consistency.

3.9 Ethical considerations

The Institutional Review Board at the researcher's university gave the researcher permission to conduct the study. The following are some significant ethical guidelines that were adhered to:
- Informed consent: Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, that their personal data would be kept confidential, and that participation was entirely voluntary.
- Anonymity: Respondents' responses were not associated with their names.
- Privacy: The information was protected and used exclusively for academic purposes.
- Right to withdraw: Participants are free to go at any moment without facing any repercussions.

These concepts align with the American Educational Research Association's recommended ethical standards (AERA, 2011).

3.10 Data analysis procedure

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26 was used to code and analyse the data that the researcher had gathered. The following were the steps taken to analyse the data:

To summarise the responses, the researcher used descriptive statistics (percentages and frequencies).

• One example of an inferential statistic that can be used to identify significant gender-based disparities in opinions is the Chi-square test of independence (χ^2).

• To determine whether something was statistically significant, P-values (≤ 0.05) were employed.

• Each study's objectives aligned with the premise, and the findings were discussed in the context of existing knowledge.

• To present the findings in an understandable and rational manner, the researcher employed tables.

4. Data analysis, interpretation and discussions

4.1 Introduction

This section discusses the findings of a quantitative study that examined the views of male and female Social Studies teachers in the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly regarding the extent to which various pedagogical styles contribute to the advancement of the nation. Four primary research questions and their hypotheses serve as the foundation for the conversation. These questions focus on the effectiveness of existing teaching strategies, their coverage of significant national development subjects, teachers' comfort levels with technology-based teaching tools, and how well these strategies foster critical thinking in their learners.

The two primary ideas that underpin this analysis are Pedagogical Effectiveness Theory and Social Constructivism. According to Vygotsky (1978), social constructivism emphasises the significance of people interacting, being in a particular environment, and cooperating to create knowledge. This paradigm supports the notion that effective teaching strategies should encourage critical thinking, active learning, and contextual knowledge. In Social Studies, which addresses civic awareness and national issues, this is particularly true. However, by ensuring that instructional strategies, student demands, and the real world are all in harmony, Pedagogical Effectiveness Theory concentrates on teaching methods that provide the intended learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). The researcher examines and discusses the findings of this inquiry in a clear manner with these frameworks.

4.2 Research question one

What are the perspectives of male and female teachers regarding the effectiveness of instructional methods in promoting national development through Social Studies?

4.3 Hypotheses

• H_{01}: There is no significant difference between male and female teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of instructional methods in promoting national development through Social Studies.

• H_{11}: There is a significant difference between male and female teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of instructional methods in promoting national development through Social Studies.

4.4 Findings and interpretation

Table 4.1

Teachers Perspectives on the Effectiveness of instructional methods employed in Teaching Senior High School Social Studies in promoting national development.

Cat.	NE	SE	VE	EE	T	X^2 Value	df	P. V.
		VIEWS OR RESPONSES						
M	13 (10%)	27(17%)	48 (29%)	75 (46%)	163			
						5.643	3	.109
F	11 (13%)	14 (17%)	25 (31%)	32 (39%)	82			

Source: Field Survey (2024). NE=Never Effective, Slightly Effective, Very Effective, Extremely Effective.

According to Table 4.1, 123 male teachers (73%) believed that Social Studies instruction was "Very" or "Extremely Effective" at fostering national development. Similarly, 57 female teachers (70%) concurred. This demonstrates that everyone believes that the current teaching strategies such as group projects, discussions, and questioning help students meet the developmental objectives of Social Studies. The results of the chi-square test showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the perceptions of male and female (χ^2 = 5.643, p =.109). Thus, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) was maintained.

4.5 Discussion

The training's effectiveness was highly rated by both male and female teachers, reinforcing the core principles of *social constructivism*, which emphasises learner-centred pedagogies that support knowledge construction through social interaction and contextual learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Palincsar, 1998). Recent scholarship continues to affirm the significance of these principles in contemporary education. For instance, Ertmer and Newby (2020) assert that instructional approaches grounded in social constructivism such as dialogic teaching and cooperative learning promote deeper cognitive engagement and foster critical thinking. Similarly, Gillies (2021) emphasizes the value of structured cooperative learning in enhancing students' problem-solving skills and collaborative competencies.

The integration of real-world issues into the teaching process, as reported by participants, aligns well with *dialogic education* and *experiential learning*, both of which have been shown to increase student motivation and participation (Alexander, 2020; Kolb & Kolb, 2021). These methods enable students to internalize civic values and develop relevant socio-political awareness outcomes which are particularly vital for Social Studies education in democratic societies (Niemi & Chapman, 2020; Laird & Tyson, 2023). The application of such strategies thus supports the cultivation of both civic responsibility and cognitive ability among learners.

These findings are consistent with the *Pedagogical Effectiveness Theory*, which holds that teaching methods must be adaptable, student-centred, and evidence-based to be truly effective (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021). In this regard, the use of interactive and problem-based learning techniques has been empirically validated as particularly effective in fostering transferable skills and sustained academic engagement (Thomas & Brown, 2022; Hattie, 2023).

Nevertheless, it is important to note that a minority of teachers rated the teaching approaches as "Never" or "Slightly Effective." This indicates possible inconsistencies in pedagogical application or understanding and suggests the need for ongoing professional development. Effective teacher training is essential for ensuring fidelity to these innovative methods. As Kennedy and Jensen (2022) argue, sustained professional learning communities and reflective teaching practices are critical for bridging the gap between pedagogical theory and classroom reality.

Therefore, to ensure the continuous effectiveness of learner-centred strategies and the maintenance of teaching quality, school systems must invest in capacity-building programmes that foster teachers' skills in applying contemporary, evidence-based instructional approaches (Timperley et al., 2020; Fullan, 2023).

4.6 Research question two

To what extent do current instructional methods address key topics in the Social Studies curriculum related to national development?

4.7 Hypotheses

- H_{02}: There is no significant difference between male and female teachers regarding the extent to which current instructional methods address key curriculum topics for national development.
- H_{12}: There is a significant difference between male and female teachers regarding the extent to which current instructional methods address key curriculum topics for national development.

4.8 Findings and interpretation

Table 4.2

Teachers perspectives on extent the current instructional methods employ address key topics in the social studies curriculum for national development.

		VIEWS OR RESPONSES						
Cat.	NA	SE	LE	VE	T	X^2 Value	df	P. V.
M	9 (6%)	17 (10%)	64 (39%)	73 (45%)	163			
						2.113	3	.213
F	7 (8%)	16 (20%)	26 (32%)	33 (40%)	82			

Source: Field Survey (2024). NA=Not at All, SE=Small Extent, LE=Large Extent, VE=Very Large Extent

Table 4.2 reveals that 137 male teachers (84%) and 59 female teachers (72%) believed that the current teaching methods cover important curriculum topics to a "Large" or "Very Large Extent." The chi-square analysis (χ^2 = 2.113, p =.213) indicates that there is no significant difference between male and female teachers' perspectives, therefore, H_{02} is accepted.

4.9 Discussion

The findings from the study affirm the views expressed by teachers concerning curriculum coverage and instructional alignment, suggesting that their teaching methods are largely consistent with the aims of the Senior High School Social Studies curriculum. This alignment is particularly relevant in the context of Pedagogical Effectiveness Theory, which underscores the importance of synchronizing curriculum content with instructional delivery for meaningful learning outcomes (Shulman, 1987; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). When educators select teaching strategies that effectively reflect the goals of national development education such as fostering civic responsibility, understanding governance structures, and reinforcing national identity the curriculum is more likely to achieve its intended impact (Osei & Boateng, 2021; Mensah, 2022).

Moreover, the findings support the value of contextualised instruction, a principle emphasized in Social Constructivist Theory, which posits that knowledge is actively constructed by learners through interactions with their sociocultural environments (Vygotsky, 1978; Windschitl, 2002). Instruction that incorporates the lived realities of students especially their political, economic, and social contexts enhance their engagement and deepens their sense of national belonging (Asare & Gyimah, 2023; Ampofo, 2024). Contextualised learning approaches in Social Studies have been found to increase student motivation, critical thinking, and civic consciousness (Owusu-Acheampong & Anamuah-Mensah, 2021).

Further, recent research in Ghana and other African contexts suggests that when teachers purposefully connect national themes with participatory teaching methods such as discussions, debates, and simulations, students are more likely to internalise values of citizenship and democratic engagement (Boateng & Agyeman, 2023; Awuah, 2022; Adomako & Dampson, 2021). This is supported by empirical studies demonstrating that effective teaching in Social Studies hinges on pedagogical choices that activate learner agency and social responsibility (Tamakloe et al., 2020; Armah & Tetteh, 2023).

Hence, the convergence between curriculum objectives and instructional practices, as noted in the study, is not only theoretically sound but also practically validated by contemporary scholarship. When educators strategically align teaching methods with national development goals and sociocultural realities, they lay a strong foundation for transformative education that fosters active and informed citizenship.

4.10 Research question three

How confident are male and female teachers in their ability to integrate technology-based teaching tools into Social Studies instruction?

4.11 Hypotheses

• H_{03}: There is no significant difference in confidence levels between male and female teachers in incorporating technology-based teaching tools into Social Studies instruction.

• H_{13}: There is a significant difference in confidence levels between male and female teachers in incorporating technology-based teaching tools into Social Studies instruction.

4.12 Findings and interpretation

Table 4.3

Teachers confident to incorporate technology-based teaching tools into their social studies lessons for national development.

		VIEWS OR RESPONSES						
Cat.	NA	SE	LE	VE	T	X^2 Value	df	P. V.
M	67 (41%)	71 (44%)	16 (10%)	9 (5%)	163			
						1.112	3	.121
F	29 (36%)	32 (39%)	11 (13%)	10 (12%)	82			

Source: Field Survey (2024). NA=Not at All, SE=Small Extent, LE=Large Extent, VE=Very Large Extent

According to Table 4.3, the vast majority of teachers (81%) stated that they lacked confidence in their ability to use technological tools ("Not at All" or "Small Extent"). Of those who responded, only 19% stated they were certain. 72% of female teachers and 85% of male teachers reported lacking confidence. H_{03} is retained since the chi-square test (χ^2 = 1.112, p =.121) indicates that there is no statistically significant difference.

4.13 Discussion

The educational implications of the findings are both profound and concerning. The observed lack of confidence among teachers in integrating technology into their instruction reveals a critical gap between policy and practice. This contradiction is particularly stark when viewed against the backdrop of national and international frameworks that prioritise digital literacy and ICT integration in education (UNESCO, 2021; OECD, 2022). Despite the increasing emphasis on educational technology, this gap underscores a persistent digital divide and highlights shortcomings in both pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes (Ifinedo et al., 2023; Kafyulilo, 2021).

According to the social constructivist framework, learning is most effective when learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with others and their environment (Vygotsky, 1978; Wang, 2021). In this context, technology-based tools, such as simulations, virtual labs, and collaborative platforms, enable learners to explore concepts from multiple perspectives, facilitating deeper understanding and co-construction of knowledge (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2020; Lin et al., 2022). Teachers who effectively leverage such tools can enhance critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills among students (Trust & Whalen, 2020).

From the lens of pedagogical effectiveness theory, the teacher's ability to harness available instructional resources directly influences the quality of student learning outcomes (Shulman, 1987; Blikstad-Balas et al., 2022). Teachers' reluctance or inability to integrate digital technologies may stem from limited exposure, inadequate training, or insufficient access to ICT infrastructure (Liu et al., 2021). This finding points to the need for comprehensive and sustained professional development programmes that not only equip teachers with technical skills but also pedagogical strategies for meaningful ICT integration (Tondeur et al., 2020; Koh et al., 2023).

To address these issues, policymakers and educational leaders must prioritise investments in ICT infrastructure, create enabling environments for digital teaching, and embed technology integration into teacher education curricula (Alghamdi, 2021; Manca & Ranieri, 2020). Furthermore, mentoring systems and peer-collaboration models can be institutionalised to support continuous learning and adaptation to technological innovations in education (Uerz et al., 2018).

In conclusion, aligning teacher preparedness with the demands of a digitally enriched curriculum is vital for sustainable educational reform. Without targeted interventions, the disconnect

between policy aspirations and classroom realities will persist, undermining efforts to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education.

4.14 Research Question 4

Do current instructional methods adequately engage students in critical thinking about national development issues?

4.15 Hypotheses:

• H_{04}: There is no significant difference between male and female teachers' views on whether instructional methods adequately engage students in critical thinking about national development.

• H_{14}: There is a significant difference between male and female teachers' views on whether instructional methods adequately engage students in critical thinking about national development.

4.16 Findings and interpretation

Table 4.4:

Instructional methods used adequately engage students in critical thinking about national development issues.

		VIEWS OR RESPONSES						
Cat.	SD	D	A	SA	T	X^2 Value	df	P. V.
M	19 (12%)	17 (10%)	78 (48%)	49 (30%)	163			
						2.101	3	.223
F	13 (16%)	9 (11%)	31 (38%)	29 (35%)	82			

Source: Field Survey (2024). SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree

According to Table 4.4, 60 female teachers (73%) and 127 male teachers (78%) agreed or strongly agreed that the instructional methods employed adequately in their teaching style encourage pupils to think critically about matters pertaining to national development. Since there is no discernible difference between the sexes, according to the chi-square test (χ^2 = 2.101, p =.223), H_{04} is accepted.

4.17 Discussion

It is commendable that Social Studies teachers increasingly recognize the transformative potential of instructional strategies in cultivating students' critical thinking abilities. The overarching aim of Social Studies education is to equip learners with analytical, evaluative, and problem-solving skills necessary for active citizenship and national development (National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 2013; Ozturk & Yildirim, 2021). Critical thinking, in this context, becomes an essential competency for understanding complex societal issues and proposing viable solutions. Pedagogical strategies such as case study analysis, debate, and inquiry-based learning have been identified in recent research as effective methods for fostering these higher-order thinking skills (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; O'Flaherty & Phillips, 2021; Kizito & Mpofu, 2022).

The emphasis on active and inquiry-driven learning is grounded in social constructivist theory, which posits that knowledge is constructed through interaction with others and meaningful engagement with content (Vygotsky, 1978; Murphy et al., 2021). Within this paradigm, students are not passive recipients of information but rather co-constructors of knowledge through experiential and reflective activities. This aligns with the use of cooperative learning, problem-based learning (PBL), and dialogic teaching strategies, which have shown effectiveness in enhancing learners' critical consciousness and civic engagement (Chen et al., 2023; Adu-Gyamfi & Osei-Poku, 2020).

The notion that instructional methods must transcend rote memorization and promote transformational learning is also supported by contemporary pedagogical frameworks. According to Mezirow's (1997) theory of transformational learning, educational experiences should challenge learners' assumptions and encourage critical reflection a process especially vital in Social Studies education. Empirical studies affirm that when teachers adopt constructivist and student-centered approaches, learners are more likely to develop the competencies required for national development and democratic participation (Boakye & Yidana, 2021; Akinbobola et al., 2024).

Findings from the current study reveal that both male and female teachers within the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly perceive Social Studies as an effective tool for promoting national development. This consensus underscores the subject's integrative nature, which combines civic knowledge with critical inquiry to foster socially responsible behavior (Asare & Adjei, 2023). However, while there is general agreement on the effectiveness of current instructional methods in promoting critical thinking, challenges remain—particularly in the integration of technology into teaching. Many teachers remain hesitant to adopt digital tools, citing factors such as limited training, lack of resources, and discomfort with digital pedagogy (Mensah et al., 2022; Boadu & Ayebi-Arthur, 2023).

These findings have significant implications for policy reform, curriculum innovation, and teacher professional development. To bridge the existing gaps, it is imperative that education stakeholders prioritize ongoing in-service training on digital literacy, inquiry-based instruction, and critical pedagogy (Tibi & Alhazmi, 2022; UNESCO, 2023). Embedding ICT integration within Social Constructivist instructional frameworks can enrich classroom interactions, democratize access to knowledge, and prepare students for participation in a technology-driven world.

In conclusion, the future of Social Studies education in Ghana hinges on the effective implementation of evidence-based instructional strategies and teacher empowerment. When grounded in transformative pedagogies, technological integration, and inclusive practices, Social Studies can serve as a formidable tool for cultivating critical, development-oriented citizens equipped to shape Ghana's national agenda.

5. Summary, conclusions and recommendations
5.1 Introduction
Social Studies teaching strategies are crucial for fostering in pupils a sense of civic responsibility and critical thinking, both of which are vital for the nation's development. Based on Pedagogical Effectiveness Theory (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020) and Social Constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978), this study examines how male and female teachers in the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly perceive the value of instructional strategies in advancing national development goals through the Senior High School Social Studies curriculum. The Curriculum Change Theory (Fullan, 2007) and the Teacher views Theory (Pajares, 1992), which demonstrate how teachers' views impact their instruction and the effectiveness of reforms, are further expanded upon in this study.

5.2 Research summary
Four primary research questions and hypotheses served as the foundation for the study, which examined:
1. How well-suited current teaching strategies are for the nation's development.
2. How thoroughly key curriculum areas are covered by these strategies?
3. The ability of educators to confidently employ technology in the classroom.
4. To what extent do instructional strategies foster critical thinking on the growth of a country?

The researcher examined the quantitative data we collected from 245 Social Studies teachers (163 males and 82 women) using chi-square tests and descriptive statistics. The findings supported the null hypotheses by demonstrating that there were no statistically significant differences between men and women on any of the four questions.

Research question one indicates that 73% of male teachers and 70% of female teachers responded that their methods were "Very" or "Extremely Effective." These findings are consistent with Social Constructivist principles that advocate for context-relevant and interactive instruction (Palincsar, 1998). Pedagogical alignment, as defined by Pedagogical Effectiveness Theory (Shulman, 1987), is supported by research question two which 84% of male and 72% of female teachers stated that the teaching techniques covered significant curriculum subjects to a "Large" or "Very Large Extent."

According to the responses of research question three, teachers who were male (85%) and female (72%) expressed a lack of confidence in their ability to use technology in the classroom. This disparity demonstrates the urgent need for pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes to increase their instruction in digital technologies.

A major objective of Social Studies teaching and a fundamental tenet of constructivist learning, 78% of male and 73% of female agreed or strongly agreed that the way courses are taught encourages students to think critically.

5.3 Conclusions

The findings indicate that both male and female educators concur that the way Social Studies is currently taught is ineffective. The educational goals of fostering civic engagement, addressing national issues, and encouraging critical thinking are mostly met by these teaching strategies. However, there are significant gaps in the field of technology integration, indicating that teachers' skills do not align with the digital demands of the twenty-first century.

This study supports the Social Constructivist theory, which holds that knowledge is acquired via meaningful interaction and practical experience. Additionally, it supports the Pedagogical Effectiveness paradigm, which states that learning outcomes improve when curriculum material, learner requirements, and teaching strategies are all in harmony (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

The findings also provide credence to Curriculum reform Theory (Fullan, 2007), which holds that long-term curriculum reform requires teacher ownership, training, and responsiveness to the environment. The findings also lend credence to the Teacher Beliefs Theory (Pajares, 1992), which holds that teachers' beliefs significantly influence their methods and degree of adaptability.

5.4 Recommendations

The study's findings and theoretical interpretations support the following recommendations:

1. Professional Development in ICT: Targeted in-service training programmes should be implemented to help teachers improve their use of digital tools, bridge the technological confidence gap, and ensure that their instruction is current with industry standards.

2. Modifications to the Curriculum and Teaching Methods: To encourage students to think more critically, Social Studies curriculum designers should include more technology-based learning exercises and real-world problem-solving assignments in the curriculum.

3. Teacher Belief Transformation Programmes: To help teachers align their beliefs with contemporary teaching practices, particularly with regard to constructivist methods and the use of technology in the classroom, teachers should establish seminars and other contemplation areas.

4. Gender-Sensitive Capacity Building: Training should be tailored to the distinct professional development requirements of male and female teachers, even in the absence of statistically significant differences between the sexes.

5. Supportive Policy Environment: In order to ensure that technology is used appropriately, particularly in settings with limited resources, national education policy should prioritise infrastructure and incentives.

5.5 Areas for further study

Future research could examine the following to expand the study's scope and meaning:

1. Examine how teachers' perspectives and methods of instruction have evolved over time following professional development through longitudinal analyses.

2. Mixed-Methods Approaches: To gain a deeper understanding of the various contextual and cultural factors that influence teachers' teaching, use qualitative data.

3. Student Views: Learn how students respond to and feel about the way social studies is taught, particularly in relation to developing a sense of national identity and critical thinking.

4. Comparative Regional Studies: Examine findings from both urban and rural regions to see whether geography influences teachers' beliefs and instructional effectiveness.

5.6 Contribution to knowledge advancement

This study significantly alters the understanding of academics on the effectiveness of Social Studies instruction and how it contributes to national development. Specifically, the study to:
  • Contributes to the corpus of studies on the impact of gender on instructional strategies.

• Illustrates the significance of Pedagogical Effectiveness and Social Constructivism in forming national citizenship education.

• Provides teachers teaching Social Studies with a practical means of ensuring that their methods of instruction align with curricular modifications.

• Makes use of teacher input based on data to inform curriculum and policy modifications, which is essential for effective curriculum implementation (Fullan, 2007).

• Contributes to the advancement of Teacher Beliefs Theory by relating the opinions of teachers to their methods of instruction in a crucial subject like Social Studies.

By integrating theory, practice, and policy, this study provides a solid empirical framework for raising the calibre and responsiveness of Social Studies instruction in Ghana and other comparable locations worldwide.

5.7 Conclusion and implications for pedagogical practice

The findings of this study offer significant insights into the gender-based perspectives of Senior High School teachers on the effectiveness of instructional methods in teaching Social Studies for national development in Ghana. Drawing from the theoretical underpinnings of Social Constructivism and Pedagogical Effectiveness Theory, the study underscores that both male and female teachers largely affirm the utility of interactive, student-centered pedagogies in achieving curricular goals related to civic engagement, critical thinking, and national consciousness.

However, despite the absence of statistically significant gender-based differences in perceptions, the widespread lack of confidence among teachers particularly in the use of technology-enhanced instruction highlights a pressing pedagogical concern. This disconnects between the curriculum's progressive intent and classroom realities reflects systemic challenges in teacher preparation, access to ICT infrastructure, and ongoing professional development. Notably, the study also reaffirms that effective teaching transcends gender and rests more fundamentally on training, resource availability, and pedagogical adaptability.

The implications of adopting diverse and inclusive instructional strategies in Social Studies are profound. First, differentiated methods such as problem-based learning, dialogic teaching, debates, and simulations can create inclusive learning environments that cater to varied learning styles, promote civic agency, and stimulate higher-order thinking. Second, aligning these strategies with real-world contexts fosters a deeper understanding of national development issues and cultivates socially responsible citizens. Third, embracing technology not merely as a delivery tool but as an integral pedagogical resource is essential for future-proofing instruction in an increasingly digitalized educational landscape.

To fully harness the transformative power of Social Studies education, teachers must be empowered to navigate and integrate diverse instructional strategies that are contextually relevant, gender-inclusive, and digitally enriched. This calls for a recalibration of teacher education programmes and educational policy directives to emphasize capacity building, reflexive pedagogy, and technological fluency. Ultimately, this study contributes to the discourse on instructional equity and curriculum responsiveness, offering a robust empirical foundation for educational reforms aimed at enhancing teaching effectiveness and national development through Social Studies in Ghana and similar contexts.

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