




# Global Citizenship Education in Ghana: An Evaluation of the Junior High School Social Studies Curriculum


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## Abstract

The aim of global citizenship education (GCE) is to equip individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to address global challenges. Despite its significance, GCE is often insufficiently integrated into curricula, particularly in the Global South. The purpose of the study was to examine the alignment of the junior high school standards-based social studies curriculum with GCE principles. Using a qualitative case study design and content analysis, the study explores cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioral aspects of global citizenship embedded in the curriculum. The findings indicate a strong alignment between social studies learning outcomes and GCE principles, with content incorporating universal values and action-oriented learning that addresses local and global contexts. However, the study identifies gaps in explicitly connecting local issues to global challenges. We concluded that, while Ghana's social studies curriculum provides a strong foundation for GCE, further integration of global perspectives is needed to foster a comprehensive understanding of interconnected global issues.

**Keywords:** *global citizenship, standards-based curriculum, social studies, socio-emotional learning, junior high school*

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## Introduction

Global citizenship education (GCE) has become a central focus in modern educational discourse, recognized as a transformative approach for equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to drive positive change and contribute to societal development (Assefa, 2024; Reimers, 2020). In an increasingly interconnected world, where individual actions often have far-reaching global consequences, there is a growing emphasis on collective responsibility and international collaboration to address critical challenges, such as climate change, economic instability, and public health crises (Estellés & Fischman, 2020; Pashby et al., 2020). This interconnectedness highlights the urgent need to develop citizens with a global perspective who can understand and respond effectively to these global problems (Estellés & Fischman, 2020; Reimers, 2020). Integrating GCE into formal curricula has become vital for promoting sustainable development and preparing learners to thrive in an increasingly complex and interdependent world. By ensuring that students are educated not only within their local contexts but also about global realities, education can serve as a powerful catalyst for fostering informed, empathetic, and action-oriented citizens who are equipped to engage with global challenges (Leite, 2022; Parejo et al., 2022). Structured educational interventions that encourage critical engagement with pressing global issues further position learners to make meaningful contributions to collective progress, global cooperation, and the pursuit of sustainable solutions (Parejo et al., 2022).

The fundamental goal of social studies is widely recognized as the promotion of citizenship education. Scholars within the field contend that social studies serves as a critical platform for imparting the requisite knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies essential for individuals to become responsible and engaged citizens (Dyngneson & Gross, 1999; Ross, 2006). By facilitating a comprehensive understanding of societal dynamics and nurturing a sense of civic responsibility, the discipline seeks to prepare learners who are not only well-informed but also capable and motivated to contribute meaningfully to the advancement of their local, national, and global communities (Russell & Waters, 2021; Wafa, 2022). This integrative approach underscores the pivotal role of social studies in shaping individuals who possess a profound awareness of their societal obligations and are equipped to engage with the complex challenges of contemporary life. In particular, by prioritizing the development of civic responsibility, critical thinking, and an appreciation of diverse perspectives, social studies occupies a unique position in advancing GCE (Parejo et al., 2022). It equips learners with the intellectual and practical competencies necessary to navigate and address the multifaceted issues of the interdependent global society.

Despite the significant potential of social studies to enhance GCE, the concept remains poorly integrated into curricula, with insufficient articulation, which impedes effective implementation (Parejo et al., 2022; Rapoport, 2021). Rapoport's (2021) study in the United States highlights this issue, revealing that despite increased visibility of human rights and global citizenship, state standards fail to establish a clear and cohesive connection between the two. Moreover, lacking a human rights framework within these standards has undermined efforts to promote a deeper understanding and broader acceptance of global citizenship. Similarly, Nanthawong's (2024) content analysis of the Thai social studies curriculum exposes a comparable deficiency, where the curriculum fails to adequately link its content to contemporary global social problems, prioritizing national identity over global citizenship. This indicates a more profound, systemic flaw within social studies curricula that inhibits their ability to engage meaningfully with the concept of global citizenship, thereby restricting their capacity to address the complexities of an interconnected world. Such deficiencies

indicate a broader neglect of globalization and related processes within social studies education (Rapoport, 2021). Consequently, curriculum developers must consider critically how social studies concepts can address global-local relationships and incorporate contemporary scholarship on global issues to better prepare students for the challenges of a globalized society.

Citizenship education has been a foundational element of Ghana's basic education system since 1972, primarily embedded within subjects like social studies and related subjects (Donkoh et al., 2024). Despite its longstanding presence, this educational approach has, for many years, been shaped primarily by a traditional, nation-centric concept of citizenship, with overemphasis on cultivating patriotic Ghanaian citizens. The aim of citizenship education, particularly within the objective-based social studies curriculum, had been to promote patriotism by equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for contributing to the national development of Ghana (Curriculum Research and Development Division, 2007; Donkoh et al., 2024). While fostering a sense of national identity and civic responsibility is undeniably crucial, this curriculum's narrow focus on nationalistic ideals exposed its limited capacity to prepare students adequately for the global challenges of the 21st century. Notably, the concept of global citizenship was insufficiently integrated into the curriculum (Angyagre & Quainoo, 2019; Parejo et al., 2022).

The recent educational reform in Ghana, shifting from an objective-based to a standards-based curriculum, has redefined the purpose of education, with the national pre-tertiary education framework emphasizing the development of graduates who are problem solvers, creative thinkers, and active participants and responsible citizens in both local and global societies (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2018; Yalley, 2022). This reform underscores the necessity of integrating global citizenship across all pre-tertiary school curricula, including social studies. Despite this stated emphasis, however, there are no clear guidelines for curriculum developers on effectively incorporating global citizenship into the social studies curriculum, raising concerns about the potential continuation of the nation-centric approach that has historically dominated citizenship education within the discipline. This gap raises critical questions about the extent to which the revised junior high school social studies curriculum fosters global citizenship and can adequately prepare students to engage with the complexities of the globalized world.

Generally, research on GCE in the Global South remains limited (Angyagre & Quainoo, 2019; Howard & Maxwell, 2023), with a notable gap in the Ghanaian context (Angyagre & Quainoo, 2019; Parejo et al., 2022). Although global citizenship is recognized as a key learning outcome in Ghana's national pre-tertiary education framework, empirical evidence regarding its integration into the junior high school social studies curriculum is lacking. Existing studies, such as those by Ashun (2022), Awuah (2022), Nyantakyi et al. (2020), and Kyei and Liyab (2022), have explored areas such as teachers' conceptions and self-efficacy, national cohesion, curriculum supervision challenges, and assessment practices.

These studies, however, do not address how GCE has been incorporated into the curriculum. This gap is here addressed by evaluating the junior high school social studies curriculum to determine how GCE is embedded within it. Explicitly, in this study, we examined components such as the curriculum's rationale, philosophy, aims, profile of expected learning behaviors, pedagogical approaches, and core competencies. Beyond addressing the scarcity of research in the Ghanaian context, this study contributes to the broader field by providing a context-specific perspective for understanding how GCE is operationalized within national education frameworks in a Global South setting. Furthermore, it provides practical guidance for social studies educators and curriculum developers seeking to strengthen the transformative potential of citizenship education in preparing learners for active participation in both local and global communities. The social significance of this study lies in its focus on the crucial role of the social studies curriculum in systematically developing students' civic consciousness, intercultural competence, and global competencies, capacities that are essential for fostering inclusive and sustainable societies.

## Literature Review

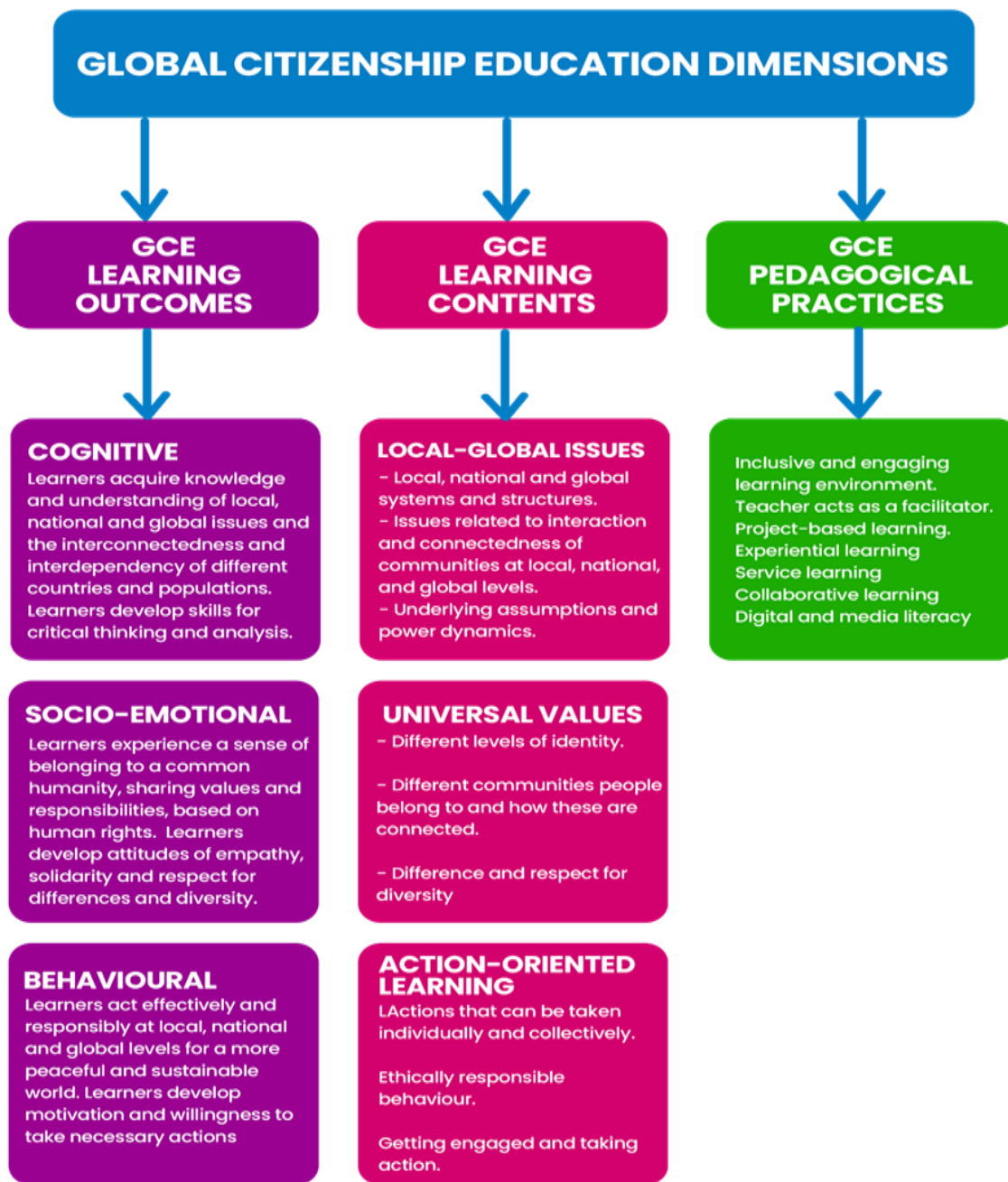
### Conceptual Framework

We developed the framework for this study based on the core conceptual dimensions of GCE as outlined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO; 2015). These conceptual domains guide learning outcomes, topics, and pedagogical approaches to GCE. These principles informed the formulation of the research question and provided a robust framework for data collection and analysis. UNESCO (2015) defines GCE as a comprehensive paradigm for citizenship education aimed at equipping learners with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary to contribute to the creation of a peaceful, secure, inclusive, and sustainable world. To this end, UNESCO has delineated three key domains of GCE learning outcomes and objectives, each emphasizing competencies, skills, and values critical for global citizenship. These domains also suggest thematic areas and topics through which GCE concepts can be taught alongside pedagogical practices that foster GCE. For this study, these conceptual dimensions provided us with a benchmark against which the learning outcomes, topics, and pedagogical approaches recommended in the junior high school standards-based social studies curriculum were evaluated. The dimensions are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows UNESCO's (2015) dimensions of GCE, focusing on the cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioral domains of learning. Cognitively, it emphasizes equipping learners with knowledge of local, national, and global systems and their interconnectedness. This domain prioritizes the development of critical thinking and analytical skills to enable learners to interrogate societal structures and power dynamics, thereby fostering an in-depth understanding of global issues. The socio-emotional dimension seeks to cultivate values like empathy, solidarity, and respect for diversity, nurturing a shared sense of humanity and collective responsibility. Complementing these, the behavioral dimension focuses on motivating ethically responsible actions and proactive engagement in initiatives that promote peace, sustainability, and social justice across multiple societal levels. Integral to this framework are pedagogical practices that foster inclusive, participatory, and dynamic learning environments. These practices reposition the teacher as a facilitator who guides learners through collaborative and critical knowledge construction. Innovative instructional approaches, such as project-based and experiential learning, immerse learners in real-world scenarios, bridging theoretical knowledge and practical applications. Complementary methods, including service learning and collaborative activities, encourage teamwork and collective problem solving to address pressing local and global challenges. Together, these pedagogical strategies ensure learners are actively engaged, critically reflective, and meaningfully involved in tackling contemporary issues.

Furthermore, the framework incorporates digital and media literacy, equipping learners with the skills to evaluate and navigate the digital information landscape critically. This inclusion ensures that students are informed consumers of knowledge and active participants in global discourse. The framework also integrates identity concepts, emphasizing respect for diversity and the importance of interconnected communities. By prioritizing individual and collective actions, learners are inspired to adopt ethically responsible behaviors and contribute to sustainable and peaceful coexistence. Collectively, these elements form a coherent, dynamic, and scholarly robust foundation for implementing GCE, empowering learners to engage critically, empathize deeply, and act responsibly in an interconnected global landscape.

**Figure 1.** *Conceptual Framework of the Study*



*Note:* Source: UNESCO (2015).

## Research Questions

1. How do social studies learning outcomes align with the domains of GCE?
2. How are the standards-based social studies curriculum contents developed to support GCE?
3. What pedagogical approaches recommended in the standards-based social studies curriculum are essential for fostering GCE?

## Methods

### Research Design

We adopted a qualitative single-case-study design and explicitly focused on documentary analysis to address the research questions. This will strengthen the knowledge base and advance understanding of document analysis as a qualitative research method (Morgan, 2022). Social studies was selected as the case for this study because it serves as a critical subject for integrating GCE elements within basic education in Ghana. This allowed for a focused and in-depth evaluation of how GCE principles are reflected in the junior high school standards-based social studies curriculum.

### Source of Data

The primary focus of this study was the junior high school standards-based social studies curriculum document prepared by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. We purposively selected this document as the sole source of data for analysis due to its central role in guiding the teaching and learning of social studies at the junior high school level. By concentrating on this document, the aim was to uncover the integration of GCE principles within its learning outcomes, content, and pedagogical frameworks.

### Data Collection

We conducted data collection exclusively using secondary sources, specifically the junior high school standards-based social studies curriculum document obtained from official National Council for Curriculum and Assessment publications and online repositories. This process involved systematically evaluating the curriculum's learning outcomes, topics, and instructional approaches to identify and interpret the integration of GCE elements.

### Data Analysis

We analyzed the qualitative data from the curriculum document using Mayring's (2000) qualitative content analysis procedure. This approach involved identifying relevant sections of the curriculum document, such as specific learning outcomes, topics, and pedagogical guidelines. The data were then coded using thematic categories created based on UNESCO's (2015) guidelines for GCE. Through this systematic coding process, we identified and analyzed themes and elements of GCE embedded within the curriculum. The analysis focused on uncovering explicit and implicit representations of GCE principles within the curriculum's structure and content.

### Study Rigor

We employed multiple strategies to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. First, we conducted two peer debriefing sessions with an expert in social studies education and curriculum evaluation to review and refine the coding categories and thematic interpretations. These sessions ensured alignment

with the research questions while integrating alternative perspectives and critical feedback. During the first session, the expert recommended the inclusion of the rationale and philosophy of the subject as presented in the curriculum, a significant area initially omitted from the analysis. Second, expert review was incorporated into the methodology. An independent expert in curriculum design and GCE, who was not specialized in social studies, evaluated the methodological approach, coding strategies, and thematic conclusions. This external perspective helped control researcher bias and ensured that key domains of GCE were adequately captured in the analysis. The feedback from this expert led to further refinement of the analytical process, enhancing the overall rigor and validity of the study. Third, we maintained an audit trail throughout the research process. This included detailed documentation of decisions made during data collection and analysis, coding procedures, and revisions informed by peer and expert feedback. The comprehensive record provided transparency and reinforced the credibility and dependability of the study.

## Results

### Alignment of Learning Outcomes With Global Citizenship Education Domains

The alignment between social studies learning outcomes and GCE domains is deeply rooted in the curriculum's rationale and philosophy and articulated competencies outlined in the expected learning behaviors and core competencies. Table 1 indicates that the curriculum explicitly identifies social studies as a multidisciplinary field that fosters learners' acquisition of the knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills requisite for responsible, innovative, and globally informed citizenship. This foundational positioning resonates with GCE's core objectives, which emphasize cultivating critical thinking, global responsibility, cultural sensitivity, and the capacity to address complex global challenges. The curriculum rationale underscores social studies as a medium for addressing pressing societal challenges, emphasizing its role in equipping learners with interdisciplinary perspectives and problem-solving capabilities. This orientation mirrors GCE's emphasis on empowering learners to engage critically and constructively with real-world issues. Additionally, the curriculum emphasizes competencies such as leadership, communication, creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, cultural identity, digital literacy, and global citizenship. These core competencies are foundational to GCE's framework, particularly in preparing learners to navigate and respond effectively to the interconnectedness of contemporary societies.

**Table 1.** *Alignment of Social Studies Rationale in Ghanaian Junior High Schools With GCE Learning Outcomes*

Rationale (breakdown)	GCE domain	GCE learning outcome
Social Studies is a multi-disciplinary subject that equips learners with knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills	Cognitive/ socio-emotional	Learners acquire knowledge and understanding of local, national and global issues and develop attitudes of empathy and solidarity.
Social Studies will enable learners to become active, informed, innovative, and responsible citizens.	Behavioral	Learners act effectively and responsibly at local, national, and global levels for a more peaceful and sustainable world.
Social Studies addresses challenges threatening Ghanaian society through problem analysis and solution seeking.	Cognitive/behavioral	Learners develop skills for critical thinking and analysis and a willingness to take necessary action.

It allows the learner to apply concepts and generalizations to personal and societal problems.	Cognitive	Learners acquire understanding of systems and structures and develop analytical skills.
It allows learners to explore their immediate environment and the world further.	Cognitive	Learners understand interconnectedness and interdependency of countries and populations.
Social Studies focuses on curiosity, critical thinking, problem solving, and competencies for personal development and leadership.	Cognitive/behavioral	Learners develop critical thinking skills and act responsibly at all levels.
It enhances communication, collaboration, creativity, innovation, digital literacy, cultural identity and global citizenship.	Socio-emotional/ behavioral	Learners respect diversity, develop empathy, and demonstrate motivation to engage in global citizenship.
Social Studies aims to help learners become effective, active, and patriotic citizens.	Behavioral/ socio-emotional	Learners act responsibly and feel a sense of belonging to a common humanity with shared responsibilities.

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“Social Studies is a multi-disciplinary subject that aims to equip learners with knowledge, attitudes, values and skills that will enable them to become active, informed, innovative, and responsible citizens. Social Studies addresses the challenges or problems that confront and threaten the survival of Ghanaian society. It does so by allowing the learner to apply concepts, theories, and generalisations from various relevant disciplines to analyse, investigate, and come up with appropriate solutions to personal and societal problems. It allows learners to explore their immediate environment and the world further. Therefore, Social Studies specifically focuses on developing the learners’ curiosity, critical thinking, problem-solving skills and competencies for personal development and leadership. Besides, it seeks to enhance communication and collaboration, creativity and innovation, digital literacy, cultural identity and global citizenship. The inclusion of Social Studies in the Common Core Programme of the Pre-tertiary Education Curriculum is intended to enable learners to acquire relevant tools to become effective, active and patriotic citizens.” (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2020, p. xi)

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Further alignment is evident in the curriculum’s philosophical underpinnings shown in Table 2, which draw on social constructivist and realist principles. This approach prioritizes active, learner-centered processes that encourage the construction of knowledge through engagement with environmental, social, and global contexts. The philosophy of the subject promotes the development of a holistic worldview, fostering learners’ appreciation of cultural diversity, environmental stewardship, and adaptability to globalization and technological advancements. These tenets align closely with GCE’s principles of fostering ethical, globally conscious individuals capable of engaging with diverse cultural and environmental issues. Significantly, the curriculum’s philosophy explicitly integrates global citizenship within its educational goals. It emphasizes learners’ dual identity as both national and global citizens, highlighting the interconnectedness of local and global contexts. This dual emphasis reflects GCE’s objective of fostering learners who can balance local belonging with global awareness and actively contribute to addressing global challenges ethically and responsibly.

An analysis of the curriculum’s profile of expected learning behaviors revealed significant congruence with UNESCO’s (2015) principles of GCE. These behaviors encompass cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral dimensions that support the development of global citizenship competencies. Anchored in Bloom’s Taxonomy, the cognitive expectations range from foundational knowledge acquisition to higher-order skills, such as synthesis, evaluation, and application. This progression aligns with GCE’s emphasis on critical analysis and problem solving to address local and global challenges. Attitudinally, the curriculum fosters

tolerance, respect for evidence, empathy, and environmental awareness, which are pivotal for nurturing responsible and informed global citizens. The curriculum also emphasizes values such as cooperation, responsibility, and environmental stewardship, reflecting GCE's focus on ethical and collaborative responses to sustainability and social inequality. Notably, the profile's inclusion of patriotism and national development reflects efforts to balance local and global citizenship. Behavioral expectations, such as cooperation and responsible civic action, further reinforce the alignment with GCE by fostering active participation in local and global communities. The emphasis on environmental awareness within the profile signals a commitment to sustainability and global civic responsibility, establishing a robust framework for integrating GCE principles into the teaching and learning of social studies in junior high schools in Ghana.

**Table 2.** *Alignment of Social Studies Teaching Philosophy in Ghanaian Junior High Schools With GCE Learning Outcomes*

Philosophy (breakdown)	GCE domain	GCE learning outcome
Curriculum promotes learning through social constructivism and social realism, where learners construct knowledge actively.	Cognitive	Learners develop skills for critical thinking and analysis.
Learners take responsibility for the environment.	Behavioral	Learners act effectively and responsibly at local, national, and global levels for a more peaceful and sustainable world.
Learners appreciate the richness and diversity of Ghana's culture.	Socio-emotional	Learners develop respect for differences and diversity.
Learners respond to globalization, technological advancement, and digital literacy.	Cognitive/behavioral	Learners acquire understanding of global systems and structures and develop motivation and willingness to act.
Curriculum fosters a holistic worldview, aiming to develop learners as creative, honest, and responsible citizens.	Socio-emotional/ behavioral	Learners experience a sense of belonging to a common humanity and act responsibly.
Learners make independent and healthy choices about their development and well-being.	Behavioral	Learners develop motivation and willingness to take necessary actions for personal and communal well-being.
Learners develop awareness of themselves and their environment, becoming national and global citizens.	Cognitive/ socio-emotional	Learners acquire understanding of local-global interconnectedness and develop empathy and identity.
Learners use technology to express beliefs and strengthen moral values.	Behavioral/ socio-emotional	Learners engage responsibly with digital tools and express values, beliefs, and ethical behavior.
Teachers must promote higher-order thinking in learners.	Cognitive	Learners develop skills for critical thinking and independent judgment.

“The Social Studies curriculum will enable learners to develop knowledge, understanding, skills and competencies through a combination of social constructivism and social realism. These theories emphasise learning as an active process where the learner constructs knowledge rather than acquiring it. The curriculum is designed to provide learners with opportunities to expand, change, enhance and modify ways in which they view the world. Teachers will adopt thematic and creative pedagogical approaches that engage learners in a rich and rigorous inquiry-driven environment, such as talk for

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learning, project-based learning, games, modelling, questioning, brain- storming, demonstration and role-play which are necessary for achieving learning centred classrooms and developing learners into creative, honest and responsible citizens.” (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2020, p. xii)

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Nonetheless, a closer examination of the strands and sub-strands in the junior high school social studies curriculum, as presented in Table 3, suggests a mixed pattern of alignment with global citizenship competencies. While the emphasis on critical thinking and problem solving and communication and collaboration appears to be relatively consistent across all the strands and sub-strands, indicating a string of alignment with GCE’s cognitive and participatory dimensions, other equally essential competencies receive less consistent attention. Notably, skills such as creativity and innovation and cultural identity and global citizenship, which are central to the GCE framework, appear to be unevenly represented. For example, cultural identity and global citizenship are not clearly emphasized in sub-strands where they would be expected, such as self-identity, tourism, and socialization, raising concerns about how effectively the curriculum supports global awareness and cultural sensitivity in practice. Likewise, creativity and innovation are not prominently featured in areas such as family life, population, and conflict management, where opportunities for creative engagement might otherwise be leveraged. While digital literacy shows some presence, particularly within environmentally themed and mapping units, its integration remains moderate, rather than robust. These observations point to a partial alignment with GCE domains and suggest that, while some core competencies are given prominence, others may require further curricular strengthening to achieve a more balanced and holistic approach.

**Table 3.** *Distribution of 21st-Century Skills Across Strands and Sub-Strands in the Junior High School Social Studies Curriculum in Ghana*

Strand	Sub-strand	CP	CC	PL	CI	CG	DL
JHS 1							
Environment	Environmental Issues	✓	✓	✓	✓	*	✓
	Mapping Skills	✓	✓	✓	*	*	✓
	Understanding Our Natural World	✓	✓	*	✓	*	✓
Family Life	Adolescent Reproductive Health	✓	✓	✓	*	*	*
	Socialisation	✓	✓	✓	*	*	✓
	Population	✓	✓	✓	*	✓	✓
Sense of Purpose	Self-Identity	✓	✓	✓	*	*	*
Law and Order	Citizenship and Human Rights	✓	✓	✓	✓	*	*
Socio-Economic Development	Human Resource Development	✓	✓	✓	*	*	*
	Financial and Investment Issues	✓	✓	*	✓	*	*
	Tourism	✓	✓	*	✓	*	*
Nationhood	Independent Ghana	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
JHS 2							
Environment	Environmental Issues	✓	✓	✓	*	*	✓
	Mapping Skills	✓	✓	*	*	*	✓
	Understanding Our Natural World	✓	✓	✓	*	*	✓
Family Life	The Family	✓	✓	*	*	*	✓
	Population	✓	✓	*	*	*	✓
Sense of Purpose	The Individual and the Community	✓	✓	*	✓	*	✓
Law and Order	Citizenship and Human Rights	✓	✓	*	*	*	✓
	Conflict Prevention and Management	✓	✓	*	*	*	*
Socio-Economic Development	Financial and Investment Issues	✓	✓	*	*	*	*
	Tourism	✓	✓	*	✓	*	✓
Nationhood	The Republics	✓	✓	*	✓	*	✓

*Note:* ✓ = Skill is explicitly emphasized or aligned with exemplar(s); \* = Skill is not emphasized or aligned with exemplar(s); CP = critical thinking and problem solving; CC = communication and collaboration; PL = personal development and leadership; CI = creativity and innovation; CG = cultural identity and global citizenship; DL = digital literacy.

### Alignment of Learning Contents With Global Citizenship Education Domains

Building on the established alignment between the learning outcomes and the elements of GCE, we conducted a more in-depth analysis to examine how the curriculum's strands and sub-strands are designed to support GCE. Guided by UNESCO's framework for GCE learning content, the analysis focused on the sub-strands content standards, indicators, and exemplars, as shown in Table 4. Special attention was given to how these components are structured to address local-global issues, advance universal values, and encourage action-oriented learning.

**Table 4.** *Alignment of Curriculum Learning Content with Global Citizenship*

Strand	Sub-strand	Content standard	Indicator	Exemplar	GCE prescribed content
Environment	Environmental Issues	B7.1.1.1 Demonstrate skills in dealing with environmental challenges.	B7.1.1.1.1. Examine ways of dealing with sanitation challenges in the environment.	Identify some environmental problems, including sanitation.	Behavioral: Action-oriented learning Action that can be taken individually and collectively Ethically responsible behavior
		B9.1.1.2 Evaluate the sources and ways of conserving energy.	B9.1.1.2.1. Assess global sources and the means of conserving energy.	Identify global energy sources and conservation, such as Ghana, United Kingdom, Germany. In groups, discuss why Ghana sometimes imports energy.	Cognitive: Local and global issues Local, national, and global systems and structures Interconnectedness and interdependency of countries Interconnectedness of global demographic trends
	Understanding Our Natural World	B7.1.3.1 Show understanding of the world around us.	B7.1.3.1.1. Examine major physical features of the earth.	Identify some major features of the earth such as mountain ranges, rivers, oceans, hot deserts and tropical rainforest.	
Family Life	Population	B7.2.4.1 Analyse population structure in Ghana and its related issues.	B7.2.3.1.1 Examine the components of population growth.	Compare Ghana's population growth with that of some other countries in Africa and in other countries in the world.	Cognitive: Local and global issues Local, national, and global issues Demographic and development disparities between countries
			B8.2.4.1.1. Compare the population structure of high-income and middle/low income countries.	Examine the population structure of any developed country in the world, for example, China, Norway, Sweden, Singapore, Japan, and Canada. Discuss the population structures of low-, middle- and high-income countries.	

Nationhood	The Republics	B7.6.1.1. Demonstrate understanding of how Ghana became an independent nation.	B7.6.1.1.4 Analyse the nature of government from 1957 to 1960.	Discuss the power-sharing arrangement between the British government and elected Ghanaian officials. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of power-sharing from March 1957 to July 1960.	Cognitive: Local and global issues Local, national, and global issues Underlying assumptions and power dynamics
Law and Order	Citizenship and Human Rights	B8.4.1.1 Investigate the rights and responsibilities of a citizen.	B8.4.1.1.1 Examine the importance of human rights in the Ghanaian society.	Explain the concept “human rights.” Examine the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights.	Socio-emotional: Universal values Human rights Respect for diversity and dignity
	Peace and Security in Our Nation	B9.4.2.1 Assess the role of peace and security in national development.	B9.4.2.1.1. Examine the relevance of peace and security in our community.	With the use of video and pictures, compare a country destroyed by conflict and another that has enjoyed a long period of peace.	Behavioral: Action-oriented learning Getting engaged and taking action Acting for peace and sustainability Different levels of identity Belonging to common humanity
Sense of Purpose	Self-Identity	B7.3.1.1 Show understanding of self as a unique individual.	B7.3.1.1.1. Exhibit knowledge of self-identity.	Identify one’s strengths and weaknesses as unique individual and discuss with peers.	Socio-emotional: Universal values Difference and respect for diversity Belonging to common humanity

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*Note:* Source: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2020).

Regarding how the learning contents support local-global discourse, the unit analysis revealed that the curriculum demonstrates a discernible commitment to addressing local, national, and global systems and structures. However, the integration of global perspectives is uneven and insufficient. For instance, within the Environment strand, content standards such as examining sanitation challenges and energy sources in Ghana effectively foster awareness of local environmental issues. Nevertheless, the curriculum often presents connections to global contexts implicitly rather than explicitly. A sub-strand like Understanding Our Natural World encourages learners to engage with global physical features, such as mountain ranges, rivers, and oceans but lacks the depth necessary to explore the interconnectedness of these features with local, regional, and global environments. For example, while learners will identify rivers such as the Volta and the Nile, the curriculum does not critically require them to examine how shared water resources influence socio-economic relationships across nations. The Family Life strand incorporates themes of population growth and structures, offering learners opportunities to compare population trends in Ghana with those in other countries, such as Japan and Canada. This comparative framework aligns with UNESCO's emphasis on examining global systems within the GCE context. However, the curriculum does not explicitly interrogate the underlying assumptions or critically engage with the power dynamics shaping these trends, such as economic disparities, historical colonial legacies, and global inequities. While the strand reflects an effort to link local and global interactions, it lacks the analytical depth required to connect local issues with broader regional and global contexts. This limitation constrains its capacity to fully realize UNESCO's cognitive dimension of GCE, which emphasizes fostering a critical awareness of interconnected systems and their inequities.

Furthermore, the curriculum strongly emphasizes universal values, such as respect for diversity, tolerance, and peaceful co-existence, mainly through the strands Law and Order and Family Life. In the sub-strand Citizenship and Human Rights, learners investigate the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and discuss its significance in Ghanaian society. This depicts the potential to foster an appreciation for shared human values while grounding them in the local context. The strand Sense of Purpose further reinforces values related to identity and belonging. Activities on self-identity and cultural awareness promote learners' understanding of their roles within their communities and the broader global context. For example, learners are meant to explore the importance of knowing one's strengths and weaknesses while being encouraged to respect diversity in cultural practices. The curriculum also integrates action-oriented learning by emphasizing practical, hands-on activities, encouraging learners to engage with real-world challenges. For instance, in the Environment strand, learners will be guided to create posters on energy conservation and participate in community clean-up projects, promoting ethically responsible behavior at the local level. In the sub-strand Peace and Security in Our Nation, learners will use videos and pictures to compare countries affected by conflict with those that have enjoyed long periods of peace. This activity aligns with UNESCO's behavioral dimension by fostering critical reflection and inspiring collective action toward peace building.

### **Alignment of Pedagogical Approaches With Global Citizenship Education Domains**

In this study, the researchers evaluated the pedagogical approaches recommended in the standards-based social studies curriculum and their potential to foster GCE. By applying UNESCO's (2015) global citizenship pedagogical framework, we identified that the curriculum incorporates a variety of pedagogical approaches that align closely with the principles of GCE. These alignments come to life through the philosophical foundation of teaching and learning the subject, the learning contexts it suggests, and the innovative pedagogical methods it advocates. They are further reinforced through the provided exemplars. The philosophical underpinnings of the curriculum combine elements of social constructivism and social realism, reflecting the principles of UNESCO's GCE framework. Social constructivism emphasizes the importance of creating an inclusive and engaging learning environment where learners actively construct their understanding. This approach aligns with GCE's focus on fostering critical thinking and providing a learning

space that encourages students to connect content to their lives and communities. Social realism, which highlights the importance of engaging students with real-world issues, further strengthens the alignment with GCE. It promotes the development of critical thinking skills, enabling students to grapple with social realities. The curriculum's emphasis on incorporating the community as a context for teaching and learning aligns with GCE's service learning component. It encourages students to engage in projects that address local issues and promote awareness through volunteerism.

As depicted in Table 5, the curriculum further supports GCE by recommending pedagogical approaches that position the teacher as a facilitator of learning. In this role, teachers are expected to guide students toward ownership of their learning and foster an environment where exploration, inquiry, and collaboration are central. This approach aligns with GCE's emphasis on teachers as catalysts for critical thinking and self-directed learning rather than mere knowledge disseminators. Additionally, there is a strong focus on inclusivity, with the curriculum recommending differentiated instruction and scaffolding techniques to address students' diverse needs and abilities. Tasks must be tailored to learners' readiness and interests, ensuring equitable participation and enabling all students to engage meaningfully with the content. This focus on inclusion and equity directly supports UNESCO's recommendation for an inclusive and engaging learning environment, which is critical for promoting GCE.

Moreover, integrating digital technologies is a key feature of the curriculum. The internet is a tool for improving students' digital competencies and engaging them in informed discussions relevant to the digital age. This aligns with GCE's focus on preparing students to participate in a globally connected world, where digital literacy is essential for active and informed citizenship. In line with its learner-centered focus, the curriculum incorporates a variety of instructional methods, including role-playing, dramatization, debate, group discussions, and projects. These methods engage students actively and encourage the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are vital for GCE. Additionally, the curriculum highlights experiential and problem-based learning approaches, immersing students in real-world challenges and encouraging them to develop solutions through hands-on experience.

**Table 5.** *Alignment of Social Studies Curriculum With GCE Pedagogical Demands*

Recommended pedagogical approaches	Excerpt <sup>a</sup>	GCE pedagogical demands	Alignment description
Learning context	<p>“The CCP places emphasis on engagement of learners in the classroom activities and projects (in and outside classroom). These projects can involve individual or group tasks which all learners are required to complete by the end of Basic 9. The CCP project provides learners with contexts to demonstrate creativity and inventiveness in various areas of human endeavour. Community service offers an opportunity for learners to nurture, love and care for, and solve problems in their community” (p. ix).</p>	Project-based learning, service learning, collaborative learning	The emphasis on classroom and community projects aligns with project-based learning, encouraging students to address real-world issues creatively. Community service directly corresponds to service learning, fostering civic responsibility. Group tasks support collaborative learning, promoting teamwork and collective problem solving and supporting key GCE competencies.
Learning-centered pedagogy	<p>“The Curriculum encourages the creation of a learning-centred classroom with the opportunity for learners to engage in meaningful “hands-on” activities that bring home to the learner what they learn in school and what they know from outside of school” (p. xxiii).</p> <p>“The teacher as a facilitator needs to create a learning environment that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. makes learners feel safe and accepted;</li> <li>2. helps learners to interact with varied sources of information in a variety of ways;</li> <li>3. helps learners to identify a problem suitable for investigation through project work;</li> <li>4. connects the problem with the context of the learners’ world so that it presents realistic opportunities for learning</li> <li>5. organises the subject-matter around the problem, not the subject;</li> <li>6. gives learners responsibilities for defining their learning experiences and planning to solve the problem;</li> </ol>	<p>Inclusive and engaging learning environment, teacher as facilitator, experiential learning, collaborative learning</p> <p>Inclusive and engaging learning environment</p>	<p>This approach creates an inclusive environment by ensuring safety and acceptance, with the teacher as a facilitator guiding student-led learning. Hands-on activities align with experiential learning, connecting classroom knowledge to real-world contexts. Collaborative problem solving and planning support GCE’s collaborative learning goals.</p> <p>Differentiated pedagogy ensures inclusivity by tailoring tasks and support to individual learner needs, aligning with GCE’s focus on inclusive learning environments that respect diverse abilities and backgrounds, enabling all students to develop global citizenship competencies.</p>

7. encourages learners to collaborate in learning; and
8. expects all learners to demonstrate the results of their learning through a product or performance” (p. xxiii).

Differentiated pedagogy	“Differentiation as a way of ensuring each learner benefits adequately from the delivery of the curriculum can be achieved in the classroom through task, support from the Guidance and Counselling Unit and learning outcomes” (p. xxiv).	Teacher as facilitator, inclusive and engaging learning environment	Scaffolding supports the teacher as a facilitator by guiding students through structured, accessible learning steps. Providing multiple explanations and exemplars creates an inclusive environment, ensuring all learners can engage with complex global citizenship concepts, such as sustainability or cultural diversity.
Scaffolding	<p>“Common scaffolding strategies available to the teacher are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. giving learners a simplified version of a lesson, assignment or reading, and gradually increasing the complexity, difficulty, or sophistication over time;</li> <li>2. describing or illustrating a concept, problem or process in multiple ways to ensure understanding;</li> <li>3. giving learners an exemplar or a model of an assignment and asking them to complete;</li> <li>4. giving learners a vocabulary lesson before they read a difficult text;</li> <li>5. describing the purpose of a learning activity clearly and the learning goals they are expected to achieve; and</li> <li>6. describing explicitly how the new lesson builds on the knowledge and skills learners were taught in a previous lesson” (p. xxv).</li> </ol>	Inclusive and engaging learning environment, experiential learning	Inclusion aligns directly with GCE’s inclusive learning environment by addressing diverse needs and backgrounds. Linking learning to students’ experiences supports experiential learning, making GCE relevant and meaningful by connecting to real-world contexts and personal capacities.
Inclusion	“The Curriculum suggests a variety of approaches that addresses learners’ diversity and their special needs in the learning process including addressing stereotypes that seek to limit the learners’ interest and abilities. When these approaches are effectively used in lessons, they will contribute to the full development of the learning potential of	Digital and media literacy, inclusive and engaging learning environment	ICT integration directly supports digital and media literacy by enabling students to access, analyze, and organize information online, fostering critical evaluation skills essential for global citizenship. Multimedia use creates an

every learner. Learners have individual needs and learning experiences and different levels of motivation for learning. Therefore, planning, delivery and reflection on daily learning experiences should take these differences into consideration. The curriculum therefore promotes:

1. learning that is linked to the learners' background and to their prior experiences, interests, potential and capacities;
2. learning that is meaningful because it aligns with learners' ability (e.g. learning that is oriented towards developing general capabilities and solving the practical problems of everyday life); and
3. the active involvement of the learners in the selection and organisation of learning experiences, making them aware of their importance and also enabling them to assess their own learning outcomes" (p. xxiv).

ICT

"Information Communication Technology (ICT) has been integrated into the Social Studies curriculum as part of the core of education, alongside reading, writing and numeracy. Thus, the curriculum is designed to use ICT as a teaching and learning tool to enhance deep and independent learning. For instance, the teacher in certain instances is directed to use multimedia to support the teaching and learning process." (p. xxv).

The use of ICT as a teaching and learning tool is to provide learners access to large quantities of information online and offline. It also provides the framework for analysing data to investigate patterns and relationships in a computing context. Once learners have made their findings, ICT can help them organise, edit and print information in many different ways" (p. xxvi).

Digital and media literacy, inclusive and engaging learning environment

engaging learning environment, enhancing inclusivity through diverse resource access.

ICT integration directly supports digital and media literacy by enabling students to access, analyze, and organize information online, fostering critical evaluation skills essential for global citizenship. Multimedia use creates an engaging learning environment, enhancing inclusivity through diverse resource access.

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*Note:* GCE = global citizenship education; ICT = information communication technology.

<sup>a</sup> Excerpt taken from the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2020).

## Discussion

Social studies has long been recognized as a pivotal discipline for fostering global citizenship, providing a platform for developing knowledge, values, and skills necessary for active participation in an interconnected world (Li Manni, 2023). This study's findings reveal a fundamental alignment between Ghana's junior high school social studies curriculum and the principles of GCE. In examining the curriculum's emphasis on critical thinking, global responsibility, cultural awareness, and problem solving, it becomes clear that social studies plays a critical role in preparing students to engage with the complexities of the 21st century. A key feature of the curriculum is its integration of cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioral competencies. These elements align with UNESCO's (2015) vision of global citizenship, which emphasizes the development of knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills essential for ethical participation in local and global communities.

Including interdisciplinary knowledge acquisition in the learning outcomes strengthens students' ability to think critically and solve problems, which are crucial competencies in GCE's cognitive dimension. By fostering such intellectual growth, the curriculum enables students to understand better and engage with global challenges, such as climate change, social inequality, and human rights (Oxfam, 2006; Pandey, 2024). Notably, the findings indicate that the curriculum is theoretically aligned with GCE and practically designed to develop the competencies required for responsible global citizenship. The curriculum ensures that students gain the practical skills necessary to address pressing global issues through competencies such as critical thinking, communication, creativity, collaboration, and leadership. This emphasis on practical skills enables students to engage critically and constructively with real-world challenges, supporting GCE's objective of fostering learners capable of making informed and responsible decisions.

The curriculum's emphasis on socio-emotional and behavioral competencies deepens its alignment with GCE. Promoting values such as environmental stewardship, tolerance, respect for diversity, and social responsibility embodies the socio-emotional dimension of GCE (Sun, 2020; UNESCO, 2015; Welply et al., 2019). These values are pivotal for nurturing empathy and cultural sensitivity, empowering students to engage ethically with global challenges while appreciating cultural diversity. This suggests the extent to which the social studies subject contributes to Ghana's commitment to preparing ethically aware and globally conscious individuals through this dual focus on cognitive, behavioral, and socio-emotional development (Bosio, 2024; Bryan, 2024). Furthermore, integrating socio-emotional learning competencies further enhances the curriculum's alignment with global educational frameworks. According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (2019), a curriculum grounded in global citizenship philosophy must foster self-awareness, social awareness, and responsible decision-making. The curriculum's emphasis on empathy, tolerance, and environmental responsibility mirrors these socio-emotional learning principles, creating a balanced approach and prioritizing academic achievement and emotional intelligence. Through this approach, the curriculum holds the potential to equip students to navigate complex global challenges with ethical awareness (Bosio, 2024; Bryan, 2024; Richerme, 2022). Moreover, the curriculum is a holistic educational framework that blends cognitive, behavioral, and socio-emotional competencies. It addresses students' intellectual needs while preparing them to engage with global citizenship's moral and ethical dimensions. This comprehensive vision of education aligns with the core principles of GCE, fostering learners who are informed, empathetic, and capable of making responsible decisions on both local and global scales.

The findings for research question two reveal that the social studies curriculum integrates local and global themes, universal values, and action-oriented learning, aligning with the goals of GCE (UNESCO, 2015). By addressing local issues such as environmental challenges and population trends, the curriculum enables students to connect with their immediate surroundings while fostering an understanding of broader global

contexts (Reddy, 2021). This approach aligns with UNESCO's (2015) emphasis on education, promoting awareness of the interconnectedness between local and global issues. The curriculum lays a foundation for fostering this critical awareness by grounding students in local realities. However, the curriculum's learning content falls short of explicitly linking local issues to global contexts. For instance, topics such as sanitation and energy sources are framed primarily within a local perspective, with limited emphasis on their connections to global environmental crises or international cooperative efforts. This omission highlights a persistent gap in the curriculum's design, undermining its ability to meet GCE's demands fully. Angyagre and Quainoo (2019) also identified similar deficiencies in the objective-based social studies curriculum, noting a lack of integration of key global citizenship elements. The absence of an explicit global perspective limits students' understanding of how local and global challenges are interconnected. As a result, their ability to recognize how local actions contribute to or are shaped by global dynamics may remain superficial, reducing their capacity to engage meaningfully with global citizenship principles.

The findings from the study reveal a strategic integration of pedagogical approaches within the social studies curriculum that align with the principles of GCE. A deeper analysis underscores that these approaches transcend conventional instructional techniques, representing a transformative educational philosophy to cultivate globally conscious and socially responsible learners. The curriculum's philosophical alignment with social constructivism and social realism signals a deliberate shift toward an education that is both learner-centered and contextually grounded (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2020). As Saleem et al. (2021) emphasized, social constructivism fosters an active learning environment where students co-construct knowledge through dialogue and collaboration. This approach encourages the curriculum to move beyond traditional rote learning by embedding critical reflection and personal relevance into the educational process. In parallel, social realism grounds learning in real-world contexts, urging students to confront societal complexities (Granados-Sánchez, 2023; Rata et al., 2019).

The social realist approach emphasizes engaging students with real-world issues, societal structures, and the multifaceted nature of the world (Granados-Sánchez, 2023). By situating education within students' lived experiences and broader social realities, the social studies curriculum becomes more meaningful and relevant, offering learner-centered pedagogical approaches capable of engaging students with the critical challenges of their communities and the world. This suggests that the standards-based social studies curriculum offers a promising guideline for promoting GCE. Its philosophical foundation, community-oriented approach, and emphasis on inclusivity and active learning position it as a transformative tool for equipping students with the competencies needed for global engagement.

However, beneath these broad alignments lies a nuanced curricular logic, one that reflects a deliberate and context-sensitive adaptation of global competencies. Rather than aiming for uniform or exhaustive integration of all global citizenship skills, curriculum developers exercised thoughtful discretion in determining which 21st-century competencies to emphasize, where they should be placed, and how they should be operationalized within the curriculum. This selective emphasis should not be interpreted solely as a limitation but rather as a strategic localization of GCE. It demonstrates how the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2020) asserts curricular sovereignty in committing to a global educational framework such as GCE. In doing so, the curriculum reflects a commitment to contextual relevance and national identity, ensuring that the principles of global citizenship are not uncritically adopted but meaningfully interpreted and embedded within local pedagogical realities.

## Limitations

The study relied exclusively on documentary analysis of the social studies curriculum document prepared by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2020), which limited the scope of the findings by focusing solely on explicit and implicit representations of GCE within the document, potentially overlooking the actual implementation of these principles in classroom settings. The study did not account for other contextual factors, such as teacher perceptions, student experiences, or classroom practices that influence integrating GCE in social studies instruction. Moreover, the case study design restricts the generalizability of the findings to other subjects or educational contexts, as the research concentrated on social studies, limiting its applicability to a broader understanding of GCE across other disciplines within the Ghanaian education system. Also, the study did not delve into the assessment mechanisms within the curriculum and how they align with global citizenship principles. Given the emphasis on competencies such as critical thinking and problem solving, a potential limitation is the lack of specific assessment frameworks to evaluate students' development in these areas. Global citizenship competencies are complex and multidimensional, and assessing students' proficiency in these areas requires more than traditional exams.

## Implications for Theory and Practice

The GCE study in Ghana's junior high school social studies curriculum presents significant implications for theory and practice. In terms of theory, it emphasizes the importance of integrating global and local contexts, advocating for a "glocal" awareness that recognizes the interconnectedness of issues. The study findings align with frameworks that stress the need for education to encompass cognitive skills and values, reinforcing that GCE is a multidimensional process. The findings contribute to developing curricula that prioritize knowledge acquisition and cultivating attitudes and behaviors essential for global citizenship.

Practically, the study supports the call for adopting active, learner-centered pedagogies that engage students with real-world challenges, suggesting methods like project-based and experiential learning. It highlights the necessity for ongoing professional development for teachers, equipping them with the skills to integrate global issues into their teaching practices effectively. Additionally, the research highlights the need for curriculum developers to incorporate global citizenship themes explicitly, connecting global challenges and local realities to enhance student engagement. Overall, the study underscores the importance of a holistic approach to education that combines theoretical insights with practical applications, aiming to foster responsible global citizens in Ghana.

## Conclusions

Through its learning outcomes, content, and pedagogical approaches, the junior high school standards-based social studies curriculum exemplifies Ghana's commitment to fostering global citizenship through education. As a core subject within the country's free and compulsory basic education framework, it offers a valuable opportunity to equip learners with the global competencies necessary in today's interconnected world. Despite some limitations in the organization of the curriculum content, it holds substantial potential to develop cognitive, behavioral, and socio-emotional competencies that are vital for responsible global citizenship.

Moreover, the curriculum's alignment with key principles of GCE, as outlined by UNESCO (2015), confirms its global relevance and appropriateness for 21st-century education. Promoting values such as human rights, environmental sustainability, and diversity addresses both local educational needs and global educational

goals. Thus, the social studies curriculum remains a crucial framework for preparing students to navigate the complexities of the modern world.

## Recommendations

In future reviews of the social studies curriculum, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment should prioritize redeveloping content standards, indicators, and exemplars to ensure their alignment with global contexts. Such an approach would enhance the curriculum's capacity to foster the development of globally informed citizens, which aligns with contemporary educational goals. To promote global citizenship effectively, it is essential that social studies teachers consciously adapt instructional exemplars to reflect global realities and perspectives. Moreover, social studies teachers must rigorously implement the pedagogical strategies integral to facilitating GCE. This adherence to best practices in pedagogy will ensure that social studies instruction promotes academic knowledge and cultivates critical thinking, intercultural understanding, and active engagement with global issues.

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