

# **A Study of Teachers' Pedagogical Beliefs and Actual Classroom Practices in Social Studies Instruction**

Aung Lin<sup>1</sup> and Lwin May Soe<sup>2</sup>

## **Abstract**

The main purpose of this study is to study the relationship between teachers' pedagogical beliefs and actual classroom practices in Social Studies Instruction in Kay Gyi Daunt Township, Ayeyarwaddy Region. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in this study. By using Census Method, all 64 teachers who taught Social Studies from all 20 Basic Education High Schools in Kan Gyi Daunt Township were selected as sample. Quantitative and qualitative research methods were used in this study. 48 items with four point Likert scale were used in quantitative study. 5 open-ended questions were used in qualitative study. Questionnaires were validated by seven experienced teacher educators from Department of Educational Theory, Yangon University of Education. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire for teachers' pedagogical beliefs was (0.95) and for actual classroom practices was (0.91). Descriptive statistics, independent samples *t*-test, one-way ANOVA and Pearson product-moment correlation were used for data analysis.

According to the quantitative findings, the level of teachers' pedagogical beliefs in Social Studies Instruction was high level. Code of Ethics was higher than other domains and Lesson Presentations was lower than others in teachers' pedagogical beliefs. In finding teachers' actual classroom practices by personal factors, it was found that female teachers had high level of pedagogical beliefs and their actual classroom practices were good in Social Studies Instruction. BA, BSc, MA, MSc degree holder teachers had high level in pedagogical beliefs and the actual classroom practices of BEd; BA,BEd; BSc,BEd; MA,BEd; and MSc,BEd were good in Social Studies Instruction. The group of teachers who had the teaching services of 7 to 18 years had high level of pedagogical beliefs than others and their actual classroom practices were better than others in Social Studies Instruction. The teachers who were in Basic Education High Schools (Branch) had high level in pedagogical beliefs and their actual classroom practices were better than the teachers who were in Basic Education High Schools. According to open-ended questions, most of teachers who teach Social Studies practise in the classroom in order to their pedagogical beliefs. There was a very strong positively relationship between teachers' pedagogical beliefs and actual classroom practices in Social Studies Instruction.

**Key words:** pedagogical beliefs and actual classroom practices

## **Introduction**

Education is the main factor that affects and directs a society (Tuncel, 2008). However, the education is effected by the various developments and changes happening around the world. Accordingly, it is necessary to arrange the education programs parallel to these developments in order to train individuals depending on the requirements of the society (Yasar et al, 2005). Therefore, in order to implement the educational programs, the teachers have to carry out the activities required in the programs effectively. Today, it

- 
1. Lecturer, Dr., Department of Educational Theory, Yangon University of Education
  2. M.Ed. Second Year Student, EAS-1, Department of Educational Theory, Yangon University of Education

is required to have not only the individuals who have the basic knowledge but also the individuals who can think, do researches, produce products, and solve problems (Gultekin, 2008).

To be able to implement the best education systems for society, teachers' pedagogical beliefs must match their actual classroom practices. It is believed that the individual teacher's beliefs are strong indicators of his/her instructional classroom practices. These beliefs can be thought of as guiding principles teachers hold to be true that serve as lenses through which new experiences can be understood. When people believe something is true, they perceive information supporting that belief. What teachers do in the classroom is said to be governed by what they believe, and these beliefs often serve to act as a filter through which instructional judgements and decisions are made (Cantu, 2001). Social Studies instruction should be a teaching-learning environment in which the students participate actively, the student opinions are appreciated and the knowledge is related to life (Koken, 2003 and Ocak, 2003). Therefore, it is necessary to study the relationship between the teachers' pedagogical beliefs and actual classroom practices in Social Studies instruction.

### **Purpose of the study**

The purposes of this study are as follows:

- (1) To study the teachers' pedagogical beliefs in Social Studies Instruction.
- (2) To study the teachers' actual classroom practices in Social Studies Instruction.
- (3) To study the relationship between the teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their actual classroom practices in Social Studies Instruction.

### **Research Questions**

This study is focused on the following questions:

- (1) What is the level of teachers' pedagogical beliefs in Social Studies Instruction?
- (2) What is the level of teachers' actual classroom practices in Social Studies Instruction by personal factors?
- (3) Is there any relationship between teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their actual classroom practices in Social Studies Instruction?

### **Theoretical Framework of the study**

Teaching is a complex human endeavor and the phenomenon of teacher formation is equally as complex. Teaching practices, or the decisions that teachers make every day in the classroom, are tied to their teaching beliefs (Pajares, 1992). From the viewpoint of Mansour (2008) and Richards (1998), the teachers' beliefs are described as being the

most valuable in the psychological composition of the teachers. Haney (1996) determined that teachers' pedagogical beliefs are significant indicators of the behaviors that will be presented in the classroom. The attitudes and values about teaching students, and the education process those teachers bring to classrooms. They are thought held by the teacher about the teaching and learning process, which influence his/her classroom practices. Teachers' beliefs and practices are important for understanding and improving educational processes. They are closely linked to teachers' strategies for coping with challenges in their daily professional life and to their general well-being, and they shape students' learning environment and influence student motivation and achievement. A set of teaching strategies and methods of instruction employed in the classroom. The interaction between the teacher and his students in order to expand their cognitive and skillful perceptions through the appropriate classroom management, determination to teach and continuous evaluation to achieve the desired teaching objectives was defined by Cotton (1995).

Mansour (2008) saw that although there is a lot of research which indicates that the teachers' practices in the classroom are effected by their beliefs, there is a still a need to examine teachers' beliefs to clarify how they affect their practices. In the domain of social studies is a growing need to study the beliefs of the teachers to understanding the factors that affect their classroom practices.

Borg (2006) suggested a framework including six elements (Organization, Lesson Presentation, Control and Discipline, Dealing with Students, Codes of Ethics and Evaluation) that are instrumental in forming teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their actual classroom practices.

#### (1) Organization

Teaching is a profession that requires organization. When setting up organizational system, it is important for a teacher to keep in mind the three Ps: physical space, paperwork, and planning. Staying organized in these areas contributes to a successful teaching experiences for teachers (Pierro L., 2003).

#### (2) Lesson Presentation

Lesson presentation is a mode of instruction of being either teacher-centered (instructivist) or student teacher collaborative (constructivist). Toof et al. (2004) suggest that teaching processes in Social Studies should be predominantly student-oriented interactive process in which the learner actively participates and acquires significant learning experience under the teacher who serves as a guide and a facilitator. Flanders

(2004) refers to an effective teacher as one who asks questions, accepts students' feelings, acknowledges students' ideas and gives praise and encouragement.

### (3) Control and Discipline

Effective teaching does not occur solely by efficient classroom control. However, one must remember that effective teaching cannot occur without excellent discipline in the classroom. When students are out of control and off task, the chance of unanticipated accidents increases. Effective classroom control by teachers and keeping students on task can eliminate some of these unnecessary mishaps (Tenoschol, 1985).

### (4) Dealing with Students

Positive teacher-learner relationships have the potential of creating a conducive learning environment in the classroom and will determine whether or not a learner can benefit from the teaching-learning situation. Teachers should be aware of the need for a positive loving relationship if learning is to take place (Hood and Hood, 2001). It is believed that in a relationship of trust positive educative learning can be achieved. If trust in the relationship between educator and learner is lacking, the educator is in a position of power instead of authority (Oosthuizen and Wolhuter, 2003).

### (5) Code of Ethics

The codes set out the key principles of good conduct and practice for teachers. It is intended to guide teachers' practice judgements and decisions. The code is intended to encourage teachers to adopt an informed approach to their teaching and its contexts and to reflect on the good and correct practices as professional teachers (Mark Freakley and Gilbert Burgh, 2000). A teacher shall endeavor to be a role model to enhance the prestige of the profession.

### (6) Evaluation

The process of evaluation includes three major divisions-formulation of objectives, designing learning experiences for the objectives, and accessing the outcomes of education. Having strategies for evaluating the students refers to being able to use the assessment process and procedures that help to determine children' skills and knowledge (Jack R. Fraenkel,1980).

### **Limitations of the study**

This study is concerned with teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their actual classroom practices in Social Studies Instruction. Due to the time constraint, this study was geographically restricted to the areas of Kan Gyi Daunt Township, Ayeyarwaddy

Region. This study intends to investigate senior teachers who teach Social Studies in Ninth Standard and the students from Kan Gyi Daunt Township, Ayeyarwaddy Region.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to collect the required data in this study. Questionnaire survey which included 48 items with four point Likert scale was used in quantitative study. 5 open-ended questions were used in qualitative study.

### **Sample**

There are 21 Basic Education High Schools in Kan Gyi Daunt Township. There are 10 Basic Education High Schools and 11 Basic Education High Schools (Branch). But, at one Basic Education High School (Branch), there were no student who learn Social Studies. Therefore, only 20 schools are concerned for this study according to research design. By using Census Method, 64 teachers who teach Social Studies in that 20 schools are concerned for this study.

### **Research Instrumentation**

The instrumentation was developed by the researcher based on six domains of Borg (2006) which was included in the review of related literature. This questionnaire included demographic data and teachers' pedagogical beliefs and actual classroom practices in Social Studies Instruction. This instrument contain 48 items rated in a four point Likert scale from (1) low to (5) very high for pedagogical beliefs and (1) poor to (4) very good for actual classroom practices. Cronbach's alpha was used to test the internal consistency of reliability. In questionnaire for teachers' pedagogical beliefs, the overall value of Cronbach's alpha was 0.95 and in questionnaire for teachers' actual classroom practices, the overall value of Cronbach's alpha was 0.91.

### **Procedure**

First of all, the relevant literature concerning the research was explored. In order to find out the required data, the instruments for teachers' pedagogical beliefs and actual classroom practices in Social Studies Instruction was conducted under the guidance of the supervisor. After getting the validation, pilot test was conducted with 35 teachers from Ngaputaw Township on 4<sup>th</sup> week of September, 2018. For item clarity, the wording and contents of items were also revised under the guidance of the supervisor. After receiving the permission from the Kan Gyi Daunt Township Educational Officer, the questionnaire

was distributed to the respondents from the schools on 4<sup>th</sup> week of November, 2018. The respondent rate was 100% for this study.

### **Analysis of Data**

The collected data of this study were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) software version 25. The descriptive statistics were used to compute means and standard deviations for group of items. Independent samples *t*-test and One-Way ANOVA were used to explore the level of teachers' pedagogical beliefs and to measure the level of teachers' actual classroom practices by gender, qualifications, teaching services and school levels. Pearson product-moment correlation were conducted to find the relationship between teacher' pedagogical belief and actual classroom practices in Social Studies Instruction.

### **Findings**

#### **Quantitative Research Findings**

#### **Findings for Research Question (1)**

**Table 1 The Levels of Teachers' Pedagogical Beliefs in Social Studies Instruction**

**(N=64)**

No.	Domains	Pedagogical Beliefs	Level
		Mean (SD)	
1.	Organization	3.21 (0.31)	High
2.	Lesson Presentation	3.14(0.35)	High
3.	Control and Discipline	3.15(0.32)	High
4.	Dealing with Students	3.53(0.35)	Very High
5.	Code of Ethics	3.61(0.42)	Very High
6.	Evaluation	3.31(0.32)	High
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3.32(0.25)</b>	<b>High</b>

#### **Scoring Direction-**

1.00-1.49= low    1.50-2.49= moderately low    2.50-3.49= high    3.50-4.00= very high

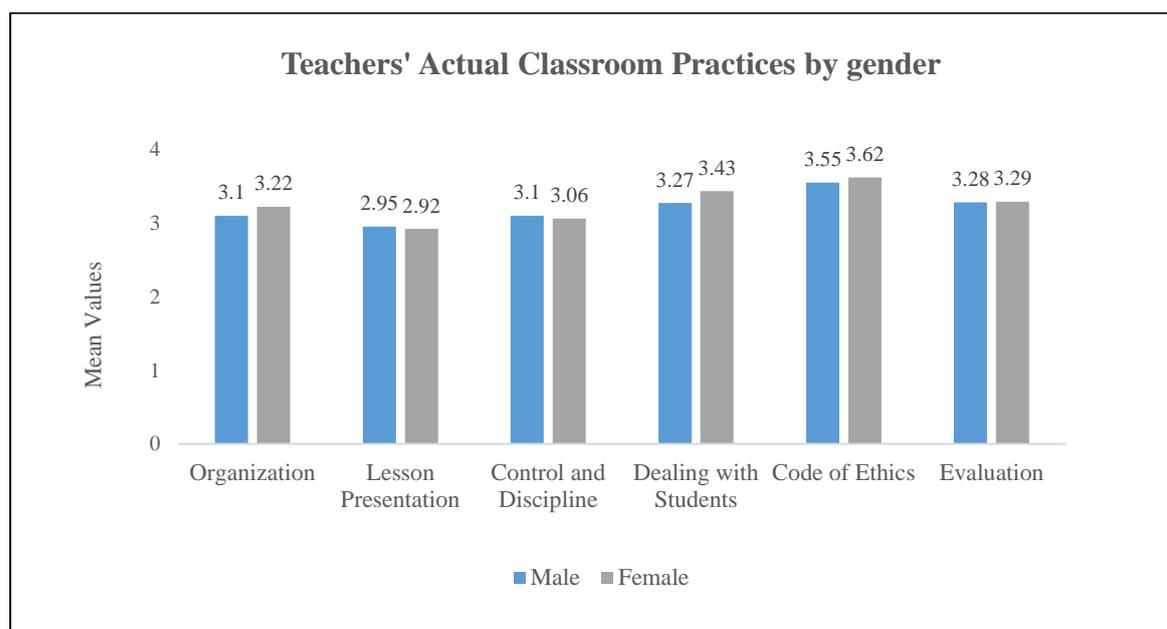
## Findings for Research Question (2)

**Table 2 Comparison of Mean Values and Standard Deviations of Teachers' Actual Classroom Practices in Social Studies Instruction by Gender (N=64)**

No.	Domains	Actual Classroom Practices			
		Mean (SD)			
		Male (n=13)	Level	Female (n=51)	Level
1.	Organization	3.10 (0.65)	Good	3.22 (0.42)	Good
2.	Lesson Presentation	2.95 (0.36)	Good	2.92 (0.43)	Good
3.	Control and Discipline	3.10 (0.46)	Good	3.06 (0.32)	Good
4.	Dealing with Students	3.27 (0.58)	Good	3.43 (0.37)	Good
5.	Code of Ethics	3.55 (0.48)	Very Good	3.62 (0.43)	Very Good
6.	Evaluation	3.28 (0.34)	Good	3.29 (0.35)	Good
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.21 (0.42)</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>3.26 (0.27)</b>	<b>Good</b>

### Scoring Direction-

1.00-1.49= poor    1.50-2.49= satisfactory    2.50-3.49= good    3.50-4.00= very good



**Figure 1 Comparison of Mean Values Showing Teachers' Actual Classroom Practices in Social Studies Instruction by Gender**

**Table 3 Comparison of Mean Values and Standard Deviations of Teachers' Actual Classroom Practices in Social Studies Instruction by Qualifications (N=64)**

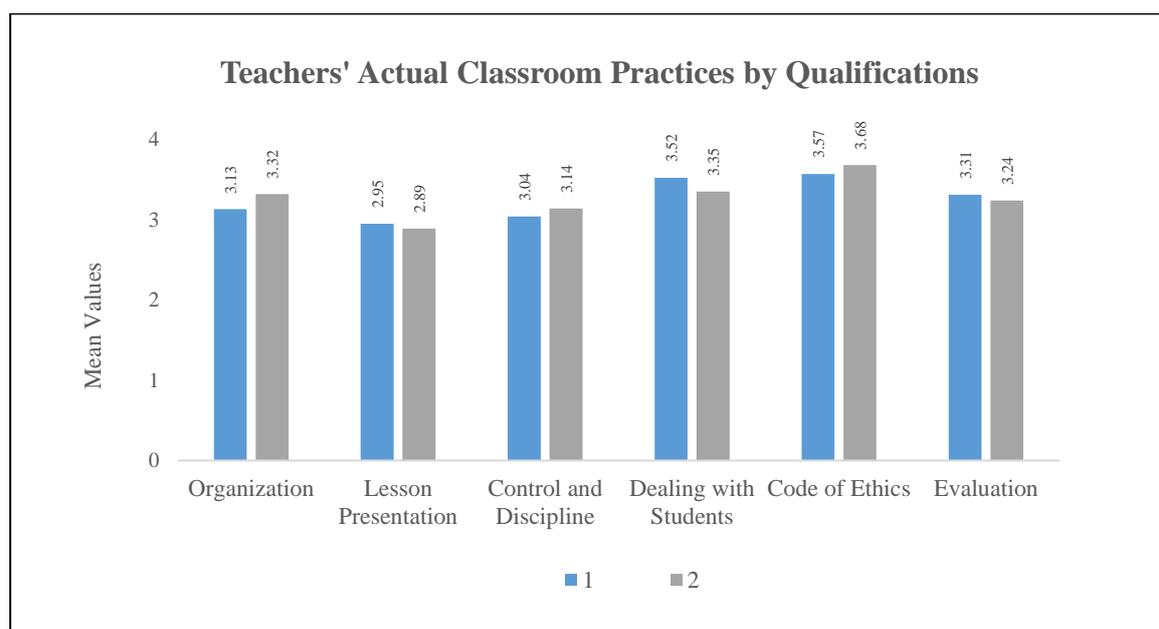
No.	Domains	Actual Classroom Practices			
		Mean (SD)		Level	
		1 (n=43)	Level	2 (n=21)	Level
1.	Organization	3.13(0.53)	Good	3.32(0.27)	Good
2.	Lesson Presentation	2.95(0.47)	Good	2.89(0.26)	Good
3.	Control and Discipline	3.04(0.35)	Good	3.14(0.33)	Good
4.	Dealing with Students	3.52(0.37)	Very Good	3.35(0.37)	Good
5.	Code of Ethics	3.57(0.49)	Very Good	3.68(0.29)	Very Good
6.	Evaluation	3.31(0.38)	Good	3.24(0.26)	Good
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.23(0.35)</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>3.26(0.18)</b>	<b>Good</b>

**Scoring Direction-**

1.00-1.49= poor    1.50-2.49= satisfactory    2.50-3.49= good    3.50-4.00= very good

*1= BA, BSc, MA, MSc degree holder teachers*

*2= BEd; BA,BEd; BSc,BEd; MA,BEd; MSc,BEd degree holder teachers*



**Figure 2 Comparison of Mean Values Showing Teachers' Actual Classroom Practices in Social Studies Instruction by Qualifications**

*1= BA, BSc, MA, MSc degree holder teachers*

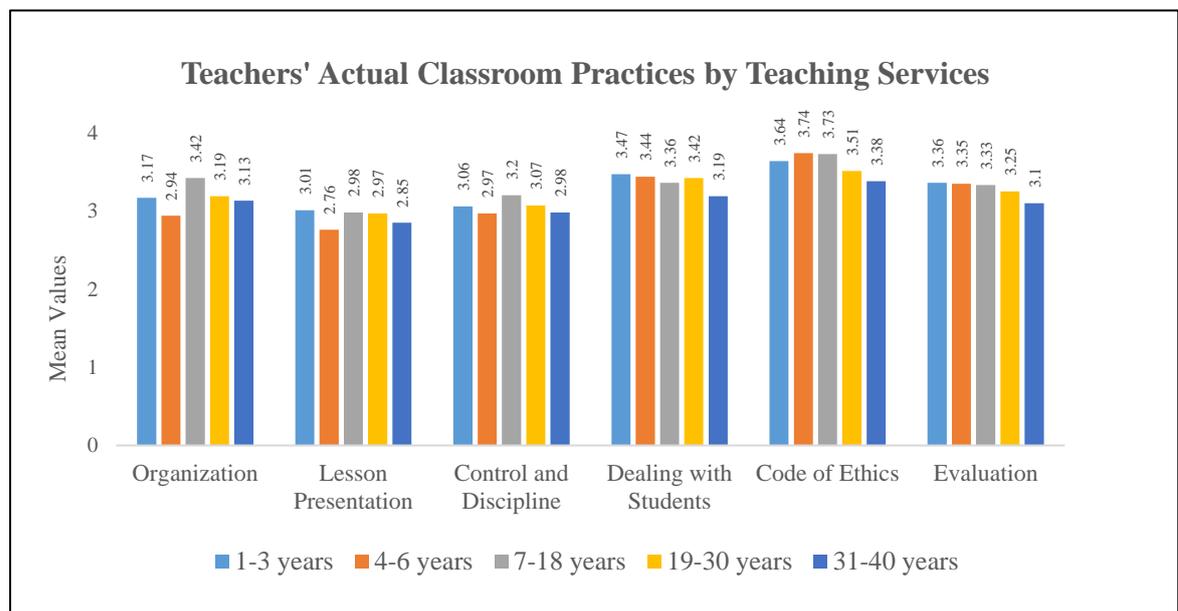
*2= BEd; BA,BEd; BSc,BEd; MA,BEd; MSc,BEd degree holder teachers*

**Table 4 Comparison of Mean Values and Standard Deviations of Teachers' Actual Classroom Practices in Social Studies Instruction by Teaching Services (N=64)**

No.	Domains	Actual Classroom Practices				
		Mean (SD)				
		1-3 years (n=9)	4-6 years (n=11)	7-18 years (n=15)	19-30 years (n=23)	31-40 years (n=6)
1.	Organization	3.17(0.42)	2.94(0.58)	3.42(0.23)	3.19(0.53)	3.13(0.38)
2.	Lesson Presentation	3.01(0.01)	2.76(0.57)	2.98(0.33)	2.97(0.40)	2.85(0.54)
3.	Control and Discipline	3.06(0.24)	2.97(0.28)	3.20(0.32)	3.07(0.44)	2.98(0.22)
4.	Dealing with Students	3.47(0.30)	3.44(0.43)	3.36(0.31)	3.42(0.50)	3.19(0.47)
5.	Code of Ethics	3.64(0.36)	3.74(0.38)	3.73(0.26)	3.51(0.57)	3.38(0.33)
6.	Evaluation	3.36(0.34)	3.35(0.54)	3.33(0.24)	3.25(0.25)	3.10(0.47)
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.29(0.22)</b>	<b>3.20(0.38)</b>	<b>3.34(0.16)</b>	<b>3.24(0.36)</b>	<b>3.10(0.34)</b>

**Scoring Direction-**

1.00-1.49= poor    1.50-2.49= satisfactory    2.50-3.49= good    3.50-4.00= very good



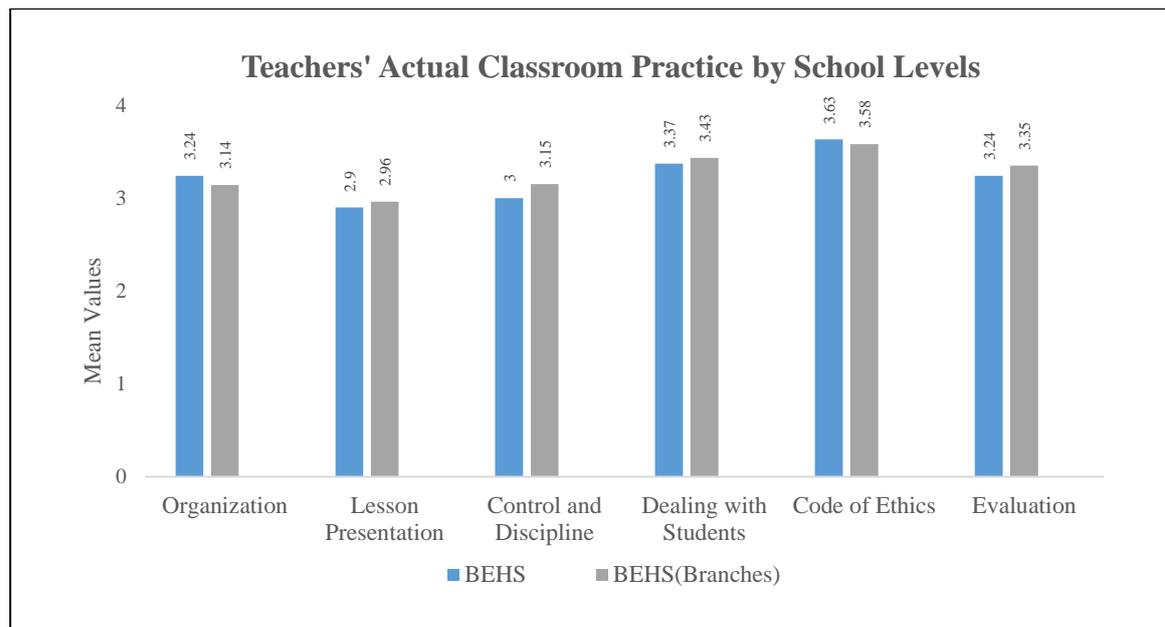
**Figure 3 Comparison of Mean Values Showing Teachers' Actual Classroom Practices in Social Studies Instruction by Teaching Services**

**Table 5 Comparison of Mean Values and Standard Deviations of Teachers' Actual Classroom Practices in Social Studies Instruction by School Levels (N=64)**

No.	Domains	Actual Classroom Practices			
		Mean (SD)			
		BEHS (n=10)	Level	BEHS (Branch) (n=10)	Level
1.	Organization	3.24(0.42)	Good	3.14(0.52)	Good
2.	Lesson Presentation	2.90(0.39)	Good	2.96(0.45)	Good
3.	Control and Discipline	3.00(0.27)	Good	3.15(0.41)	Good
4.	Dealing with Students	3.37(0.35)	Good	3.43(0.49)	Good
5.	Code of Ethics	3.63(0.31)	Very Good	3.58(0.55)	Very Good
6.	Evaluation	3.24(0.27)	Good	3.35(0.41)	Good
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.23(0.22)</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>3.27(0.38)</b>	<b>Good</b>

**Scoring Direction-**

1.00-1.49= poor    1.50-2.49= satisfactory    2.50-3.49= good    3.50-4.00= very good



**Figure 4 Comparison of Mean Values Showing Teachers' Actual Classroom Practices in Social Studies Instruction by School Levels**

### Findings for Research Question (3)

**Table 6 Pearson Correlation Matrix between Teachers' Pedagogical Beliefs and Actual Classroom Practices in Social Studies Instruction (N=64)**

Variables	Pedagogical Beliefs	Actual Classroom Practices
Pedagogical Beliefs	1	.690**
Actual Classroom Practices	.690**	1

**\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

As shown in table 6, there is significant relationship between teachers' pedagogical beliefs and actual classroom practices in Social Studies Instruction. The teachers' pedagogical beliefs were very strong positively correlated with their actual classroom practices in Social Studies Instruction ( $r=.690$ ).

### Qualitative Research Findings

Five open-ended questions were used in this study. Various responses for open-ended questions are described as follows.

For the question (1), **“Do you believe what are the advantages that the students who learned Social Studies (Example- Geography, History and Economics can get?”** These advantages are knowing what is happening in our natural environment, knowing what about the sector of agriculture in our country, loving and valuing our whole race and country. For the question (2), **“As you are a teacher who teach Social Studies, which instructional strategies are very effective in your instruction? Describe the most useful instructional strategies for you.”** There are nine methods which are very effective for their instruction. The most useful instructional strategy is **question and answer method.** For the question (3), **“In your instruction, can you teach according to your lesson plan or teacher manual book? If do so, which advantage do you get?”** 76.56% of teachers (n=49) can always teach according to their lesson plans or teacher manual books. For the question (4), **“As you are a teacher who teach Social Studies, describe your attempt to enhance your knowledge related to your subject- matter?”** 82.81% (n=53) of the teachers who teach Social Studies who attempt to improve their knowledge by reading textbooks thoroughly and other books, the biography of historic ideal person, journals, newspapers, by listening news from television or radio, by studying contour with Myanmar Map etc. For the question (5), **“Describe your assessment to know whether learning objectives are achievable or not?”** 54.69% (n=35) of the teachers assess the performance of students by asking

questions orally during instruction. 15.62% (n=10) of the teachers assess the performance of students before instruction, during instruction and after instruction.

### **Conclusion**

Summary of research findings, discussion, recommendation and need for further study would be presented following.

### **Summary of Research Findings**

Research findings could be aggregated as follows.

1. This study found out the teachers had very high level of pedagogical beliefs in **Code of Ethics** domain in Social Studies Instruction. According to their pedagogical beliefs, the teachers' actual classroom practices were very good in **Code of Ethics** domain.
2. There was no male and female teacher who had low level of pedagogical beliefs. There were 20.31% (n=13) of male teachers and 79.69% (n=53) of female teachers who had high level of pedagogical beliefs. Although total numbers of male and female teachers are different, their level of pedagogical beliefs are almost equal. According to their beliefs, their actual classroom practices were good in Social Studies Instruction.
3. It was found that both 67.19%(n=43) of teachers who were BA, BSc, MA, MSc degree holder and 32.81%(n=21) of teachers who were BEd; BA,BEd; BSc,BEd; MA,BEd; MSc,BEd degree holders had high level of pedagogical beliefs in Social Studies Instruction and their actual classroom practices were also good in Social Studies Instruction.
4. It was found that there were 14.06% (n=9) of teachers who had teaching services of 1-3 years, 17.09% (n=11) of teachers who had teaching services of 4-6 years, 23.44% (n=15) of teachers who had teaching services of 7-18 years, 35.93% (n=23) of teachers who had teaching services of 19-30 years and 9.38% (n=6) of teachers who had teaching services of 31-40 years. 7-18 teaching services teachers had a little more pedagogical belief than others groups and their actual classroom practices are better than others.
5. This study pointed out that 54.69% (n=35) of teachers who were in 10 Basic Education High Schools and 45.31% (n=29) of teachers who were in 10 Basic Education High Schools (Branch) had high level of pedagogical beliefs in Social Studies Instruction. Therefore, it can be concluded that the actual classroom practices of all teachers were also good in Social Studies Instruction.

6. According to teachers' responses in each domain by their personal factors, there was very strong positive relationship between teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their actual classroom practices in Social Studies Instruction.

### **Discussion**

Education is viewed as a basic human need, an integral part of the quality of life, a support for moral and social values, and an instrument for economic productivity. Teaching is an art, the teachers, therefore, are artists. The role of the teachers is to create learning opportunities for students in the classroom (Dewey, 1916). The teachers needed to use their pedagogical beliefs for practicing in the classroom in their instruction. The teachers' beliefs are a set of ideas rooted in the psychological and mental content of the teacher and play a central role in guiding his/her teaching behaviors.

The present study analyzed teachers had high level of pedagogical beliefs and their actual classroom practices are good in Social Studies Instruction in the domain of **organization, lesson presentation, control and discipline and evaluation**. In the domain of **dealing with students**, teachers had very high pedagogical beliefs and their actual classroom practices are good in that domain. For **code of ethics** domain, teachers had very high pedagogical beliefs and their actual classroom practices are very good in that domain. Teaching practices, or the decisions that teachers make every day in the classroom, are ties to their teaching beliefs (Pajares, 1992).

Most of teachers believed that they should start and end instruction at the right time. However, for practicing in the classroom, they could carry out according to the situation. The teachers could not use exactly their pedagogical beliefs into their actual classroom practices. The teachers built their beliefs on the basis of linking the lesson with the current events and contemporary issues, they are not capable to utilize that events and issues in their instruction. Although it had been determined that about ninety percent of classroom time is spent using curriculum materials, two-thirds of this time is spent using textbook materials (Morrissett, 1982). Most of teachers believed themselves only they teach and explain in the classroom, but they tried to be role models to their students. (Manzano, 2003) studied the practices of effective teachers and determined that an effective teacher-student relationship may be the keystone that allows the other aspects to work well.

The female teachers' actual classroom practices are a little better than the male teachers' in this study. This is because the female teachers make more efforts for their profession. The teachers who were BEd degree holder had highest mean value within

three groups. This is why they had learned that concept in their student-teacher lives. The teachers who teach Economics had a little more pedagogical belief than the teachers who teach Geography and History. The teachers who had 7 to 18 years teaching services believed Social Studies can provide students with the skills and disposition required for civic engagement and activism. In order to their beliefs, their efforts are better than other four teacher groups.

Bozimo and Ilwumela (2013) maintained that teachers are undoubtedly the translators, transmitters and implementers of educational policies and programmer. Therefore, all teachers need to believe that expression. By believing and accepting that, all teachers should try to improve their pedagogical beliefs and to be good and excellent instructors in their professions.

### **Recommendation**

On the basis of analysis and interpretation of the study, the following recommendations were drawn.

1. The teachers should make effort to innovate for their instruction because most of teachers do not want to change their ways or their teaching styles.
2. Teachers should have a strong belief that the school must take a major part of the responsibility to help students acquire the skills needed to cope with the growing information age.
3. Teachers should instill in students to be good democratic citizens for their whole life.
4. The teachers should explain to the students the essence and usefulness of each Social Studies subjects to value that subjects themselves, in the first day of the school year.
5. Teachers should use available resources as teaching aids in teaching Social Studies effectively.
6. The teachers should read knowledgeable books and historical books, study using internet sources including Google, Websites, Facebook and Knowledgeable Page in order to enhance their pedagogical beliefs.

### **Need for Further Research**

There is a need for further research to investigate the teachers' pedagogical beliefs and actual classroom practices in Social Studies Instruction in other states or regions. Further study should emphasize in specific one subject in Social Studies (For example- Geography, History and Economics) to investigate teachers' pedagogical

beliefs and their actual classroom practices. And then, further study should be conducted into the skills and qualities that students acquire in the Social Studies Course.

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