



Pre-service social studies teachers' readiness and self-efficacy beliefs to promote 21st century learning in Ghanaian classrooms: evidence from the university of education, Winneba, Ghana

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Abstract

Successful acquisition of 21st century competencies enshrined in the Social Studies curriculum and, therefore, needed by students to navigate through the ever-changing world require that they are taught and moulded by 21st century teachers with the needed professional competencies. Accordingly, this study investigated the readiness and how efficacious pre-service Social Studies teachers are to implement the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies Curriculum in Ghana with Bandura's (1976) Social Cognitive theory serving as the theoretical framework. Working within the pragmatist paradigm, this study utilized the sequential explanatory research design with mixed method approach where through census sampling technique all the 120 pre-service Social Studies teachers were sampled and participated in the study. Questionnaire and an interview guide were the instruments for the study. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Pearson Product Moment Correlation) were employed to analyse the research data with the aid of version 28 of SPSS. The findings revealed that pre-service Social Studies teachers were highly ready and highly efficacious to implement the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum. The findings further established that there was a moderate and statistically significant positive relationship between pre-service teachers' readiness and self-efficacy beliefs to implement the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum. Therefore, the study concluded that readiness and self-efficacy beliefs are crucial antecedents to promoting 21st century learning in Ghanaian schools. As such, the study recommended that Ghana Education Service should liaise with pre-service teacher training institutions like the University of Education, Winneba, to continuously track, monitor and sustain the readiness level of pre-service teachers even before they are recruited to teach since it has implications on their level of self-efficacy beliefs.

Key words: Readiness, self-efficacy beliefs, pre-service Social Studies teachers, junior high school

Introduction

In today's globalized, competitive and technology driven society, the challenge for most countries is to evolve a working curriculum for achieving excellence and ensuring societal effectiveness. Scholars in the field of education have argued that it is a world class curriculum that is capable of equipping students in an educational enterprise with the needed knowledge and competencies for them to contribute substantially to the advancement of their society (Koc *et al.*, 2022; Uyar & Cicek, 2021). Consistent with this assertion, 21st century education has been identified as the cornerstone that fosters nations and individuals to be globally competent, exudes economic and political governance, transmits contemporary knowledge and skills to its citizenry, bridges the inequity gap, and nurtures technological advancement and desirable

attitudinal change (Alahmad, *et al.*, 2021; Valtonen *et al.*, 2021; Getachew & Tekle, 2020). Further in this regard, Amajuoyi (2022) posited that education empowers individuals with relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes to contribute meaningfully to the development agenda of societies. Therefore, there is an increased demand for accountability in education systems, and this phenomenon has gained ground especially in the 21st century (Jambo & Hongde, 2020). It is gleaned from these claims that 21st century education has a positive sway on the development of all societies, and therefore, it is a vital legacy that a nation can bequeath to her citizens. Conversely, the development of a nation will flop if it fails to provide quality 21st century education to the populace. Cognizance of the role of education in the socio-economic transformation of economies around the world, countries both developed and developing countries expend a substantial portion of their resources to quality education delivery. For instance, Ghana made a budgetary allocation of 9.26 billion cedis to education in 2018, thereby increasing its allocation by 11% over the previous year to the education sector (Republic of Ghana, 2018). In 2020, the Parliament of Ghana approved 13.3 billion cedis to the education sector to ensure the provision of education in the country with the hopes of achieving goal four (4) of the sustainable development goals contained in Vision 2030 of the United Nations (Republic of Ghana, 2020). It is expected that these investments in education would improve the quality of education in general, and particularly, the learning outcomes of students.

Meanwhile, scholars (Yassar, 2021; Causel *et al.*, 2021) have observed that teacher quality is one of the core and cardinal issues of concern because the calibre of teachers determines the extent to which investments made in education would be realized. These scholars further maintained that the effectiveness or otherwise of educational programmes, policies and innovations rest on the shoulders of teachers. These claims illuminate the need for adequate and professional training of teachers and that investments by governments would be a mirage if teachers are not professionally and adequately trained. This point is substantiated in the call by Ramirez (2020) requiring teacher education institutions to shape pre-service teachers to adequately respond to the innovations occasioned by the dictates of the 21st century exigencies so as to trigger life-long learning, safeguarding the standard of education as well as skills acquisition. According to Alahmad, Stamenkovska and Gyori (2021), the need for trained professionally competent teachers has now heightened more than ever because inculcating in students 21st century competencies calls for teachers who are able to employ educational technologies, build multidisciplinary relationships, conduct process-oriented measurement and evaluation, provide value education through activities, and demonstrate excellent classroom management. Implicitly, the literature underscores the essential role that professionally trained teachers play in influencing the acquisition of 21st century skills by students. Hence, teacher education institutions are duty bound to train future educators who are relevant to the educational community and competitive on a worldwide scale.

Indeed, the issue of readiness and self-efficacy beliefs of pre-service teachers in transmitting 21st century competencies to students have engaged the attention of researchers in recent times. Fairman *et al.*, (2022) explicate that pre-service teacher training is the initial preparation of teachers prior to their deployment into the teaching service and their readiness could be explained as pre-service teachers' optimum level of professional competences development that allows them to assume teaching in an effective and efficient manner (Mohamed *et al.*, 2022). Pre-service teachers' readiness could also be described as the feeling of being prepared for the teaching job by taking into consideration all aspects and elements which contributed to that feeling during pre-service training (Strakova, 2015). Accordingly, pre-service teachers must have the sense of being ready to own and implement the curriculum to engender the commitment to ensure its success. Even though scholars (Park & Son, 2022; Fan *et al.*, 2017) have proffered different dimensions of teacher readiness to entail their knowledge, attitudes and interests, this study looked at pre-service Social Studies teachers readiness as being context specific in terms of expectations of the teachers in implementing the Common Core Social Studies curriculum at the Junior High School level. Specifically, the study operationalized pre-service Social Studies teachers readiness to include their readiness to implement the rationale/aims/philosophy of the subject, their ability to use creative pedagogies recommended for use when teaching the subject, as well as their ability to assist the core competencies the subject seeks to develop in the students. Additionally, readiness was also accessed in their understanding

of the profile of expected learning behaviour, assessment practices recommended in the subject as well as their readiness to implement the process skills contained in the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum which has been implemented since 2021 in the Junior High Schools in Ghana.

However, education research has consistently proven that the effectiveness of the in-service teachers is measured in their readiness and self-efficacy beliefs acquired during their pre-service training and, therefore, could be an important factor and indicator of their ability to trigger the acquisition of the 21st century skills by their students (Hartono *et al.*, 2020). The readiness and self-efficacy beliefs of pre-service teachers in the subject of Social Studies holds great importance in enabling effective implementation of the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum which has been implemented at the Junior High School level since 2021. According to Bariham *et al.*, (2020), the discipline Social Studies plays a vital role by inculcating in learners critical thinking skills, hard work, self-reliance, empathy, honesty, ethics and integrity, tolerance and the appreciation of human dignity. These scholars further maintained that the discipline sharpens students' competencies in open-mindedness, national consciousness and patriotism, obedience, loyalty, critical judgment, constructive criticism, power of imagination and resourcefulness, accountability, respect for the rights of others, and respect for the law. The above views suggest that Social Studies holds the key and indeed could be described as the springboard in churning out reflective, concerned and participatory citizens who will be ready to spearhead the development of any nation and that efforts at modern civilization and innovation would fail if attention is not paid to the acquisition of knowledge, values and skills enshrined in Social Studies. Recognizing the significant role that Social Studies plays in the socio-economic advancement of countries, the subject has been accorded high priority in the Ghanaian school curriculum. Hence, to assist students in recognizing the benefits of Social Studies education and its applicability to national development, it is indispensable to have trained and qualified Social Studies teachers who are ready and possess high level of self-efficacy beliefs which is reflected comprehensive content knowledge, effective teaching skills, a positive attitude towards the subject.

Therefore, it could be deduced from the preceding arguments that, to ensure that pre-service teachers maximize their effectiveness during their in-service teaching, it is imperative that their readiness and self-efficacy beliefs are examined from time to time, hence, studies have been carried out around the world in this regard. A study conducted by (2020) among pre-service English Language teachers in Denpasar, Indonesia, discovered that pre-service teachers rated themselves ready in their ability to insert 21st century skills in their lessons, confident in perceiving their 21st century skills as well as being ready to insert 21st century skills in their lesson planning, teaching and learning process and assessing their students' learning activities. In the South Eastern Asia country of Malaysia, Rusdin (2018) examined teachers' readiness in implementing 21st century learning and discovered that teachers rated themselves highly in readiness to implement 21st century learning in their classrooms. In Nigeria, evidence from pre-service biology teachers in two higher institutions in Kaduna State by Francisca and Samsudin (2018) disclosed that pre-service biology teachers were highly ready in relation to their confidence, awareness and motivation, perception, knowledge and training to implement 21st century learning. Garba and Alademerin (2014) study in Nigeria uncovered that student-teachers in universities and colleges of education lacked the desired level of self-efficacy beliefs in incorporating technology in classroom instruction. Likewise, Agyei and Voogt (2015) study in Ghana, noted that pre-service teachers are deficient in terms of the required competencies and self-efficacy beliefs to successfully integrate technology in their instructional practices during classroom instruction. These evidences as espoused in Ghana create doubts as to whether pre-service teachers have acquired the requisite competencies through their training to actually instill digital literacy competencies among their students. Understandably, it is essential to uncover the level of readiness among pre-service Social Studies teachers if stakeholders desire to realize successful acquisition of 21st century competencies among them as well as their students.

Closely related to the issue of pre-service teachers' readiness and preparedness is the issue of their self-efficacy beliefs. Scholars like Adarkwa *et al.*, (2022) underscored the significance of building a strong self-efficacy beliefs during the initial pre-service education. Despite the recognition that pre-service teacher training being capable in equipping pre-service teachers with the necessary competencies and skills to work

effectively throughout their profession, Adarkwa *et al.*, (2022) aver that the pre-service teachers' education represent the most challenging period in their training. *Çam Aktaş (2018) illuminated that the initial years of teaching present the most tough times in their lives of trainee teachers with Fatiha et al., (2013) describing the transitioning from teacher training institutions to the classroom as a "reality shock" arising from snags such as lesson planning, dealing with student indiscipline, lack of teaching and learning resources, and skills in dealing with syllabi which demand skills they are yet to acquire (Boakye & Ampiah, 2017; Chychuk, 2016).* It is, therefore, evident that pre-service training presents a lot of uncertainties, hence, acquisition of desirable self-efficacy beliefs and competencies are necessary to tackle future challenges and demands. As such, the training and deployment of teachers with desirable level of self-efficacy beliefs to educational institutions must be a concern to education stakeholders. Consequently, scholars (Adarkwa *et al.*, 2022; Goh, Yusuf, & Wong, 2017) have called for pre-service teachers to have high self-efficacy beliefs so as to be able to show excellence in content area as well as having the capability of employing teaching methods, techniques and strategies to build an atmosphere that will enable students acquire the competencies which ultimately lead to quality education delivery.

Consequently, with the assurance that having good self-efficacy beliefs such as effective student engagements, and effective instructional and classroom management enhances improved classroom instruction and the realization of educational goals and objectives, researchers have sought to investigate the level of pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs as well as explore inventories that could be deployed to enhance the self-efficacy beliefs of pre-service teachers around the world. As a result of empirical studies, researchers have offered various inventories in assessing teacher's self-efficacy beliefs with the most popular being Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2007) model of teacher self-efficacy beliefs which sinks well with the Bandura Socio-Cognitive theory. In Turkey, Balci *et al.*, (2019) adopted Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (2007) model of teacher self-efficacy beliefs and investigated pre-service English Language teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and it was concluded that even though these pre-service teachers had higher levels of teacher efficacy in the three subscales, they felt themselves as the most efficacious for instructional strategies, followed by classroom management and student engagement respectively. These results implied that the pre-service teachers efficaciously would involve their students in the instructional process, engaged them effectively as well as demonstrated mastery in their classroom management.

Again, in Turkey, Yildiz and Arici (2021) employed Riggs and Enochs' (1990) model of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs which was later adapted to Turkish by Bıkmaz (2017) and investigated pre-service Science teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. The findings of the study disclosed that even though pre-service Science teachers had high self-efficacy beliefs towards teaching, they have medium-level teaching abilities, as they struggle with lesson planning and its execution during instructional periods. Additionally, it was found that pre-service teachers exhibited a number of inappropriate behaviors, including failing to guarantee student participation, failing to grab students' attention, choosing activities that were too advanced for the students' level, failing to concretize abstract ideas, failing to assess the degree of student accomplishment, and failing to maintain classroom order. On the Ghanaian scene, a study by Kaku and Arthur (2021) investigated the level of self-efficacy beliefs among pre-service Economic teachers and discovered that the pre-service Economics teachers exhibited high self-efficacy beliefs in student engagement, instructional strategies and classroom management. Likewise, Coffie and Doe (2019) investigated pre-service Science teacher self-efficacy beliefs in teaching Science at the basic school level and concluded that pre-service science teachers had high self-efficacy beliefs in teaching science. However, higher self-efficacy beliefs were reported amongst those enrolled in science programmes than their counterparts in general science programme. Furthermore, Dorsah, *et al.*, (2020) study on pre-service teachers' scientific epistemological beliefs and science teaching efficacy beliefs in Ghana discovered that pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs was low. These studies have proven that there were inconsistencies in the results. This implies that assessment of pre-service teacher's self-efficacy beliefs should be supported by situation-bound evidence which calls for further research in diverse subject disciplines such as Social Studies. Besides, it was evident from the discussion that while some studies revealed that student engagement was the most prevailing self-efficacy construct, others also revealed different constructs being the most dominant as well as being relative to pre-

service teachers of other subject disciplines other than Social Studies teachers. Based on these conflicting findings, this study was conducted to gather evidence on the level of self-efficacy beliefs from the perspective of pre-service Social Studies teachers in the Department of Basic Education, University of Education, Winneba, who would be implementing the Junior High School Common Core Social Studies curriculum across Ghana.

Research consistently indicates a positive correlation between pre-service teachers' level of readiness and level of self-efficacy beliefs to be able to be successful in their instructional delivery. In their study, Yilmiz and Arici (2021) uncovered a notable connection between a teachers' level of confidence in their teaching skills and their proficiency in solving challenges they encounter to trigger learning. Furthermore, Baltaoğlu and Güven (2019) found evidence indicating that the process of learning and teaching requires high levels of self-efficacy beliefs from teachers since it plays a crucial role in effectively fostering the growth and enhancement of students' self-efficacy in learning. Similarly, Aybek and Aslan (2019) demonstrated that pre-service teachers who possess a high level of readiness in terms of their self-efficacy beliefs in their instructional abilities are more successful in implementing and evaluating their teaching to trigger student learning. According to Aybek and Aslan's (2019) research, there was a predictive and moderately significant association between the self-efficacy belief and preparedness for teaching among pre-service teachers. In line with these revelations, it could be deduced that improving the level of readiness would guarantee better levels of self-efficacy beliefs leading to quality instruction and improved learning outcomes of students.

Nevertheless, it has been revealed in other studies that having high levels of readiness or preparedness does not automatically translate into having high self-efficacy beliefs. In this regard, Dilekli and Tezci (2020) disclosed that even though high self-efficacy beliefs have an important role in teaching, it is not a sufficient indicator of level of readiness or preparedness of pre-service teachers to teach. Similarly, in another study, Derman and Ebenezer (2020) disclosed that even though pre-service teachers thought they were very competent in terms of communication and class management, the results of the interviews did not match their perceptions, showing that they struggled to get students to pay attention, be motivated, and communicate during lesson planning. It is, therefore, difficult to affiliate with the preceding evidences to assume that high levels of readiness among pre-service Social Studies teachers would translate into high level of self-efficacy beliefs. Hence, this study would test if readiness has any significant relationship with pre-service Social Studies self-efficacy beliefs.

Even though a recent study in Ghana by Narh-Kert *et al.*, (2022) indicated the country's resolve to implement 21st century education, there is paucity of studies on pre-service teachers' perspective on their readiness and self-efficacy beliefs to implement 21st century education if non-existence. The few studies that have been conducted (Nyamekye *et al.*, 2022; Abdulai, 2021; Apau, 2017; Gyamfi, 2017) only concentrated their ability to incorporate the use of Information Communication Skills (ICT) and Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) which are insufficient indicators of the varied 21st century skills required of pre-service teachers. Besides, these aforementioned studies concentrated on in-service and pre-service teachers who were not trained to implement the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum which was introduced in September 2019 and calls for subject specialism teachers to teach it. Accordingly, since the pre-service Social Studies teachers involved in this study are the 4-year B. ED Basic Education Curriculum (Social Studies specialism option) in the Department of Basic Education, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana, it is crucial to uncover their readiness and self-efficacy beliefs prior before they are recruited to teach and implement the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum, hence, this study becomes relevant.

As the nature of education is becoming more and more complex as a result of evolution of teaching and learning, so also are the duties of a teacher. Ideally, pre-service teachers in teacher training institutions are expected to receive quality education and training to equip them with 21st century competencies to adapt to the changing dynamics of teaching, teach students to acquire competencies (collaboration, problem-solving, digital literacy, critical thinking), enhance their employability, make them globally competitive for a productive life, and contribute meaningfully to national development (United Nations, 2021; Tlali, 2021).

In this milieu, teacher training institutions are expected to train their pre-service teachers to become change agents in advancing 21st century competencies and skills. However, in recent times, empirical studies have established that it is a laborious task training today's pre-service teacher to be very effective and efficient in delivering competencies required of the present millennium (Uslu, 2020; Uslu, & Ersan, 2020). As such, in order to foster the development of 21st century skills with the advancement and rapidly changing technologies, teacher training institutions are challenged to design learning that meaningfully integrates content and pedagogy as this could assist future educators to become ready for a knowledge society that is driven by technology (Gurgenidze, 2018; Uslu, 2020; Uslu, & Ersan, 2020). Therefore, the mammoth changes within the education landscape and the growing emphasis on 21st century competencies among students worldwide have raised concern about the readiness and self-efficacy beliefs of pre-service teachers more than ever before.

In response to the demands of the 21st century education around the world, Ghana through the Ministry of Education and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA, 2020) designed a curriculum which includes the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum whose goal is to train students to acquire 21st century skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, digital literacy, global citizenship, etc, based on the social constructivist approach to learning. Additionally, the University of Education, Winneba, also started a New-Four-Year B.ed Basic Education Programme to train subject specialism teachers to implement the new curriculum. For the stakeholders in education and the country at large to realise the benefits enshrined in the curriculum, therefore, calls for an assessment of the readiness and self-efficacy of the pre-service teachers who are going to implement the curriculum through school learning experiences that are designed for students. Due to the dearth of empirical evidence on the level of readiness and self-efficacy beliefs among pre-service Social Studies teachers since, the implementation of the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum, and to ensure that students maximize their learning and acquisition of 21st century competencies, this study became imperative to understand the readiness and self-efficacy beliefs of the will be Social Studies teacher. Therefore, the following research questions guided the study:

1. How do pre-service Social Studies teachers perceive their readiness to implement the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum in Ghana?
2. What is the level of pre-service Social Studies teachers' self-efficacy beliefs to implement the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum in Ghana?
3. What is the relationship between the pre-service Social Studies readiness and self-efficacy beliefs to implement the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum in Ghana?

It is envisaged that the findings of the study would have theoretical, methodological, and practical significance. In respect to theoretical significance, the findings of this study would provide a more scientific perspective on pre-service Social Studies teachers' readiness and self-efficacy beliefs to implement the Common-Core Social Studies Curriculum at the Junior High Schools in Ghana. It is hoped that the findings of the study would assist stakeholders to ascertain the pre-service Social Studies teachers to know their prevailing readiness and the extent to which it influences their efficacy in the implementation of the Common-Core Social Studies Curriculum. When this is done, it would lead to the realization of educational goals in educational institutions in Ghana.

Practically, it is envisaged that the findings of the study would determine the level of pre-service Social Studies teachers' readiness and self-efficacy beliefs so that measures are implemented to improve their readiness and their level of self-efficacy beliefs. This would lead to promoting learning outcomes of students in the subject, quality and competence of the teachers so that they can perform appropriately on their charge. The findings of the study would help the pre-service Social Studies teachers' to be aware of the areas of their readiness and their level of self-efficacy that need improvement for successful implementation of the common-core Junior High School social studies curriculum in Ghana. Besides, the outcome of the study would create awareness among pre-service social studies teachers so as to undertake

some professional development endeavours so as to enhance their efficacy and readiness to implement the common-core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum. Methodologically, the findings of the study would provide insights in employing the mixed method approach in studying the readiness and self-efficacy of pre-service teachers in educational institutions. Lastly, the outcome of the study would contribute to the existing knowledge in the area of the readiness and self-efficacy among pre-service Social Studies teachers in implementing the Common Core Social Studies curriculum as well as serve as reference material for future studies.

Theoretical Framework

Bandura's (1976) Social Cognitive Theory (STC) constituted the theoretical framework for the study. The main thrust of SCT is about how the interplay of cognitive, environment and other contextual factors influence the behaviour of an individual. According to Cai *et al.*, (2023), the nomenclature of SCT describes how human behavior is triggered and fashioned by personal cognition within a social milieu thereby establishing a bidirectional effect lacinate by personal, environmental factors, and behavior (Chen & Tu, 2021). SCT remains one of the widely deployed theories used in different disciplines in examining how environmental and personal factors intermingle to influence an individuals' pro-environmental behavior, such as pre-service Social Studies teachers thereby aiming to significantly reduce the undesirable environmental impact that could hamper their readiness and self-efficacy beliefs to implement the curriculum (Guo *et al.*, 2022). As such, SCT remains of the effective theories to understand the readiness and self-efficacy beliefs of pre-service Social Studies teachers to implement the Common Core Junior High School curriculum in Ghana.

Methodology

Working within the pragmatist paradigm, this study employed naïve realist as ontological basis, objectivist as epistemological foundation, beneficent as axiological stance and mixed methods approach as methodological grounding as professed by Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) as a measure of the four cardinal consideration underlying research philosophy. The choice for the adoption of pragmatism paradigm is at the heart of the paradigm struggle between positivism and interpretivism where positivists describe subjectivity as a contamination to research, whereas interpretivists view objectivity as unattainable (van Thiel, 2022; Collis & Hussey, 2021; Matias, 2021). Hence, the rationale to use pragmatist paradigm in this study apart from aiming to reduce the shortcomings associated with the use of both positivism and interpretivism, also hope to combine approaches and paradigms so as to get a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon since reality can exist on multiple levels (Collis & Hussey, 2021; Bell *et al.*, 2019). The pragmatist's stance, therefore, suggests that neither quantitative nor qualitative approach only is adequate to give a complete picture of the phenomenon.

Consistent with the pragmatism and the mixed methods methodology, this study employed the sequential explanatory mixed methods research design which aimed to use the quantitative data and their analysis to provide some level of understanding of the research problem while the qualitative (text) data are also collected and analyzed second in sequence to help explain or elaborate on the quantitative results obtained in the first phase (Mariani & Zenga, 2021; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). For the quantitative phase of the study, census sampling technique was used to select all the 120 Level 400 pre-service Social Studies teachers who were the pioneer group of the New-Four (4) year B.ed Curriculum of the Department of Basic Education, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana, while convenient sampling technique was utilized to select 12 pre-service Social Studies teachers of the same department for the qualitative phase of the study. The selection of 12 pre-service Social Studies teachers was consistent with the recommendation of Whitehead and Annells (2007) that eight to fifteen participants are adequate for qualitative studies.

Questionnaire and semi-structured interview guide were the instruments used for data collection. The questionnaire was organized into three sections A-C. Section 'A' gathered data on the demographic characteristics of the pre-service Social Studies teachers whereas Sections 'B, and C' collected information

on their level of readiness, and self-efficacy beliefs respectively. Section 'B' which assessed the level of readiness of pre-service Social Studies teachers was self-constructed and was based on the six unique features of the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum which included their readiness in implementing the rationale/aim/philosophy, using creative pedagogies, teaching core competencies, understanding of profile of expected learning behavior, readiness in implementing the assessment practices as well as process skills as enshrined in the curriculum. Sections 'C' was an adapted version of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2007) model on Teacher self-efficacy beliefs (TSEB) scale which have been extensively used in studying teacher self-efficacy beliefs. Even though the original teacher self-efficacy beliefs scale by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (2007) consisted of three main components (student engagement, instructional strategies and classroom management), four components were included in this study. These include efficacy beliefs in supporting students learning, classroom management, teaching and learning content and collaboration. These elements were considered in the study because they relate well to the requisite skills expected in pre-service teachers within the Ghanaian education context, and the results would have implications for enhancing the self-efficacy beliefs among the pre-service Social Studies teachers especially with the Department of Basic Education in the University of Education, Winneba.

To ascertain the reliability of the questionnaire, a pre-test was carried out and the assessment of the internal consistency of the various items on the questionnaire was checked using Cronbach alpha. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients assessment of the various items yielded 0.89 for rationale/aim/philosophy, 0.92 for creative pedagogies, 0.83 for teaching core-competencies, 0.90 for understanding of profile of expected learning behaviour, 0.88 for assessment practices, 0.89 for process skills and 0.92 for the overall level of readiness. In the case of self-efficacy beliefs scale, Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.89, 0.83, 0.90, 0.91 and 0.90 were realized for self-efficacy beliefs in classroom engagement, collaboration, supporting students learning, teaching and learning content as well as the overall questionnaire. Scholars such as (Collier, 2020; Verma & Abdel-Salam, 2019) have all recommended that a Cronbach alpha coefficient of ≥ 0.7 is indicative of acceptable reliability, hence, it could be said that based on the various Cronbach alpha coefficients realized, the questionnaire was reliable.

To ensure validity of the questionnaire, face, content and construct validation principles were followed. Besides, the trustworthiness criteria established by Lincoln and Guba (1985) was also ensured in ascertaining rigour in the qualitative phase of the study. Also, the use of parametric analytical tools like Pearson Product Moment Correlation requires satisfying assumptions like normality and homogeneity of variance. Therefore, the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was used to check homogeneity of variance, where its statistic was greater than the alpha value of 0.05 was used as indicative of satisfying these assumptions. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation and inferential statistics were used in answering research questions set for the study whiles thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data through verbatim quotations used in relation to the various themes identified. The standard deviation was used to measure the variability of the data by determining how spread out the scores were from the mean in the distribution, where values between ± 3 indicated that the data were normally distributed (Gravetter *et al.*, 2021; Roni *et al.*, 2020). The instruments were personally administered after meeting ethical considerations underlying the conduct of research. Trustworthiness of the qualitative data was enhanced through credibility, cofirtability, transferrability, as well as dependability.

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: How do pre-service Social Studies teachers perceive their readiness to implementing the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum?

The aim of this research question was to find out how ready pre-service Social Studies teachers are in implementing the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum. The analysis was based on six scales that centered on the unique features of the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum. These included their readiness in implementing the rationale/aim/philosophy, using creative pedagogies, teaching core competencies, understanding of profile of expected learning behavior, readiness

in implementing the assessment practices as well as process skills as enshrined in the curriculum. To provide answers to this research question, I computed descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation for each variable such that $\text{mean} < 2.50$ indicated not ready, $2.50 \leq \text{mean} < 2.99$ showed ready, $3.00 \leq \text{mean} < 3.49$ indicated moderately ready and $\text{mean} \geq 3.50$ indicated highly ready. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics on Pre-service Teachers' Level of Readiness to Implementing the Junior High School Common Core Social Studies Curriculum

Domains of Readiness	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Level of Readiness
Rationale/Aim/Philosophy	1	5	4.45	0.46	Highly Ready
Creative Pedagogies	1	5	4.40	0.47	Highly Ready
Core Competencies	1	5	4.40	0.40	Highly Ready
Profile of Expected Learning Behaviour	1	5	4.39	0.42	Highly Ready
Assessment Practices	1	5	4.27	0.53	Highly Ready
Process Skills	1	5	4.25	0.51	Highly Ready
Overall Level of Readiness	1	5	4.35	0.37	Highly Ready

Source: Field Data, 2024

Inspection of the minimum and maximum values confirmed that there were no outliers in the data. The data in Table 1 reveal that the pre-service Social Studies teachers were highly ready in all the indicators employed in assessing their level of readiness in implementing the common core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum. Specifically, the pre-service Social Studies teachers' readiness in implementing the rationale/aim/philosophy of the subject was rated highest ($M=4.45$, $SD=0.46$), followed by their readiness in using creative pedagogies ($M=4.40$, $SD=0.47$), core competencies ($M=4.40$, $SD=0.40$), profile of expected learning behaviour ($M=4.39$, $SD=0.42$), assessment practices ($M=4.27$, $SD=0.53$) while their readiness in process skills ($M=4.25$, $SD=0.51$) was rated the least among the indicators of readiness. Generally, the pre-service teachers' overall level of readiness recorded ($M=4.35$, $SD=0.37$). Inspection of the standard deviation values showed that, they fell within the ± 3 threshold for assessing normality of data distribution (Gravetter *et al.*, 2021; Roni *et al.*, 2020). Nevertheless, based on the 5-point Likert scale used in the questionnaire where the mean score is 3.0 ($1+2+3+4+5/5$), it could be said that all the domains used in assessing pre-service Social Studies teachers' level of readiness in implementing the Junior High School Common Core Social Studies curriculum outlined in the study were rated very high. This implied that the pre-service Social Studies teachers see themselves as highly ready to implement the Junior High School Common Core Social Studies curriculum in Ghana. Also in this study, qualitative data was collected in the form of interviews to throw more light on the findings from the quantitative data. Therefore, I read through the transcripts, and used phrases to describe portions of the data to represent ideas in the form of themes. In reading through the transcripts to look out for the pre-service Social Studies teachers readiness to implement the Junior High School Common Core Social Studies curriculum the following themes emerged:

Readiness to Implement the Rationale/Aims/Philosophy of Social Studies

The data analysis of the qualitative data showed that one of the key dimensions of assessing the pre-service Social Studies teachers' readiness in implementing the common core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum is their understanding of the rationale/aim as well as the philosophy underlying Social Studies. One of the pre-service teachers remarked that:

I have been made to understand during my training that the inclusion of Social Studies in the common core programme during the latest educational reforms in 2019 is intended to enable learners acquire and develop

relevant knowledge, attitudes, values and skills to become active, effective and patriotic citizens to contribute to the development of our dear country. Therefore, I understand the rationale/aims/ and the philosophy of the subject and ready to teach it (SD #2).

Another participant had this to say:

The Common Core Social Studies Curriculum aims as one of its philosophies of producing concern, competent and reflective and participatory citizens who are capable of taking and making informed decisions for themselves and the public good. Hence, I fully understand the nature of the subject and willing to teach in achieving this aim and philosophy of the subject (SD #3).

Another participant commented that:

I know that the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum is hugely centered on the development of 21st century competencies and skills where the teacher is charged to create a classroom environment where learners can construct and discover knowledge for themselves rather than acquiring it (SD #5).

These statements implied that the pre-service Social Studies teachers are ready in terms of their understanding of the rationale/aim and the philosophy of the common core Social Studies curriculum and are, therefore, ever willing to fully implement it when giving the opportunity.

Readiness to Use Creative Pedagogies to Induce the Development of 21st Century Core Competencies in Social Studies

Other participants indicated their readiness to use creative pedagogical approaches so as to see to the development and acquisition of 21st century competencies and skills. This was what one of the participants said:

Through my training, I have had adequate knowledge and understanding about 21st century competencies such as creativity and innovation, communication and collaboration, problem-solving, critical thinking and among others. Besides, I have acquired adequate knowledge throughout my training to be able to use instructional strategies to induce these qualities in my learners (SD #1).

It could be inferred from the above comment that the pre-service social studies teachers have adequate knowledge about 21st century competencies and the instructional or pedagogical approaches that can trigger the development of these competencies among their learners. In responding to the question, another respondent commented that:

I am ready to deploy pedagogical techniques, approaches and strategies that can address the differences (learning styles, interest and learners' readiness to learn) to ensure that all learners have the best possible chance to learn (SD #6).

It is understood from these remarks above that the pre-service Social Studies teachers have clear understanding of the principle of scaffolding and differentiation. Supporting this point of view, another respondent commented thus:

I am ready to deploy and use instructional techniques and strategies aimed at moving learners progressively towards achieving maximum independence in learning while also being mindful of the right and responsibilities of the learners in ensuring quality education (SD #8).

The above extract points out that the pre-service teachers' readiness in implementing the curriculum by making their classroom a participatory and democratic one while respecting the principle of inclusion which is a crucial component of the Common Core Social Studies curriculum.

Readiness in Realizing the Desired Competencies and Profile of Expected Learning Behaviour through Sound Assessment Practices

The analysis of the interview data revealed that the preservice Social Studies teachers were hopeful in terms of their readiness to realize the core competencies and profile of expected learning behavior among their learners through the assessment practices they will employ. This opinion is captured in the following statements:

I know that the 21st century competencies needed by the learners to be able to navigate through this everchanging society have been crafted into the Common Core curriculum. Therefore, having gone through the curriculum from Level 100-400, I see myself as capable in employing instructional methods, techniques and strategies that will help to develop in my learners the core competencies enshrined in the curriculum (SD #6).

Similarly, one participant also commented that:

I see myself as capable in employing instructional strategies that will help to inculcate in my learners to be able respect the views of others, develop the attitude of working effectively with others and conform to the acceptable societal norms as indicated in the Common Core Social Studies curriculum (SD #1).

Another interviewee also added that:

I have gathered enough confidence throughout my training and so I see myself very ready in using instructional strategies and pedagogies that can develop in my learners a sense of national pride so that they can develop some love for their country and be able to give their all for the development of the country (SD #4).

Likewise, one interviewee also indicated that:

I am ready to go to the classroom and unleash some 21st century pedagogies that can develop in my learners the ability to act independently in taking decisions, be morally responsible for their actions and become conscious of their physical and socio/economic surroundings for the good of the country (SD #9).

It is inferred from these extracts that the preservice Social Studies teachers see themselves as ready through their training to employ teaching methods, techniques and strategies that is crucial in developing

in their learners to develop their core competencies, become independent and responsible as well as contribute meaningfully to the development of the country.

Research Question Two: How Efficacious are pre-service Social Studies teachers to implement the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum?

The aim of this research question was to find out the level of self-efficacy beliefs among pre-service Social Studies teachers in their ability to implement the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum. To provide an answer to this research question, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (2007) model on teachers' self-efficacy beliefs was adapted. This model assesses self-efficacy beliefs in four main constructs (classroom management, teaching and learning content, supporting students learning and collaboration). Also, descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation was computed for each variable as proposed by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). These scholars maintained that on a five (5) point Likert Scale questionnaire, descriptive statistics such as mean for each variable such that $\text{mean} < 2.50$ indicated not efficacious, $2.50 \leq \text{mean} < 2.99$ showed efficacious, $3.00 \leq \text{mean} < 3.49$ indicated moderately efficacious and $\text{mean} \geq 3.50$ indicated highly efficacious. Similarly, standard deviation values of ± 3 is indicative of the data being normally distributed. The data are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

Descriptive Statistics on Preservice Social Studies Teachers Level of Self Efficacy Beliefs

Domains of Self Efficacy Beliefs	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Level of Self-Efficacy Beliefs
Efficacy Beliefs in Supporting Students Learning	1	5	4.71	0.42	Highly Efficacious
Efficacy Beliefs in Classroom Management	1	5	4.54	0.47	Highly Efficacious
Efficacy Beliefs in Teaching and Learning Content	1	5	4.50	0.56	Highly Efficacious
Efficacy Beliefs in Collaboration	1	5	4.33	0.74	Highly Efficacious
Overall Self-Efficacy Beliefs	1	5	4.52	0.41	Highly Efficacious

Source: Field Data, 2024

The minimum and maximum values have established that the data had no outliers. Again, inspection of the standard deviation values showed that, they fell within the ± 3 threshold for assessing normality of data distribution. Generally, the results in Table 2, show that the respondents had varied perspectives on their level of self-efficacy beliefs. Indeed, the findings pointed out that the pre-service Social Studies teachers were highly efficacious in supporting students learning which was rated highest ($M=4.71$, $SD=0.42$), they were also highly efficacious in classroom management ($M=4.54$, $SD=0.54$), highly efficacious in teaching and learning content ($M=4.50$, $SD=0.56$), as well as highly efficacious in collaboration ($M=4.33$, $SD=0.74$). additionally, a cursory look at the standard deviation values showed that, they fell within the ± 3 threshold for assessing normality of data distribution (Gravetter *et al.*, 2021; Roni *et al.*, 2020). Overall, the pre-service Social Studies teachers indicated that they are highly efficacious in terms of their level of self-efficacy beliefs. Based on these results, the study concluded that pre-service Social Studies teachers are highly efficacious in implementing the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum in Ghana. This study collected qualitative data through the interviews to determine the level of self-efficacy beliefs among the pre-service Social Studies teachers. One of the interviewees had this to say:

The aim of every good teacher is to support and provide the platform for his/her learners to learn. Therefore, having gone through my training, I see myself as capable and confident in deploying varied means such as using teaching methods, techniques and strategies to assist every learner to learn. I will do this by looking out for the individual differences amongst them since each of them is unique in his/her own respective ways (SD #10).

The excerpt above is related to efficacy beliefs in supporting students learning where the preservice teacher indicated his capability and confidence in causing learners to learn. Another interviewee alluded to efficacy beliefs in classroom management thus:

Ensuring class control and management is not an easy task. However, having gone through my training and the internship programme, I have learnt some classroom management techniques that I can deploy to calm and prevent disruptive behaviour as well as classroom routines effectively among the learners (SD #12).

On efficacy beliefs in teaching and learning content, most of the preservice Social Studies teachers I interviewed indicated their capability to ensure that among their learners. This view is captured in the statement below:

This new curriculum we went through per our training has given us the opportunity to learn content related courses in Social Studies Education at the Junior High School level. Having taken the content courses from level 200-400, I see myself as confident in being able to teach or implement the Junior High School Common Core Social Studies curriculum (SD #11).

Another interviewee alluded to efficacy beliefs in collaborating to realise educational goals and objectives thus:

This new curriculum we went through per our training has exposed us to the fact the school is within a community where teachers must collaborate with other stakeholders in meeting educational goals and objectives. Therefore, having received this knowledge through my training, I see myself as confident in collaborating my colleague staff and other professionals and stakeholders such as colleagues, parents, organizations both within and outside the school in getting the best out of my learners (SD #2).

The interview data have shown the preservice Social Studies have very high confidence in themselves in their ability to support students learning, classroom management, teaching and learning of the subject matter as well as collaborating with others to realize educational goals and objectives.

Research Question Three - What is the relationship between the Pre-service Social Studies teachers Readiness and Self-Efficacy Beliefs to implementing the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum?

This research question sought to investigate the link between pre-service Social Studies teachers' readiness and their self-efficacy beliefs. To provide answers to this research question, the Pearson correlation coefficients for the variables were computed. The interpretation of the strength of the relationship was guided by Kothari's (2004) suggestion which indicated that if the correlation coefficient is greater than 0.3 but less than 0.5, then the relationship is moderate; the relationship is weak if the correlation coefficient is less than 0.3; and the relationship is strong if the correlation coefficient is 0.5 or greater. The results are presented in Table 3.

Comparing the results in Table 3 to the suggestion offered by Kothari (2004), it is observed that generally, there was a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between the preservice Social Studies teachers overall level of readiness and their overall level of self-efficacy beliefs ($r=0.757$, $p<0.05$, 2-tailed). This finding imply that preservice Social Studies teachers readiness is critical to their level of self-efficacy beliefs. The results further disclosed that readiness in core competencies ($r=0.658$, $p<0.05$, 2-

tailed), assessment practices ($r=0.545$, $p<0.05$, 2-tailed), profile of expected learning behaviour ($r=0.779$, $p<0.05$, 2-tailed), and process skills ($r=0.560$, $p<0.05$, 2-tailed) all had a strong and statistically significant positive relationship with pre-service Social Studies teachers level of self-efficacy beliefs. However, rationale/aim/philosophy ($r=0.484$, $p>0.05$, 2-tailed) and readiness to use creative pedagogies ($r=0.454$, $p>0.05$, 2-tailed) had a moderate and statistically significant positive relationship with their level of self-efficacy beliefs. Based on these findings, it was concluded that the preservice Social Studies teachers' level of readiness was a vital determinant of their level of self-efficacy beliefs to implement the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum.

Table 3.*Pearson Correlation Matrix for Readiness and Self-Efficacy Beliefs*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Rationale/Aim/Philosophy	1											
2. Creative Pedagogies	0.479** 0.000	1										
3. Core Competencies	0.517** 0.000	.494** 0.000	1									
4. Assessment Practices	0.474** 0.000	0.622** 0.000	0.595** 0.000	1								
5. Profile of Expected Learning Behaviour	0.570** 0.000	0.508** 0.000	0.577** 0.000	0.703** 0.000	1							
6. Process Skills	0.462** 0.000	0.488** 0.000	0.580** 0.000	0.566** 0.000	0.623** 0.000	1						
7. Overall Level of Readiness	0.677** 0.000	0.683** 0.000	0.792** 0.000	0.797** 0.000	0.864** 0.000	0.858** 0.000	1					
8. Efficacy in Teaching and Learning Content	0.376** 0.000	0.371** 0.000	0.539** 0.000	0.457** 0.000	0.688** 0.000	0.449** 0.000	0.631** 0.000	1				
9. Efficacy in Classroom Management	0.371** 0.000	0.440** 0.000	0.409** 0.000	0.476** 0.000	0.653** 0.000	0.387** 0.000	0.579** 0.000	0.556** 0.000	1			
10. Efficacy in Collaboration	0.416** 0.000	0.405** 0.000	0.599** 0.000	0.471** 0.000	0.556** 0.000	0.450** 0.000	0.615** 0.000	0.412** 0.000	0.479** 0.000	1		
11. Efficacy in Supporting Students Learning	0.219* 0.017	0.050 0.590	0.311** 0.001	0.133 0.152	0.378** 0.000	0.338** 0.000	0.352** 0.000	0.316** 0.000	0.247** 0.007	0.260** 0.004	1	
12. Overall Self-Efficacy Beliefs	0.484** 0.000	0.454** 0.000	0.658** 0.000	0.545** 0.000	0.779** 0.000	0.560** 0.000	0.757** 0.000	0.776** 0.000	0.766** 0.000	0.804** 0.000	0.556** 0.000	1

Source: Field Data, 2024

Also with this research question, qualitative data was collected in the form of interview on the preservice Social Studies teachers on the relationship between their level of readiness on their level of self-efficacy beliefs in implementing the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum. One of them commented that:

I think my level of readiness affect my confidence and the way I will teach. This is because, my capability to teach is dependent on the rationale or the philosophy underlying the curriculum. I think when I am ready in terms of the pedagogies and the assessment strategies to use, then I think I can use them to support student learning etc. hence, I would say that being ready is crucial in assessing my capability to teach any subject (SD #4).

A preservice Social Studies teacher reiterated that:

My level of readiness impact greatly on my level of efficacy beliefs. I think that when I understand the process skills, profile of expected learning behaviour of the learners as well as the core competencies and creative pedagogies to use to teach the learners, it would put me in a pole position to teach the content of the curriculum and

support learners to learn thereby realizing the goal of the curriculum (SD #5).

Touching on the negative implication of not being ready on preservice Social Studies teachers self-efficacy beliefs, one interviewee indicated that:

When the preservice teacher is not ready and does not understand the rationale and aim of the curriculum, coupled with being ignorant on the creative pedagogies to deploy to teach the various content of the curriculum, it will impact negatively on their efficacy beliefs to implement the curriculum (SD #9).

In line with the interview data presented under research question three, the pre-service Social Studies teachers have shown that their readiness in the various indicators outlined in the study is a crucial determinant of their level of self-efficacy beliefs to implement the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum. This implies that when they have high level of readiness, it will translate into high level of self-efficacy beliefs to implement the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum in Ghana.

Discussion of the Results

The findings from both quantitative and qualitative investigation on research question one which sought to examine the level of readiness among the pre-service Social Studies teachers to implement the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum, revealed that collectively, the pre-service Social Studies teachers saw themselves as highly ready to implement the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum. This is reflected in their understanding of the rationale/aim/philosophy, creative pedagogies to use in their instructional delivery, the core competencies enshrined, assessment skills and process skills enshrined in the Common Core Social Studies curriculum. The findings further indicate that the pre-service Social Studies teachers are fully equipped with the competencies needed to cause a change in their students through their classroom practices and engagements which are needed to navigate through the everchanging world. This result is in consonance with findings of previous studies (Rahmayanti *et al.*, 2020; Rusdin, 2018) who equally reported high readiness among pre-service teachers. This finding is, however, incongruent with the findings of Garba and Alademerin (2014) where they discovered that pre-service teachers saw themselves as not ready and, therefore, lacked the needed degree of readiness and motivation to implement the curriculum. As indicated by Yildirim and Kalman (2017) the readiness of pre-service teachers is a strong indicator of their preparedness to understand students and create an effective learning platforms through their instructional practices and engagement to trigger learning. Therefore, it could be inferred from these viewpoints that readiness of pre-service Social Studies teachers as indicated in the various indicators of readiness in this study are crucial in the measure and the effective implementation of the Common Core Social Studies curriculum in Ghana.

The focus of the second research question sought to uncover the level of self-efficacy beliefs among the pre-service Social Studies teachers to implement the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum in Ghana. The findings disclosed that the pre-service Social Studies teachers saw themselves as highly efficacious to implement the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum in Ghana. Therefore, it could be gleaned from the findings that the pre-service Social Studies teachers are well equipped and very competent in dealing with the everyday challenges that are likely to occur in the discharge of their duties. This implies that the Social Studies are able to cope and deal with the daily emotional, social, and pedagogically difficult circumstances that have potential to reduce their feelings of efficacy and professional competence. This finding resonates with findings from previous studies (Kaku & Arthur, 2021; Yildiz & Arici, 2021; Coffie & Doe, 2019). Nevertheless, the finding from this study is not in agreement with findings from previous studies (Dorsah *et al.*, 2020) where low self-efficacy was established among pre-service teachers. It is worthy of mention that the pre-service teachers who participated in this study see themselves as critical agents in the teaching of 21st century competencies and would be able to collaborate with their students and other stakeholders so as engender the acquisition of the

intended learning outcomes among students. Even though the general level of the pre-service Social Studies teachers' self-efficacy was very high, there were differences in the intensity and magnitude in terms of executing the various indicators and dimensions of self-efficacy beliefs. This calls for support to enhance and sustain their self-efficacy beliefs in teaching and learning of content as well as self-efficacy beliefs in collaboration in their instructional practices so as to promote and enhance teaching and learning of Social Studies so as to realise the benefits enshrined therein in the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies Curriculum.

In determining the relationship between pre-service Social Studies teachers' readiness and self-efficacy beliefs as captured in the third research question, the study established that generally, there was a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between pre-service Social Studies teachers' overall level of readiness and their overall level of self-efficacy beliefs implying that the level of readiness among the pre-service Social Studies teachers is critical to their level of self-efficacy beliefs and that when they demonstrate high levels of readiness, it will translate into high level of self-efficacy beliefs among them which would consequently lead to improved job performance and learning outcomes among students all other things being equal. Based on this result, this study submits that demonstrating high level of readiness in the various indicators of readiness would translate into higher confidence among the pre-service Social Studies teachers to effectively implement the Common Core Junior High School Social Studies curriculum. These finding corroborate the findings from previous studies (Yilmiz & Arici, 2021; Aybek & Aslan, 2019; Baltaoğlu & Güven, 2019) which established notable nexus and connection between teachers' readiness and their self-efficacy beliefs. The results from this research question as well as findings from other studies have proven that pre-service teachers with high levels of readiness and self-efficacy beliefs are able to trigger improved learning outcomes through the use of creative teaching pedagogies by ensuring quality instruction which positively impact effective curriculum implementation (Agormedah *et al.*, 2022; Holzberger *et al.*, 2013) and therefore, advised educational stakeholders to be concerned about prioritizing avenues that seek to enhance the readiness and self-efficacy beliefs of pre-service teachers for effective implementation of any curriculum.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings established that the pre-service Social Studies were highly ready to implement the Junior High School Common Core Social Studies curriculum. Therefore, there is ample evidence to conclude that the pre-service Social Studies teachers were highly prepared and understand the rationale/aim/philosophy of the curriculum. The study again concludes that pre-service Social Studies teachers are ready to use creative pedagogies and assessment practices that are critical in developing core competencies and bringing out the expected learning behaviour among the learners. Hence, the pre-service Social Studies teachers need support to augment and sustain their level of readiness so as to enhance teaching and learning. Therefore, the study recommends that Ghana Education Service should liaise with pre-service teacher training institutions like the University of Education, Winneba, to continuously track, monitor and sustain the readiness level of pre-service teachers even before they are recruited to teach, since it has implications on their level of self-efficacy beliefs. This could be done through regular seminars and symposiums. The findings of this study also discovered that the pre-service Social Studies teachers were highly efficacious in terms of their level of self-efficacy beliefs as well as the level of each indicator in terms of supporting students learning, classroom management, teaching and learning content and collaboration was also highly efficacious. This implies that, the pre-service Social Studies teachers were professionally well equipped to discharge their instructional responsibilities effectively. In essence, the pre-service Social Studies teachers were of high calibre who are ready to effectively and efficiently implement the curriculum to impact the learning outcomes of students. Therefore, the study recommends that pre-service Social Studies teachers should be encouraged to be dynamic and keenly participate in all continuous professional development programmes and opportunities so as to preserve and deepen their level of self-efficacy beliefs. There is enough evidence to conclude that pre-service Social Studies teachers level of readiness is a vital antecedent of their level of self-efficacy beliefs to implement the Common Core Junior High School curriculum. This

implies that good level of readiness has the potential to engender good level of self-efficacy beliefs among the pre-service Social Studies teachers. Accordingly, this study recommends that educational stakeholders should pay attention and support pre-service teachers through refresher training programmes to guide them tailor their readiness in terms of their understanding of the curriculum towards improving their self-efficacy beliefs.

Research Implications, Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies

The study has demonstrated that pre-service Social Studies teachers' level of readiness was significantly linked to their self-efficacy beliefs to implement the Junior High School Common Core Social Studies curriculum. Impliedly, the pre-service Social Studies teachers would commit themselves to instructions and programmes that are intended to enhance their readiness and self-efficacy beliefs and students learning outcomes. However, this study did not investigate the link between readiness, self-efficacy beliefs and students' academic performance. Besides, the literature has shown that teacher readiness and self-efficacy beliefs impact students' academic performance. Nevertheless, the study was delimited to pre-service Social Studies teachers in the Department of Basic Education, University of Education, Winneba who have returned from internship programme. Hence, the result could not be generalized to other pre-service teachers on lesser levels and indeed other departments as well as the entire university. Similarly, the study was unable to address the extent to which the pre-service teacher's readiness and self-efficacy beliefs gained from their training and internship programme to teaching and learning in the classroom. Therefore, it is unclear the extent to which the pre-service teachers' level of readiness and self-efficacy beliefs impact their classroom practices and students learning outcomes in the schools. Hence, it is suggested that the Department of Basic Education carryout a longitudinal study to track the self-efficacy beliefs of these pre-service teachers. Finally, future studies could explore the extent to which the pre-service teachers' readiness and self-efficacy influence the academic performance of the learners they would teach.

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