

Research Article

Assessing How Social Studies Teachers in Senior High Schools Use Out-of-Door Activities in Their Teaching in Ho Municipality of Ghana

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Abstract: The study explored how social studies teachers in Senior High Schools in the Ho Municipality of Ghana use out-of-door activities in their teaching and learning methodology. Using a concurrent mixed-method design, coupled with convenience and purposive sampling techniques, a total of seventy social studies teachers from fourteen Senior High Schools in the Ho Municipality were selected for this study. The instruments for data collection included both interviews and questionnaires. The findings revealed that most social studies teachers consider out-of-door activities in their teaching because of their educational value, despite the challenges they admitted to encountering. It was also revealed that social studies teachers perceive out-of-door activities as difficult to organize, which affects their use of this technique in teaching. This study recommended that, in order to promote the use of out-of-door activities in the teaching and learning of social studies, the government, through the Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service (G.E.S), and Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD), should make funds available for senior high schools to organize out-of-door activities specifically in the teaching and learning of social studies to enhance students' understanding. Furthermore, the government, through the Ministry of Education and G.E.S, should advise heads of institutions to support and encourage teachers, particularly social studies teachers, to embark on out-of-door activities within and outside their school community to boost students' understanding of concepts that are mostly abstract in nature.

Keywords: out-of-door activity, social studies, societal problems, positive attitudes, values, skills

1. Introduction

Social studies is one of the major core subjects or disciplines that is widely taught at the various levels of education in Ghana, starting from the primary school level, through the Junior High School (JHS), Senior High Schools (SHS) to Teacher-Training Institutions and Universities. According to Cobbold (2013) "social studies as a subject was first introduced to the Ghanaian curriculum in the early 1940s". The subject is specifically designed to promote citizenship education that aims at producing a reflective, competence and concerned citizen (Siaw-Marfo, 2011). In the view of Parker (2010), social studies prepares students to fit into the society by equipping them with the requisite knowledge about their tradition, culture, norms, values, ways of life, as well as the social problems associated with their various communities. Social studies is viewed by many scholars, authors and researchers as a multi-disciplinary subject that take its sources from geography, psychology, economics, civic education, history, anthropology, religion, archaeology,

economics, philosophy, political science, law, sociology, as well as appropriate content from the field of humanities and the natural sciences (Mensah et al., 2014; Bekoe & Eshun, 2013; Cobbold, 1999; Adu-Yeboah, 2011; Ayaaba, 2013).

It is an overriding fact that, even though other subjects play significant roles in developing informed and responsible citizenship, it is only social studies that has citizenship development as its priority goal (Banks, 1990). In the words of Ayaaba (2011), social studies is distinguished from other subjects by its problem-solving nature, which concerns itself with personal and societal problems of human survival. By this, teachers must teach the subject so that learners can gain the relevant knowledge, positive attitudes, values and skills to enable them solve their personal and societal problems. The subject must also be taught so that attitudinal change can be achieved in the learners. These, as observed by Ayaaba (2011) can better be achieved if teaching and learning are contextualized or linked to the environments. This is corroborated by Tyler (1949) cited in Ayaaba (2006) when he points out that “learning takes place through the active behavior of the students”. He stresses that it is what the learner does that they learn, not what the teacher does.

Baja (1980) as cited in Tamakloe (1994) believes that, integrated social studies demands teaching approaches which do not recognize boundaries of discipline, such that learners are able to acquire the needed skills, positive attitudes and values that will help them solve individual and societal problems. Therefore, it is not enough for the social studies teacher to see the subject (social studies) as an assortment of knowledge without considering how such knowledge and concepts can be imparted to the students. For this reason, some authors recognize out-of-door activities as the cornerstone of the social studies curriculum that should be utilised in the social studies classroom (Çengelci, 2013).

The importance of out-of-door activities in the teaching and learning of social studies cannot be overemphasized. Many studies have revealed significant relationships between the use of out-of-door activities and the teaching and learning of social studies across various levels of the academic ladder (from basic school level to the tertiary level) (Tamakloe, 1994; Bekoe et al., 2017; Foran, 2008). Out-of-door activities are similar to other potent teaching methodology or techniques that propels students to gain relevant knowledge, positive attitudes, values and skills needed to solve personal and societal problems, which are some of the over-arching goals of social studies curriculum. The significance of out-of-door activities is that it helps strengthen classroom lessons and gives students the opportunity to visualize and experience unique firsthand information of a subject. It offers learners the opportunities to partake in new environments, as well as develop their curiosities of a given subject. Also, out-of-door activities are valuable in broadening the learners’ understanding of the world, and encouraging their development of social and personal problem-solving skills. It has been observed that students appear to come out of their shell on field trips, becoming creative and displaying leadership qualities (Eshach, 2007; Anderson et al., 2006; Carroll, 2007; Jakubowski, 2003; Storksdieck, 2006). As such, out-of-door activities ought to be well planned to achieve its intended purposes.

Notwithstanding, out-of-door activities in many SHSs in Ghana, particularly in the Volta Region, may not be properly planned and executed in a way that would aid or enhance students’ learning. This could, among other things, be due to the perceptions such teachers hold about out-of-door activities. Out-of-door activities may too often be regarded as having no educational value or as programs that ill-prepared students for standardized tests (Finchum, 2013). Similar concerns are that teachers may not spend sufficient time or efforts in finding methods and mediums to connect out-of-door activity given the laid down standards, procedures and bureaucracy involved.

As a problem-oriented subject, if students at the Senior High School (SHS) level are to study and understand certain contemporary issues and explore better solutions to them, it is important to engage such students in educational visits to get firsthand information (Bekoe et al., 2017). This indicates that the use of out-of-door activities is contingent on the goals of social studies. Therefore, if SHS social studies teachers tend to neglect such activities in their social studies teaching, it stands to reason that, the objectives of the subject are not likely to be realized, which apparently will affect students’ ability to independently solve their own and societal problems in future. Additionally, researching the literature for information about secondary school, social studies teachers’ use of out-of-door activities has revealed that few of these literatures dealt with practical recommendations on teachers’ use of out-of-door activities, especially at the SHS level. Although many of such literature referred to out-of-door activities as viable alternatives to classroom learning. Similarly, little of such study can be said to have been conducted in Ghana. This study thus explored how Senior High Schools social studies teachers’ use out-of-door activity as an instructional technique in social studies in the Ho Municipality in the Volta Region.

1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore how Senior High Schools social studies teachers use out-of-door activities in their Teaching in the Ho Municipality.

1.2 Study objectives

This study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. Examine how Senior High Schools social studies teachers in the Ho Municipality use out-of-door activities in their instruction
2. Examine the challenges faced by teachers when embarking on out-of-door activities

1.3 Study questions

This study sought to find answers to the following questions:

1. How do Senior High Schools social studies teachers in the Ho Municipality use out-of-door activities in their instruction?
2. What are the challenges faced by teachers when embarking on out-of-door activities?

2. Literature review

2.1 Meaning of out-of-door activities

A variety of terms have been used to describe learning experiences that are planned and undertaken outside the classroom. Some scholars describe them generally as ‘outdoor education’ (Hug & Wilson, 1965 cited in Tamakloe, 1994). Other terms used include ‘field trips’, ‘excursions’, ‘study trips’, “educated walks” (Kilparick, 1965 cited in Tamakloe, 1994) and ‘school journeys’. In this study the term ‘out-of-door activities’ would be preferred and used.

Priest (1986) cited in Eaton (1998) suggested that, out-of-door activity is an experiential method of learning, which exposes students to out-of-classroom activities, that through more lights on the subject matter, and foster relationships, concerning people and natural resources. According to Eaton (1998), out-of-door activity can be referred to school-related academic activities that take place out side of the classroom or school sites. Similarly, Krepel and Durrall (1981) cited in Behrendt and Franklin (2014) view out-of-door activity as class or school trips with educational intents, for which students interacts or connects with their immediate settings or environment, to gain experiential connections to new ideas and concepts of a subject matter. Tal and Morag (2009) cited in Behrendt and Franklin (2014) on their part described out-of-door activities as interactive learning.

Critically assessing the definition of the various writers, I can confidently conclude that, all the writers tried to point out the fact that, the influence of out-of-door activities on teaching is enormous and consequently has significant impact on the student’s academic outcomes. In my view, out-of-door activity per their definition provides the students with the opportunity to learn in practical terms those aspects of the curriculum that cannot be taught indoors for the purpose of understanding. With this, students are able to picture concepts in their mind making learning more meaningful and challenging to the students. The writers also established in their definitions that, in every out-of-door activity there is a movement from the four walls of the classroom which in my view is a typical characteristic of every out-of-door activity. Endorsing the definitions of the various writers, I would like to emphasis that, for the social studies teacher to achieve the desirable outcome of teaching the subject, it is essential that, they adopt or adapt out-of-door activities to their teaching methodologies, so as to expose their students to the in practical or real-life terms of what is learned in class.

2.2 Types of out-of-door activity

Tamakloe, Atta and Amedahe (2005) grouped out-of-door activities into two major types, namely unstructured and structured out-of-door activities. With the unstructured out-of-door activities, the teachers instruct their students

to identify or specify the various phenomenon of their interests, of which they would like to study. By consensus, the students end up choosing one phenomenon. The teacher then asks them to choose any material and equipment which they think will facilitate the study they intend to undertake. The students are then accompanied by the teacher to the place and each child embarks upon what he intends doing at the place. Tamakloe et al. (2005) believe that the experiences gained by students in these methods are “numerous and of high educational standard”, contrary to critics who think the method is time-wasting and lacks purpose. In both the structured and unstructured types of out-of-door activity, Tamakloe et al. (2005) came out with stages. They are prerequisites, fieldwork activities and post-fieldwork activities. The only difference is that whereas there is a comprehensive account on pre-fieldwork activities in the structured out-of-door activity, there is practically none in the unstructured out-of-door activity.

Behrendt and Franklin (2014) on their part came out with the formal and informal as types of out-of-door activities, that collectively arouses the student interests, knowledge, and motivation towards the topics or subjects understudy. According to them, formal out-of-door activities include governmental institutions and agencies, museums, historical centers, exhibition halls and businesses. Behrendt and Franklin (2014) viewed that these institutions offer exceptional formal experiential learning activities and programs that connect the students to appreciate the concepts learned in the classroom to the real-world situation. Behrendt and Franklin (2014) further positioned that out-of-door activities offer “an opportunity to motivate and connect students to understand classroom concepts and increase students’ knowledge foundation, as well as promote further learning and higher-level thinking strategies”. Behrendt and Franklin (2014) mentioned that students’ involvement in the learning experience forms the basic foundation of out-of-door activities. Educators and teachers find these activities comfortable on the grounds that students are bound to a choreographed agenda or plan. Nevertheless, there are minimal chances for students or learners to personally have an interaction and connection to the experience (Rennie, 2007).

Conversely, informal out-of-door activities are less structured and offer learners the laxity to control or make choices relating to the activities. Informal education is considered as one of the genuine cognitive learning models. Students feel ease learning in the informal environment. Informal environment is much focused on individualized activities that are less competitive or assessed based on grades. It involved voluntary and unforced interactions. Together, these characteristics create an inherent motivation to the students (Rennie, 2007) and encourage them to dissect their connections to the local and national communities, in addition to how they interact with or relate to the local and global ecosystems (Krepel & Durrall, 1981).

Conclusively, it can be observed from the foregoing discussions that out-of-door, irrespective of the type (formal or informal) is a vital teaching and learning tool or concept that helps sustain the interest of students towards classroom lessons. While there are two major types of out-of-door activities, however when you carefully analyze them, it will be realized that they are all talking about the same thing. The interesting aspect is that, in all the types identified, effective learning takes place which is the core objective of out-of-door activities.

2.3 Teachers’ use of out-of-door activities

The conception that out-of-door activities must be drafted in line with the curriculum or academic programs has been promoted for a long time (Rebar, 2009a). Thus, it is instructive that teachers or instructor using out-of-door activities to explicitly establish or outline the concepts of the trips, what the trips are about, the objective of the trips, the significance of the trip to the students, and whether the trip is aligned with the curriculum. Confirming this, Victor (1965) asserts that:

“The field trip can be effective as a teaching technique only when it has a purpose. There must be a real reason for taking the field trip. The purpose may be to introduce or arouse interest in a new science unit, to find the answers to questions and problems raised during the unit, or to summarize the highlights and important understandings of the unit. Whatever the purpose, it should be understood by all the children”.

Nevertheless, such thought-out utilization of out-of-door activities coupled with clear conceptions of the purposes that appears to being very uncommon; prior literature has duly established that teachers frequently do not recognize the extent to which they are able to shape students’ learning experiences in such settings and, accordingly, students tend to comprehend a different purpose (Griffin & Symington, 1997). Additionally, research on the approaches to improve

teaching and learning on out-of-door activities led Lebak (2006) to conclude that

“The role of classroom teachers is indeed an important factor in their students’ participation and learning on field trips. However, the role of the classroom teacher must extend from providing pre-planning and post-planning classroom activities to taking a greater role in the teaching and learning of students during the field trip in order for students to connect classroom learning to learning in informal learning centers”.

Again, these studies point to the need for further descriptions of teachers’ pedagogical strategies employed during out-of-door activities, with specific attention to strategies that attempt to link classroom lessons with learning experiences that occur on the out-of-door activity (Rebar, 2009a). Rebar (2009b) continues that, teachers face constraints on their teaching due to the arrangement of space and available exhibits and resources, but these should not be so prohibitive as to preclude teachers from taking an active role in facilitating learning through the out-of-door activities.

The concept that out-of-door activities can enhance education is not new; John Dewey (a distinguished educational theorist) has long positioned that all genuine education comes through experience (Dewey, 1938). Dewey’s opinion throws more light on the significance of out-of-door activities on students’ learning. It is therefore imperative for teachers especially those teaching social studies to integrate out-of-door activities in their teaching. Apparently, students are unable to learn effectively by means of traditional textbooks, TLMs and methodologies in the classrooms. The classroom setting may not promote satisfactory engagements with the curriculum. This is because the social studies curriculum requires connections or exposes learners to the real-world experiences as well as offers student with the opportunity of having firsthand knowledge and information of the happenings in their environments, communities or surroundings. However, the classroom setting is usually a one-way instructional method of teaching with less or no active learner participation. As such, it is vital that teachers especially those teaching social studies explore outside their classrooms for teaching and learning resources that can enhance curriculum effectiveness. While often supplemental text materials are used by teachers to present information, the engagement and excitement of student-centered learning is often lost (Rebar, 2009a).

Rebar (2009b) on his doctoral dissertation at the Oregon State University, interviewed teachers regarding their use of the out-of-door activity and their sources of knowledge for their practices. Rebar (2009b) asked the teachers about their influences on their out-of-door activity practice with specific focus on observed strategies. The outcome of the study suggested or outlined four groupings of training experiences that teachers apply to their practices:

1. informal mentoring;
2. past experience trip leading;
3. outdoor education training;
4. traditional education training.

In the same study conducted by Rebar (2009a) at the Oregon State University, some of the teachers confessed that they did not coordinate the trip with the curriculum which in my candid view is against the ethics of out-of-door activity. Every out-of-door activity must have a direct link with the curriculum so as to benefit the students academically. In a related development some teachers also reveal that the timing of the trip did not ideally match their curriculum even though they responded that the trip was aligned with the curriculum. Even though it may be against the ethics of out-of-door activity, I think this is far better than those who do not link it to the curriculum at all. Moving forward, it is important to note that among the respondent, some disclose that they coordinated the trip with the curriculum making their trip more relevant than others.

From the above illustrations on how teachers use out-of-door activities, it can be established that, some teachers embark on out-of-door activities for fun since some of the teachers could not connect the trips to the curriculum. Any trip conducted by a teacher should have a direct link with the curriculum else it loses the actual purpose for which it has been conducted which is mainly academic. Even though some teachers reveal that they connect the trips with the curriculum, I will encourage that all teachers should ensure that trips conducted relate to the curriculum, which I believe is a feature of out-of-door activities.

2.4 Importance of out-of-door activities

According to Finchum (2013), the experience gained by teachers during out-of-door activities can, to some extent,

have an effect on the students' attitudes and beliefs, irrespective of the trip's destination. He maintains that, merely touring a business district can provide the students with deep insight, and fair knowledge regarding the level of poverty, homelessness, and mental illnesses of such districts. A more profound degree of empathy can occasionally be realized when the students experience circumstances that are genuine, not recycled data shared either through textbooks, or guest-speakers. Such outcomes can be attributed to the objectives of good social studies teachers (Clark, 2000). In the words of Pope (2009), a well-organized and well-planned out-of-door activity can be educational, yet still be fun. Pope maintains that, educational trips and out-of-door activities create life-long memories and rekindle the desires for learning.

Furthermore, in the words of Ayaaba (2006), out-of-door activities extend learners' knowledge of their environment providing them with firsthand experiences that would not be possible to implement within a classroom. Supporting this view, Baja (1983) cited in Ayaaba and Odumah (2013) postulates that, out-of-door activities permit a social studies student to study at firsthand, a number of things that cannot be brought into their classrooms because of size or inconveniences.

Aggarwal (2003) on his part, describes out-of-door activities as supportive tools for teachers to provide further and better explanation, clarity and interpretations to the concepts leaned in the classroom, as well as to coordinate and co-relate classroom lessons to the real-world situations; to make learning more concrete, effective, interesting, inspirational, and meaningful. Accordingly, it can be assertively deduced that out-of-door activities aids in finalizing the triangular process of learning (motivations, clarifications and stimulations). Again, Aggarwal (2008) points out that out-of-door activities target at enriching, stimulating and supplementing content areas of the curriculum via firsthand observations and direct experience outside the classrooms. Corroborating the opinion of Aggarwal (2008), Kisiel (2006) believes that, out-of-door activities promote meaningful connection to the curriculum, as what students encounter during the outdoor activities are real-life applications of what they have been learning in class.

2.5 Challenges of out-of-door activities

A lot have been established regarding the challenges of deteriorating opportunities for out-of-door activities (for example, Harris, 1999; Barker et al., 2002). Available literature submits the widespread challenges and opportunities that characterize out-of-door activities over recent years. This section will be devoted to looking at the challenges of out-of-door activities that serve as a disincentive to teachers to use in their teaching.

A frequently-cited challenge for out-of-door activities is the fears and concerns about the health and safety of the students during these tours or out-of-door activities. Over the decades, the involvements of students in accidents have attained the attention of many researchers, authors, parents, policymakers, school authorities as well as many stakeholders within and outside the educational sector, which seems to overshadow the educational benefits of out-of-door activities (Thomas, 1999).

Another significant challenge that hinders out-of-door activities is the inadequate confidence and expertise knowledge on the parts of teachers to carry out effectively in out-of-door activities. A survey by Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) on the Outdoor and Adventurous Activities (OAA) in 33 English schools found that teachers experience' as a crucial factor affecting the quality of OAA in different schools (Clay, 1999). This was emphasized by Titman (1999) cited in Rickinson et al. (2004) in their qualitative study of 32 secondary schools in England. Titman (1999) as cited in Rickinson et al. (2004) found that personal and professional limitations (lack of training and fear of lack of control) as one of the barriers of using out-of-door activities. Similar findings were made by prior studies in England and Australia (e.g., Skamp & Bergman, 2001; Malone & Tranter, 2003a; 2003b; Rickinson et al., 2003a; 2003b) all cited in Rickinson et al. (2004).

This gives credence to the fact that, most teachers do not have the expertise to organize successful out-of-door activities which by extension goes to defeat the purposes of the trip. This was confirmed by Ayaaba (2006) when he intimates that "poorly planned trips are worse than none at all, for they lack purpose, may jeopardize the safety of the children, may course poor public relation between the school and the community, and can break down learning which the teacher should have been trying to achieve in the classroom".

Michie (1998) cited in Behrendt and Franklin (2014) contributing to the challenges of out-of-door activity identified the following seven barriers to successful trips:

1. Transportation;

2. Teachers' training and experience;
3. Time issues such as school schedule and teacher's ability to prepare;
4. Lack of school administrator support for field trips;
5. Curriculum inflexibility;
6. Poor student behavior and attitudes;
7. Lack of venue options.

Tamakloe et al. (2005) commenting on the challenges of out-of-door activities intimate that, out-of-door activities "are usually costly to be undertaken more especially when the phenomenon for the study is far away from the school". Evaluating the above challenges, it can be established that, planning a successful out-of-door activity is not a child's play since there are a lot of challenges that come with it. It is therefore important that as a teacher teaching social studies, you must endeavor to bring your expertise and experience to bear in order to organize a successful trip that will motivate and connect students to appreciate and understand classroom concepts better than indoor lessons. It is also important to motivate yourself as a teacher and not allow the challenges of out-of-door activities to put you off from using it in teaching.

2.6 Barriers in the use of out-of-door activities

According to Ayaaba and Odumah (2013), teachers organizing out-of-door activities must first obtain administrative permission for the trip and make arrangements for transportation. They further maintain that it is better to use a public transport or a school bus than use private vehicles. In using private vehicles, the teacher is never sure if the vehicle is properly insured, if the driver is competent behind the wheel, or even if he has a valid drivers' license.

Victor (1965) on his part asserts that the out-of-door activity can be effective as a teaching technique only when it has a purpose. There must be a real reason for taking an out-of-door activity. The purpose may be to introduce or arouse interest in a new unit, to find the answers to questions and problems raised during the unit, or to summarize the highlights and important understandings of the unit. Whatever the purpose is, it should be understood by all the children.

In the words of Finchum (2013), when organizing an out-of-door activity, one of the important considerations is whether the site is accessible for students with disabilities. Since the social studies classroom is made up of different students with different needs, it is important to create a very helpful environment to cater for each student during such visit. This can be done by first visiting the site and making the necessary arrangement for the visit. According to Woolf (2012) cited in Finchum (2013), proper out-of-door activity behavior should be taught and practiced in advance as well. With this, it is significant that students need to have some background knowledge of the site to be visited, along with an understanding of the goals to be accomplished while at the site. It is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that, students are well prepared in advance for the trip by way of having background knowledge of the location to be visited. Lastly, Orion (1993) posits that, "out-of-door activities should be a learning experience. This criterion may seem trivial, but in reality, most field trips can be summarized as adventure social events. In order to make out-of-door activity more educational, a teacher should develop learning materials that both prepare students for the trip as well as guide them through it". With this, Orion believes that the purpose of organizing trips will be achieved.

3. Theoretical framework

The SHS social studies syllabus is a replete of abstract concepts such as democracy and nation building, socialization, leadership and followership (Ayaaba, 2006). It is suggested in the syllabus that opportunities are created by teachers for students to relate these abstract concepts to tangible or real-life situations in order for the students to learn or have firsthand information of such concepts and equally live by such tenants as future leaders (Oikonomou, 2012). This, no doubt, per the objectives of social studies as spelt out in the SHS social studies syllabus can be associated with the socio-cultural and experiential views of learning elaborated by Vygotsky (1978) and Dewey (1938) respectively (CRDD, 2010).

Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory of human learning describes learning as a social process and the origination of human intelligence in society or culture. The major theme of Vygotsky's theoretical framework is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. Vygotsky believed everything is learned on

two levels. First, through interaction with others, and then integrated into the individual's mental structure. Vygotsky (1978) posits that,

“Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals”.

Furthermore, in out-of-door activities, the socio-cultural environment is the site where students are taken to learn, providing them with the platform to interact with the social environment, their mates and the teacher as well (Ajitoni & Salako, 2013; Taniguchi et al., 2005). Out-of-door activities, even those that are intended as entertainment, provide such “life experiences” that connect to the various disciplines in the realm of social studies. Dewey (1938) believes that experience and education are two concepts strongly related to the learning process. According to Dewey (1938) “there is an intimate and necessary relation between the process of actual experience and education”. Hence, in this way, experience is an important component of the learning process (Higgins & Nicol, 2002). Students need to value such experiences related to social studies if they are to truly understand social studies. Before that can be realized, there is the need to look at how social studies teachers use out-of-door activities as a technique in teaching, which logically promotes Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory which forms the bases of my study.

The rationale for the use of out-of-door activities as part of the school curriculum is well established and at the same time recommended as stated in the Citizenship Education/social studies curriculum right from the upper primary to the tertiary level; thus, from a both theoretical and practical perspective (Wilhelmsson, 2012; Ottander et al., 2015). With regard to the former, Bransford et al. (2005) contend that, survey on informal education must be emphasized in conjunction with research on formal learning because learning is learning regardless of the setting.

Similarly, these two types of learning that, by definition, take place in different contexts in the social studies classrooms are viewed independently not just by researchers but by teachers and students leading some social studies students to declare that they are not learning anything in informal settings unless formal procedure (Griffin & Symington, 1997). The observation that the social studies classroom tends to be abstract, divorced from the real world, involves ideas and generally lacks connections to live experience (Ramey-Gassert, 1997) supports the conclusion that teachers often separate formal and informal learning as well. It appears that even social studies teachers who lead out-of-door activities often separate the two by failing to provide purposeful connections to the curriculum for students (Anderson et al., 2006; Griffin & Symington, 1997).

The implication of Vygotsky's theory to this study is that, the Vygotsky's theory places emphasis on the fundamental roles of social interactions in the developments of cognition (Vygotsky, 1978), as such he opined that strong community engagements play essential roles in the process of “making meaning”. By extension, out-of-door activities present students or learners the opportunity to have some forms of social interaction with their communities and acquire firsthand information or knowledge of their surroundings. Vygotsky's theory submits that social interactions are essential for effective learning. Accordingly, the essences of out-of-door activities are to foster social interactions, and to develop the cognition of the learners to make meanings of their immediate environments.

In sum, it is clear that, the socio-cultural and experiential philosophies of learning views social interactions, which take place in a culturally and physically defined context, as learning events. Because the questions of interest focus on teachers' perceptions and more specifically, teachers' experiences and interactions during out-of-door activities. A socio-cultural and experiential approach is useful to uncover insights about teachers' practices in the teaching of social studies. Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory and John Dewey's experiential learning theory strongly support out-of-door activities as an educational strategy because they motivate, engage students and foster learning connections between formal and informal settings calling for a study into how social studies teachers use out-of-door activities in teaching.

4. Methodology

Considering the research problem, the purpose and the research questions formulated as spelt out in chapter one, the researcher adopted the concurrent mixed methods design which is also called parallel, convergent and simultaneous

mixed methods design (Creswell, 2003; Morse, 1991; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The study was conducted in fourteen (14) senior high schools comprising seven government assisted senior high schools and seven private senior high schools in the Ho Municipality of the Volta Region of Ghana. The Population of the study included all Senior High Schools' social studies teachers in the Volta Region. All social studies teachers in both public and private Senior High Schools in the Ho Municipality constituted the accessible population. In all, there were fourteen (14) Senior High Schools which were made up of seven (7) government assisted and seven (7) private registered ones, with a total social studies teacher's population of seventy-nine (79) at the Ho Municipality at the time of conducting the research (Data from G.E.S Volta Region Office).

A sample of seventy (70) SHS social studies teachers from fourteen (14) Senior High Schools within the Municipality was selected for the study. Non-probability sampling methods such as convenience and purposive sampling techniques were employed by the researcher to select the sample of district, schools and respondents (teachers) for the study. Convenience sampling technique was employed to select the Ho Municipality out of the twenty-five (25) districts in the Volta Region of the Republic of Ghana. Ho Municipality was selected due to the large number of Senior High Schools it houses. As at the time of conducting the research, there were fifteen (15) Senior High Schools which were made up of seven (7) government assisted and eight (8) private registered ones. Fourteen (14) Senior High Schools were conveniently selected for the study out of the fifteen (15) because I had the permit to conduct the study in those schools. Convenience sampling technique was again used to select seventy (70) teachers teaching social studies for the study from the Municipality. Even though as at the time of the study there were 79 social studies teachers in all the fifteen (15) schools studied, seventy (70) of them were sampled for the study because they had given their consent to be studied. According to Fray et al. (2000), convenience sampling includes participants who are readily available and agree to participate in a study. Also, purposive sampling technique was employed to select eight trained graduate social studies teachers (8) out of the seventy (70) sampled teachers for one-on-one interview. This technique was employed in order to allow the researcher select teachers who are trained graduates in social studies to serve as respondents for the study. It was important to select trained graduate social studies teachers for the interview because it was assumed that they have acquired the professional training in the subject and have the required knowledge the researcher sought for in the research.

Techniques for data collection used were the questionnaire and interview. Through these, primary data were largely collected. The entry of quantitative data and analysis was done using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). However, qualitative data collected through interview were analysed using the interpretive method based on the themes arrived at in the data collection. The researcher related the themes to the research questions and interpreted on a number of issues raised by respondents. These were based on questions on the semi-structured interviews. It is important to note that data presentation and interpretation aided by the questionnaire and interview was done concurrently.

5. Data analysis

This section presents and explains the outcome of the research having gathered the questionnaire and interview responses. Simultaneously, in this chapter, the major findings set out are interpreted, discussed and inferences made from them in view of findings from related literature as purported in chapter two of this study. The presentation is done using the mixed methods approach (concurrent mixed methods design) and with recourse to the three formulated research questions as in chapter one. The results underpinning this study were organised in formal themes derived from the participants' questionnaire and interview transcripts. Both questionnaire and semi-structured interview questions, focused on teachers' use of out-of-door activities in their instruction and the challenges faced by teachers when embarking on out-of-door activities.

These enabled teacher participants to select responses from the questionnaire and respond to the interview questions in their own words: their use of out-of-door activities in their instruction and the challenges they faced when embarking on out-of-door activities. In particular, the key questions this research addressed are:

1. How do Senior High Schools social studies teachers in the Ho Municipality use out-of-door activities in their instruction?
2. What are the challenges faced by teachers when embarking on out-of-door activities?

The findings are presented and discussed below.

5.1 Social studies teachers' use of out-of-door activities

To answer the research question; “How do Senior High Schools social studies teachers in the Ho Municipality use out-of-door activities in their instruction?”, the following are results from questionnaire and as well as the semi-structured interviews conducted. SD represents strongly disagree; D, disagree; U, uncertain; A, agree; SA, strongly agree. The data in Table 1 as well as interview answer the research question.

Table 1. Social studies teachers' use of out-of-door activities

Statement	N (%)				
	SD	D	U	A	SA
I usually embark on out-of-door activities with my students when the need be.	3(4.3)	8(11.4)	3(4.3)	48(68.6)	8(11.4)
The level of students' participation in my out-of-door activities is always high.	1(1.4)	8(11.4)	9(12.9)	37(52.9)	15(21.4)
Students get the social studies concepts better whenever I embark on an out-of-door activity.	0(0.0)	2(2.9)	8(11.4)	32(45.7)	28(40.0)
The trips I embark on are always linked to my instructional goals.	0(0.0)	1(1.4)	7(10.0)	45(64.3)	17(24.3)
I use post out-of-door activities to highlight students' experiences in the social studies classroom.	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	14(20.0)	44(62.9)	12(17.1)

Source: Field data, 2015

I usually embark on out-of-door activities with my students when the need be.

The figures here in Table 1, Row 1 indicate that most of the SHS social studies teachers sampled for this study claimed that they usually embark on out-of-door activities when the need be. This is because 8(11.4%) and 48(68.6%) responded strongly agreed and agreed respectively to this item making an aggregate of 56(80.0%) out of 70 respondents. Despite this massive use of out-of-door activities as endorsed by 56 of the respondents, 8(11.4%) did say they disagreed and 3(4.3%) saying they strongly disagreed with three (3) respondents, representing a percentage of 4.3 not certain.

The level of students' participation in my out-of-door activities is always high.

In Table 1 Row 2, it is shown that, some of the teachers asserted that students' participation is always high during out-of-door activities. This shown by the ‘15(21.4%) strongly agreed and 37(52.9%) agreed’ endorsement from the teachers, depicting a cumulative percentage 74.3. Nevertheless, some of the teachers were in disconnection with the assertion, this is evidential as ‘8(11.4%) disagreed, 1(1.4%) strongly disagreed and nine (9) are not certain’. Thus, to them (25.7%), students' participation is not always high during out-of-door activities.

Students get the social studies concepts better whenever I embark on an out-of-door activity.

Table 1, Row 3 was included to ascertain whether students get the social studies concepts better whenever teachers embark on an out-of-door activity. The results from the table indicated that as many as 28(40.0%) and 32(45.7%) of the sampled teachers indicated that they strongly agreed and agreed respectfully with the assertion, representing a cumulative percent of 85.7. on the other hand, 8(11.4%) of the respondents were uncertain as to whether students get the social studies concepts better whenever teachers embark on out-of-door activities, however only 2(2.9%) of the total respondents (teachers) disagreed with the assertion.

The trips I embark on are always linked to my instructional goals.

Also, the results from Table 1, Row 4 suggests that a number of SHS social studies teachers linked their trips to instructional goals. Thus, a representative of 17(24.3%) and 45(64.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively to this item. Whereas a total of 8(11.4%) respondents also disclosed that they do not link the trips to instructional goals. Nevertheless 7(10.0%) were undecided to the item. On the aggregate, a good number of the respondents 62(88.6%) affirmed to linked their trips to instructional goals.

I use post out-of-door activities to highlight students' experiences in the social studies classroom.

Finally, the result in Table 1, Row depicts that most of the teachers, sampled for this study, use post out-of-door

activities to highlight students' experiences in the social studies classroom. This is evidential as 56(80.0%) of the respondents agreed to the assertion. On the other hand, none of the respondents were disaffirmed the claim, however 14(20.0%) of them were undecided about using post out-of-door activities to highlight students' experiences in the social studies classroom.

5.2 Challenges faced by teachers when embarking on out-of-door activities

This section examined the challenges faced by teachers when embarking on out-of-door activities. Here the researcher wanted to establish whether social studies teachers who embark on out-of-door activities do face challenges. The researcher identified the challenge and asked the respondents to choose using the likert scale as illustrated in the other tables. The results are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Challenges faced by teachers when embarking on out-of-door activities

Characteristics	N (%)				
	SD	D	U	A	SA
I do face challenges anytime I embarked on out-of-door activities.	0(0.0)	2(2.9)	4(5.7)	45(64.3)	19(27.1)
Challenges faced					
i. Lack of support from the school	2(2.9)	7(10.0)	10(14.3)	31(44.3)	20(28.6)
ii. Problem in securing a vehicle for the trips	3(4.3)	13(18.6)	7(10.0)	31(44.3)	16(22.9)
iii. Students' inability to pay for the trips	2(2.9)	3(4.3)	5(7.1)	41(58.6)	19(27.1)
iv. Difficult to get the consent of parents	7(10.0)	6(8.6)	13(18.6)	28(40.0)	16(22.9)
v. Exposure of students to hazards	0(0.0)	11(15.7)	9(12.9)	31(44.3)	19(27.1)
vi. Limited time to undertake the trips	2(2.9)	2(2.9)	3(4.3)	35(50.0)	28(40.0)
vii. Indiscipline among students during the trips	3(4.3)	11(15.7)	14(20.0)	27(38.6)	15(21.4)
viii. Disrupting the schools programme	0(0.0)	8(11.4)	5(7.1)	31(44.3)	26(37.1)
Measures					
I always put in place measures to limit the challenges the next time I embark on an out-of-door activity	0(0.0)	2(2.9)	6(8.6)	42(60.0)	20(28.6)

Source: Field data, 2015

I do face challenges anytime I embarked on out-of-door activities.

First of all, the researcher enquired whether the teachers face some challenges anytime they embarked on out-of-door activities. With this item, only 2(2.9%) affirmed to face any challenge, whereas 4(5.7%) could not tell whether face challenges or not. However, majority of the respondents 64(91.4%) affirmed encounter challenges any time they embark on out-of-door activities. By inferences, if one is to go by this information, then it can be suggested that most social studies teachers who do use out-of-door activities in the Ho Municipality of Ghana do encounter some challenges.

As such, to unearth the type or nature of challenges faced by these teachers, the researcher asked the respondents to show their level of agreement or disagreement to the statement, assertion or claims as listed i-viii in Table 2. questions were posed to the teachers to identify of challenges encounter anytime embarked on out-of-door activities.

Regarding the kind or nature of challenges as encountered by the social studies teachers during out-of-door activities, one of the foremost challenges as identified or affirmed by some of the teachers is *Lack of support from the school* (Table 2, row 2). 51(72.9%) of the respondents agreed to this assertion, affirming that they lack supports from their schools any time they embark on out-of-door activities. However, 9(12.9%) of the respondent refutes the claim, suggesting that they do receive some supports form their respective schools, particularly when embark on out-of-door

activities. Nevertheless, 10(14.3) respondents could not state their level of agreements of disagreement of this item or claim.

Another challenge as captured in Table 2, row 2(ii), is the *Problem in securing a vehicle for the trips*. This assertion was affirmed by 47(67.2%) of the respondents. However, 16(22.9%) refute the assertion. By extension, 47(67.2%) do face problems in securing a vehicle for the trips, while 16(22.9%) do not face such problem. However, the remaining 7(10.0%) were undecided or neutral about the issue.

Moving on, from the results in Table 2, row 2(iii) the teachers suggested the challenge of *Students' inability to pay for the trips*, the challenge was affirmed by 60(85.7%) of the respondents. Other challenges affirmed by majority of the respondents included *Difficult to get the consent of parents* 44(62.9%), and *Exposure of students to hazards* 50(71.4%), *Limited time to undertake the trips* 63(90.0%), *Indiscipline among students during the trips* 42(60.0%), and *Disrupting the school's programme* 57(81.4%).

5.3 Discussion of results: Social studies teachers' use of out-of-door activities

Under this theme, the study generally gathered data pertinent to the second research question. The data gathered sought to unearth whether social studies teachers' use out-of-door activities in their teaching. The questionnaire results (Table 1, Row 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5) endorsed the fact that, some teachers do use out-of-door activities in their teaching. However, the interview findings further affirm this finding. Unlike the questionnaire, the interview revealed that some of the teachers do not use out-of-door activities because of the difficulty involved in organizing it. Out of the eight sampled for the interview, only three respondents confirmed that their use of out-of-door activities. Even with that, the three could not tell when they used it to teach. For instance, when the researcher asked Mr. Fakfak (not the real name) to state when he embarked on out-of-door activities, this was what he said, *"somewhere last two years, I can't remember the day off hand"*. This confirms the fact that some of the teachers (probably very few of them) do not often use out-of-door activities in their instruction as expected of social studies teachers. Notwithstanding three respondents out of the eight interviewees who affirmed that they use out-of-door activities, were able to establish to some extent that the purposes of their trips are linked with the social studies syllabus. When I asked Mr. Fakfak (not the real name) whether the trip is linked with the social studies syllabus, this is what he said:

"It is in line with social studies syllabus because the syllabus demands that concepts are made practical and real to students which will further provide them with relevant knowledge values and skills changing their behavior for the better. I think the trip is in line with the syllabus".

Digesting this statement, it can be determined that, those who indicated that they do use out-of-door activities claimed that their activities are linked with the social studies syllabus, even though some could not convincingly ascertain the linkage very well. This do not correspond with a study conducted by Rebar (2009a) at Oregon State University, when he intimated that, some teachers confessed that they did not coordinate the trip with the curriculum while other teachers also revealed that the timing of the trip did not ideally match their curriculum even though they responded that the trip was aligned with the curriculum. Nevertheless, in the same study, some teachers disclosed that they coordinated the trip with the curriculum. This suggests that, not all out-of-door activities are linked to the curriculum or syllabus, as manifested in this study.

Questionnaire results (Table 1, Row 5) and the interview findings point to the fact that social studies teachers do use post out-of-door activities to highlight students' experiences. The transcribed interview authenticated to that fact, even though the use of post out-of-door activities was limited to the three respondents who indicated using out-of-door activities in their instruction. For instance, Mr. Fakfak (not the real name) stated that, *"I normally use small group discussion and sometimes question to reinforce students' experiences"*. Mr. Evans (not the real name) on his part speculates that:

"Actually, it was not all students that had the opportunity to go because of financial, but when we came back, I went through the topic with the students referring them to the things we saw there. I asked questions for which the students answered and the students also asked questions for clarification".

From the responses of these two respondents, it can be established that, indeed, some social studies teachers who sometimes use out-of-door activities do use post out-of-door activities to highlight students' experiences given weight to (Falk & Dierking, 2000; Kisiel, 2006; Orion & Hofstein, 1994; Pace & Tesi, 2004; Tal & Steiner, 2006) cited in Behrendt and Franklin (2014), when they posit that teachers' actions after the field trip are very important. They continued that, the students' experiences need to be reinforced through discussions, activities, reading, a television show or movie. Supporting Behrendt and Franklin (2014) came out that, students need to solidify their new ideas and observations which have not yet made connections. They persist that reflection will help build those connections, as well as reinforce the successful connections already made on the trip. Kisiel (2006) also maintains that, students generate greater understanding as teachers develop potential connections through reflection. The stance of the various writers is a clear indication that post out-of-door activities are very crucial to the social studies teacher, hence the need for teachers to use it to achieve their objectives.

Furthermore, this finding concurs with the Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory of human learning. The foremost concept of Vygotsky's (1978) theory is to sustain student's interests and experience using social interactions. In this theory, individuals use social interaction as a cognitive tool to understand their surroundings. As observed from the results in Row 5 (Table 1), most of the teachers sampled for this study affirmed that they use "post out-of-door activities to highlight students' experiences in the social studies classroom". This suggests that the socio-cultural environments or interactions, to some extent, influence the cognition developments of students.

5.4 Discussion of results: Challenges faced by social studies teachers

The results from Table 2 reveal that many teachers recruited for this study they do face challenges any time they embark on out-of-door activities (see Table 2, row 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9). It is also evident from Table 2 that a good number of the teachers who face those challenges do put in place measures to limit their occurrence (See Table 2, row 10). Similarly, the data from the interview also suggested that teachers who embark on out-of-door activities do encounter some challenges. This really presupposes that the social studies teacher cannot escape from challenges likely to be encountered in out-of-door activities. During the interview, a respondent had this to say:

"In fact, I find it difficult to secure permission from the municipal education office and also getting a transport for the programme was a major issue before I embarked on the trip. During the trip the students were many so controlling them was a headache. After the trip I can't remember any challenge as such" (Mr. Fakfak).

"Before the trip, in the organization we wanted all students in the final year to be involved in the trip, because social studies is a core subject. As such we involved all social studies teachers but most of them did no assist in the preparation. Financial problem also prevented most students from participating in the trip because the place was too far away from the school as such, we could not get enough students for the trip. We had problem with transportation but the headmaster intervened. During the trip we found it difficult to organize the students to board the vehicle and some of the students brought their money for the trip that same day. Controlling the students was a bit difficult especially when we are about to move to the next place. They were more interested in taking pictures. After the trip we did not encounter any difficult on a whole it was a success" (Mr. Evans).

From the exposition above, it can be established that indeed, social studies teachers who embarked on out-of-door activities face challenges. The teachers were able to tell the challenges they faced before, during and after the trips. This may discourage some teachers from using the technique to teach, as such making the technique scarce in most schools. This validates the work of Behrendt and Franklin (2014) when they posit that, out-of-door activities have become less common in schools due to limited funding and limited available time. From the work of Behrendt and Franklin, it can be realized that, funding out-of-door activities is very expensive and it involves too much time throwing light on the work of Tamakloe et al. (2005), when they stress that, out-of-door activities "are usually costly to be undertaken more especially when the phenomenon for the study is far away from the school".

Michie (1998) cited in Behrendt and Franklin (2014) also identified seven barriers to successful field trips: 1) transportation; 2) teacher training and experience; 3) time issues such as school schedule and teacher's ability to prepare;

4) lack of school administrator support for field trips; 5) curriculum inflexibility; 6) poor student behavior and attitudes; and 7) lack of venue options. With this, it is crucial that the social studies teacher prepares him/herself to overcome the challenges that will be arising in organizing out-of-door activities since the technique cannot be underrated despite the difficulty in organising it.

I always put in place measures to limit the challenges the next time I embark on an out-of-door activity.

The final item on the likert scale in section D of the questionnaire sought to gather the teachers' responses to whether they always put in place measures to limit the challenges encountered the next time they embark on an out-of-door activity. From the mathematical analysis in Table 2 row 10, it can be said that 62 respondents (88.6%) put in place measures to curtail the challenges. Specifically, 20(28.6%) strongly agree to this practice and 42(60.0%) also do agree despite 2(2.9%) do not agree to the practice and 6(8.6%) also undecided.

5.5 Discussion of results: Measures adopted to mitigate challenges in organizing out-of-door activities

The results from Table 2, row 10 and the interview findings suggest that teachers who face challenges while embarking on out-of-door activities, do try to put in place measures to limit those challenges, for the next visit or out-of-door activities. Similarly, during the interview, two of the respondents who intimated that they use out-of-door activities, have this to say:

"I think I have to just come out with strategies of solving those challenges I encountered. The next time I will embark on out-of-door activity I have to plan ahead by informing students to prepare ahead of time by informing their parents so that they can pay without any difficulty. I will also educate the students to know why they are undertaking the trip and that it is not a trip for fun but an avenue to learn" (Mr. Evans).

"I will involve more teachers so that controlling the students will be less difficult. I will also make arrangement for a transport earlier than before. Again, I will give a prior notice to the education office to avoid any undue delay" (Mr. Fakfak).

From the above description of the measure, some of the teachers adopt to curtail the challenges, it can be established that a number of the teachers simply ignore the basic steps to follow in planning out-of-door activities hence the challenge. Some of the measures as mentioned or stated by some of the teachers are the essential initial steps that a teacher must go through in order to plan a successful and educative trip. This brings to mind the need for teachers to have experience in planning and attending out-of-door activities as suggested by Behrendt and Franklin (2014) which, by extension, will benefit both teachers and students at large.

Observing how out-of-door activities are planned, Behrendt and Franklin (2014) mentioned before, during and after the trip as the areas to consider when organizing out-of-door activities. They continued that, the teacher's role in preplanning, implementation, and reflection often dictates the impact that the out-of-door activity will have on students. It is therefore crucial for teachers to get themselves acquainted with the nitty-gritties in planning of out-of-door activities to minimize the challenges they encounter.

6. Major findings

The main findings of the research were:

1. It was revealed that most SHS social studies teachers usually embark on out-of-door activities when the need be. This is to suggest that the SHS social studies teachers resort to out-of-door activities the need arises. The social student curriculum for Senior High Schools in Ghana is planned, drafted or orchestrated in the form that hinder frequent out-of-door activities. Students are scheduled to spend significant number of hours in the classroom. Other factors that hinder frequent utilization of out-of-door activities include the bureaucracies in seeking permission, seeking the consents of the students' parents or guardians and the inherent safety issues through the out-of-door activities. Therefore, SHS social studies teachers, rationally, may only embark on out-of-door activities when the need arises rather than abuse the

process.

2. Also, it was revealed that most of the teachers believe that students are fully ready to participate in any out-of-door activities. This is evident in row 2 of Table 1. Though the concepts of out-of-door activities borders on education, however the prior literature as discussed above suggests that it can be considered as entertainments that provide unique life learning experiences. Students as they are will always be eager to partake in forms of entertainments to shed off academic stress-spanning from long sitting hours and boredom lectures. Also, be it as it may, students are naturally curious and inquisitive; they are desirous to explore, investigate and draw inferences. Therefore, they would jump at any given opportunity to explore, enquire and find answers to information, problems or concepts buffering their minds. More so, this concurs with the Vygotsky's theory, in the light that active participation forms an essential component of social interaction. Active participation creates the frameworks for dialogues to occur, and ideas are exchanged which leads to advanced developments. Vygotsky believe that the willingness to actively participate or be part of the social interaction, is a primary mechanism for cognitive developments.

3. It was further revealed that most teachers opined that students get the social studies concepts better whenever they embark on an out-of-door activity. This is evident in row 3 of Table 1.

4. Lastly, some of the respondents also perceived out-of-door activities to be saddled with many challenges. However, they perceived that these challenges inherently be addressed.

7. Conclusion

Based on the results obtained from the study, the following conclusions have been reached:

It was established that social studies teachers do use the technique in teaching and ensure that, the trips they embarked on are always aligned with the topics, which is essential feature in the organization of out-of-door activities. It was also a revelation in the study that, teachers who admitted using out-of-door activities in their instruction do encounter challenges before, during and after the trips. To make their subsequent trips a success, it was discovered that social studies teachers put in measures to mitigate the challenges.

8. Recommendations

In order to promote the use of out-of-door activities in the teaching and learning of social studies, the government through the Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service (G.E.S) and Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) should make funds available for senior high schools to organize out-of-door activities, specifically, in the teaching and learning of social studies to enhance students understanding.

Again, the government through the Ministry of Education and G.E.S, should advise heads of institutions to support and encourage teachers, particularly, social studies teachers to embark on out-of-door activities within and outside their school community to boost students understanding of the concept that are mostly abstract in nature.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no competing financial interest.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

I am Osumanu Sheik Jibililu, researching into how social studies teachers in Senior High Schools use out-of-door activities in their Teaching in Ho Municipality of Ghana.

The questionnaire seeks to examine how social studies teachers in Senior High Schools use out-of-door activities in their Teaching. Your answers and comments will be kept confidential. Please respond to the following questions as best as you can. There is no correct or wrong response but the response you opt for represents your best opinion. Your honest and complete responses will be most useful and helpful. Thank you in advance for your cooperation. You have the right to withdraw from responding to the questionnaire in case you are no more interested to continue in the course of the work.

Completed questionnaire should be returned to the office of the Head master/head of department of social studies or the researcher.

Section A: Social studies teachers' use of out-of-door activities

Please *carefully read* the following statements and *circle* the number in front of the item in the box that corresponds to your use of out-of-door activities. The responses span along the two extremes of *Strongly Disagree* and *Strongly Agree*. In the following items, *1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly Agree*.

	Statements	Please Circle				
		SD	D	U	A	SA
1	I usually embark on out-of-door activities with my students when the need be.	1	2	3	4	5
2	The level of students' participation in my out-of-door activities is always high.	1	2	3	4	5
3	Students get the social studies concepts better whenever I embark on an out-of-door activity.	1	2	3	4	5
4	The trips I embark on are always linked to my instructional goals.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I use post out-of-door activities to highlight students' experiences in the social studies classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I do face challenges anytime I embarked on out-of-door activities.	1	2	3	4	5
7	The following challenges are among those I face whenever I embarked on out-of-door activities.					
	i. Lack of support from the school.	1	2	3	4	5
	ii. Problem in securing a vehicle for the trips.	1	2	3	4	5
	iii. Students' inability to pay for the trips.	1	2	3	4	5
	iv. Difficult to get the consent of parents.	1	2	3	4	5
	v. Exposure of students to hazards.	1	2	3	4	5
	vi. Limited time to undertake the trips.	1	2	3	4	5
	vii. Indiscipline among students during the trips.	1	2	3	4	5
	viii. Disrupting the schools programme.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I always put in place measures to limit the challenges the next time I embark on an out-of-door activity.	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you very much for your participation

Appendix B

Section B: Interview guide-Social studies teacher's practices of out-of-door activities

1. Are there any opportunities in your day-to-day teaching that lends themselves to out-of-door activities?
 - If yes, when was the last time you embarked on an out-of-door activity?
 - If no, find out the reason and end interview.
2. What was the topic?
3. Where did you visit?
4. What was the purpose for the trip?
5. How aligned is/are the purpose(s) of the trip with the goals of SHS social studies syllabus?
6. What post out-of-door activities do you engage your students in?
7. What are some challenges you encounter before, during and after the trip?
8. How do you intend improving your use of out-of-door activity?
9. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Thank You