

Teaching Social Studies in an Integrated Manner: The Lived Experience of Out-Of-Field Social Studies Teachers

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Abstract: This study investigated the pedagogical implications of out-of-field teaching in Social Studies. The Out-of-field Social Studies teachers could encounter several challenges in their preparation and the implementation of the integrated Social Studies curriculum. This study sought the lived experiences of the out-of-field teachers concerning the causes of out-of-field teaching in social studies, problems encountered by the out-of-field teachers and the mechanisms they employ to cope with the teaching of Social Studies. The study chose the qualitative phenomenological research design. Data were collected from all the 17 out-of-field Social Studies teachers through in-depth structured interview. Data were transcribed and analysed, through the inductive thematic analysis approach, unveiling of themes and concepts from the narratives of the research participants. The study revealed that out-of-field teaching in Social Studies occurs as a result of teacher shortage in integrated social studies programme. It is also caused by the perception that any teacher could teach Social Studies irrespective of the teachers' qualification. Out-of-field teacher encounter problems such as inadequate content and pedagogical knowledge, lack of classroom managerial techniques and inability to deliver lessons through the integrated approach. Engaging in professional development courses, peer coaching, in-service training and workshops were some of the mechanisms employed by out-of-field teachers to cope with the teaching of Social Studies. The pedagogical implications of this phenomenon are that when teaching the Social Studies, the out-of-field teachers place more emphasis on aspects of the Social Studies curriculum where they have much knowledge and skip or put less emphasis on other aspects they lack in-depth knowledge, thus, the integrated approach to teaching Social Studies is not adopted effectively by out-of-field teachers. This waters down the content of Social Studies at the Senior High School level. Addressing the problem of out-of-field teaching in Social Studies requires training and recruiting more teachers who have background training and experience in the integrated approach to the teaching of Social Studies.

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1. Introduction

Several factors affect the success of education in Ghana. One of such factors is teacher quality [1]. Teacher quality has been widely considered to affect the quality of education. Teacher quality also contributes significantly to lesson delivery and students' achievement. Therefore, how teachers are prepared for instruction before and after their recruitment is crucial in determining teacher quality. The most important characteristics of a quality teacher is preparation in the subject or field in which the teacher is teaching. Subject knowledge (knowing what to teach) and teaching skills (knowing how to teach) are important predictors of both teaching quality and student learning [2].

The argument for the necessity of preparation and education in subject knowledge is especially clear for second cycle level of education in Ghana for two reasons. Firstly, at the second cycle level, teachers are classified into specialised fields than in basic schools, and therefore the differences between fields are more distinct and, perhaps, greater. Secondly,

the level of mastery needed to teach one's subject is higher at the secondary school level, and therefore a clear case has been made by policy analysts and researchers that subject teachers ought to have adequate and substantive background in the subjects they teach [1]. It, therefore, becomes a problem when teachers teach out of the field they were prepared, trained and developed before their graduation, hence, the phenomenon of out-of-field teaching.

This phenomenon, usually occurs more with second cycle Social Studies education where most students are taught by such out-of-field teachers, who are, otherwise experts in some other subjects including Geography, Economics, History, Christian Religious Studies, Home Economics, Accounting, Management Education, etc. The phenomenon stems from the integrated nature of Social Studies which blends knowledge, experiences, ideas, concepts, theories and principles from diverse discipline areas including the humanities and the social sciences [3]. The underlying philosophy is that knowledge blended in this manner provides holistic perspective to the learner and adequately equip him or her to explain societal phenomena or solve knotty societal problems from multifaceted dimensions since societal problems defy solutions from the single subject areas. At the second cycle level of education, the Social Studies teacher should have adequate knowledge in the humanities and social sciences to be able to teach Social Studies effectively. It is based on this backdrop that [4] posits that the Social Studies subject more than any other subject demands teachers who are soundly prepared and equipped with knowledge in the various areas. It must be noted that effective teaching of Social Studies demands teachers who are knowledgeable, qualified and experienced in both the pedagogy and knowledge-base of social sciences including Geography, Economics, History, and Sociology [3]. It is only when teacher have acquired the requisite content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge in History, Geography, Political Science, Economics, Anthropology and Sociology that they would be able to prepare and teach Social studies successfully in an integrated manner. On the contrary, these out-of-field teachers, as used in this study, hold degrees in other allied social sciences and non-social science disciplines and therefore are likely to teach what they do not know in Social Studies. Such teachers may face some problems regarding the teaching of Social Studies. Research has shown that when teachers teach out of field, their experiences in terms of how they teach the content, the problems they encounter and the mechanisms they employ to cope with the teaching of the subject have serious practical implications on the subject. Besides, students of such teachers are likely to miss the very core values the subject develops in them (students) for binding society together, thus, compromising the quality of Social Studies education in Ghana. The knowledge and methodological gaps could have serious pedagogical implications on the teaching of Social Studies at the second cycle level of education in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Accordingly, the lived experiences of these out-of-field teachers concerning the causes of out-of-field teaching, the problems they encounter, the mechanisms they employ to teach the integrated Social Studies, as well as the pedagogical implications of this phenomenon, were sought, hence, this study.

2. Research Methods

This study used the phenomenological in-depth interviewing method to collect data from out-of-field teachers who are currently teaching Social Studies in Senior High Schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis. It was a qualitative method intended to examine out-of-field teachers who have specialisation in other fields other than Social Studies education. The phenomenological method was chosen because it provided in-depth understanding of the experiences of these teachers who were small in number through one-on-one interview.

2.1. Population

All the 17 SHS out-of-field Social Studies teachers from SHSs in the Cape Coast Metropolis constituted the population of this study (census). These 17 teachers were selected because they teach Social Studies but have no specialisation in Social Studies education. The 17 participants were also chosen because they gave their consent to be part of the study.

2.2. Research Instrument

The research instrument used in gathering the data was a structured interview guide which was guided by the purpose of the study. The structured interview guide consisted of three sections covering all the three research questions. The first section (Section A) dealt with items on the factors that account for out-of-field teaching in Social Studies. The second section (Section B) covered items on the problems that out-of-field teachers encounter when teaching social Studies, whilst the third section (Section C) dealt with the mechanisms employed by the out-of-field Social Studies teachers to cope with the teaching of Social Studies.

2.3. Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

To ensure data validity and reliability, the structured interview guide was submitted to research experts for a thorough review. Their clarifications, comments, and directions were followed, and necessary corrections were made. The instrument was reviewed for credibility, transferability, dependability, and objectivity. This helped the items stated in the instrument to reflect the study's objectives and collect the required data. To ensure credibility, the researcher continually involved the participants in deeply understanding the study. Also, the researcher clarified unclear items during the interview discourse. When the participants found it difficult to comprehend some of the questions, the researcher focused more on those questions for proper clarification. The researcher kept records of the participants' ideas, responses and subjective views throughout the study. The same thing was done on the researcher's part to separate the researcher's biases from the data obtained. The records helped the researcher to audit the data for a reliable and reflective interpretation. Finally, the researcher returned interview transcripts to each of the 17 participants. The participants were asked to read the transcribed data to see if the researcher captured all their responses. Where necessary, the researcher was asked to make the required corrections to the data. This helped the researcher to document data that resonated with the experiences of the participants involved.

2.4. Data Collection Procedure

To ensure effective data collection, the researcher booked appropriate appointments with each of the participants before they were consulted for the interview process. A maximum of 25 minutes was spent with each participant on the field. The researcher sought permission from each participant to audio-record the interview. Participants were assured that the recorded interviews would be used mainly for the study. The participants were informed that the study was voluntary, hence, they were at liberty to exit at any time preferred. The interview was audio-recorded alongside field notes that were taken (with participants' consent).

2.5. Data Processing and Analysis

The data were transcribed verbatim into written text. After reading the interview transcripts on countless occasions, repeated comments and needless statements were carefully removed without eliminating salient data. The relevant points and ideas shared by the participants were documented. After that, the researcher carefully read the transcripts for each research question to identify codes. Similar comments were assembled under their corresponding research questions. Also, the researcher deduced themes from the codes which guided my analysis and interpretation. The data were analysed through

the inductive thematic analysis approach because pre-determined themes were not used, instead, the themes were drawn from the data obtained from the field. These strategies were helpful in this study because they were believed to be the most appropriate analytical strategy for phenomena studied within a naturally occurring setting [5].

2.6. Ethical Considerations

The researcher adhered to all ethical issues underpinning the study's data collection processes. The researcher clearly defined the purpose of the study and assured participants' confidentiality and anonymity. The researcher informed the participants that pseudonyms were used instead of their real names. Hence, there was no way their names were captured in the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data. Participants one to seventeen identified with pseudonyms. The pseudonyms included Desmond, Elliot, Michael, George, Ellis, Susana, Emma, Joel, James, Janet, Kofi, Yiadom, Prince, Jacob, Diana, Joana, Arthur and Sylvanus. The voluntariness of participation was considered to give participants the free will to exit should they become disinterested along the line. Lastly, the researcher issued the participants an informed consent letter before initiating the data collection process.

3. Results and Discussion

Out-of-field teaching happens when teachers teach a subject for which they are not competent. Such teachers are trained in a specific field but are teaching outside of their specialised field. They are assigned to teach subjects for which they do not have the necessary qualifications or relevant knowledge, whether in a specific subject area or year level. This has become common practice in many educational settings in Ghana including Senior High Schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis. This research explored the lived experiences of Senior High School teachers who teach Social Studies but do not have the necessary qualifications, certification, or specialisation in the subject.

3.1. What factors account for out-of-field teaching in Social Studies?

The first research question sought to explore the views on respondents on the factors that account for out-of-field teaching in Social studies. The participants provided varied beliefs about this research question. Majority shared homogenous views while other participants shared dissented views. The themes obtained from the results of the first research question included: school factor, teacher factor, and curriculum factor.

3.1.1. School factors

This theme sought to explore teachers' perspectives on school factors that account for out-of-field teaching in Social Studies. It is generally understood in literature that out-of-field teaching occurs because the school system allocates subjects to teachers without necessary considering their qualification [3]. This mostly occurs when the school lacks enough teachers to teach specific subjects. All participants noted that if schools lack teachers in specific subjects, the school will make arrangement for any teacher to handle the subject initially and later put measures in place to employed qualified teachers to teach the subject. This was emphatic in the responses of four out of the seventeen participants. For instance, Desmond stated:

most of the time, school administrators have also failed to recognize the problems raised due to out-field-teachers and go ahead to place teachers in classrooms contrary to their qualification. But I think at times this is an internal arrangement to fill in the gaps especially when there is no qualified teacher to teach. The school management can hire the services of other teachers who do not qualify, to assist initially, before measures are put in place for more qualified teachers later.

Elliot, also indicated that:

most of these problems exist because the managers of education themselves are aware and they encourage such problems to perpetuate. At times, the teacher is posted to the school knowing that there is no space in the teacher's area of specialisation and yet he or she is posted there. What do you expect such a teacher to do? In my case, I couldn't reject such posting.

Another teacher, Janet, indicated that:

the education system is partly to blame, because, everybody knows the challenges that out-of-field teachers encounter and yet this phenomenon is encouraged. It will interest you to know that it is not only happening in Social Studies but in other subject areas as well, especially RME and others.

In addition to the above, Arthur indicated that:

school heads sometimes cause it. At times, the head will direct some teachers to teach Social Studies knowing very well that the subject does not match the qualification of such teachers. In most cases, it is not their (headteachers) fault because if there is a timetable gap to fill, the head cannot sit aloof or unconcern. So, to me, it is one of the strategies to fill in the gaps or else some classes will lie idle.

High rates of teacher turnover mean that schools are faced with a constant need to recruit and hire new teachers to fill vacated positions. Some schools have difficulty finding qualified candidates to fill their vacant spaces and some do not. Many principals find that assigning teachers to teach out of their fields is, at times, simply more convenient

3.1.2. Teacher factor

This theme emphasized teacher factor that account for out-of-field teaching in social studies. The participants expressed varied views and largely put the blame on teachers who accept postings to teach out-of-field. This is what Edward had to say:

hmmm, the perception that anybody can teach any subject especially Social Studies is also a major contributing factor. So far as that perception has not been dealt with the canker will continue to exist. This perception exists among both headteachers and teachers, even among stakeholders in education. So, most teachers have taken advantage of that and accept teaching out-of-their qualification.

Additional, Susana asserted that:

to me if the teacher can teach the subject, why don't we allow him or her to go ahead and teach it. This phenomenon is caused by some of we teachers ourselves. I for instance, I believe I can teach the subject because teaching Social Studies does not require any rigorous preparation unlike the sciences or any other area that is technical in nature.

In a similar view, Prince opined that:

this phenomenon, to me, is usually caused by shortage of teaching in that field and in most cases shortages of teachers in some schools especially in the rural areas where most teachers don't want to accept postings. Getting somebody who is all-round and well-versed in the integrated programme is problematic at times. So, in the absence of such teachers, other teachers with different qualifications are made to teach the subject. I will support this phenomenon especially when there is shortage of teachers.

It is clear from the views expressed by the teachers that the phenomenon of out-of-field teaching occurs because, headteachers direct teachers to teach subjects that do not match their qualifications in order to fill timetable gaps and meet other school

organisational requirements. This is not a recent development. According to [6], most teachers accept teaching 'out-of-field' in order to obtain employment. Besides, the phenomenon occurs due to teacher shortages. Other studies [7,8] have observed that lack of qualified Social Studies teachers and the teachers' acceptance to teach as subject which they are not qualified in are major contributing factors to out-of-field teaching.

3.1.3. Curriculum requirement factor

The participants further disclosed that curriculum requirements by most of the teacher training institutions have led to the phenomenon of out-of-field teaching especially in Social Studies. For instance, Elliot indicated that:

the Social Studies curriculum has been developed to demand high expectations from Social Studies teachers. These teachers are supposed to acquire knowledge in Geography, History, Sociology, Economics, and what have you. But it is not every teacher who acquired knowledge in all these fields. So, definitely, such teachers face various problems in meeting these curriculum expectations. They find it difficult to teach lessons effectively due to their little knowledge in all these subjects, hence, their heavy reliance on textbooks which results in limiting students' learning experiences.

In his opinion, Desmond asserted that:

in Ghana, Senior High School teachers are typically trained as subject specialists. The teacher is trained to be a master in his or her area and not a master in all subjects. So, to me, the problem is as a result of the way the teacher training curriculum has been designed. If one curriculum can train teachers to teach all subject in primary schools, why can't we have a similar curriculum in our universities to at least prepare the teacher to teach other subjects when there is no place for him or her to teach his or her area of orientation?

These views are consistent with the views of [9] that out-of-field phenomenon is also caused by the teacher education systems in several nations where teachers are trained as specialists rather than generalists. Hobbs further indicated that out-of-field phenomenon is also caused by systemic teacher shortages, inappropriate teacher distribution and scheduling concerns in schools. On the part of [10], curriculum developers have changed the curriculum so that students-teachers must take specific courses in order to graduate. These required graduation requirements could also increase demand for teachers in the near future, regardless of their credentials. Besides, management of education is under immediate pressure to replace teacher vacancies. Therefore, they are forced to ask teachers to teach courses outside of their areas of qualification.

3.2. What problems do out-of-field teachers encounter when teaching Social Studies?

The research participants agreed that teaching Social Studies of which they have only a flyspeck background causes problem in teaching. In the delivery of the lessons, out-of-field teachers face a hard time explaining the subject matter of Social Studies because of its broad scope and integrated approach and their lack of content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. Three themes were generated from the views of the participants which are: lack of in-depth content knowledge, lack of knowledge in choosing appropriate techniques and difficulty in lesson delivery in an integrated manner.

3.2.1. Lack of in-depth knowledge in the subject

Subject matter knowledge is crucial in teaching Social Studies. A qualified Social Studies teacher must have adequate content knowledge in Social Studies as well as the Social Studies related subjects like Geography, History, Sociology, Economics, etc. lack of

knowledge in these areas poses a great challenge in teaching the subject [3]. On this, the Kofi indicated that:

The subject requires adequate knowledge especially, knowledge in the foundation subjects, to be able to implement it effectively. But sometimes, this is lacking and it makes teaching quite difficult.

This view was not different from the view held by Joana who said that:

the integrated nature of the subject requires adequate knowledge to effectively teach it, or else teaching might not be effective. I sometimes struggle with some of the topics because I don't have in-depth knowledge in those subjects, so I usually use the "surface" knowledge I have on those topics to teach them.

Similarly, Yiadom indicated that:

in-depth knowledge is really important. Some people believe that anybody at all can teach the subject. But this is not the case because of its integrated nature. At least, the teacher needs knowledge in all the subjects that come together to constitute Social Studies to be able to teach it effectively.

The integrated Social Studies curriculum is structured to blend several subjects such that lack of knowledge in one or two blended subjects creates problems for the teacher when teaching the subject. However, some of the participants indicated that they have knowledge in one or two constituents of Social Studies but lack knowledge in other aspect. For instance, Diana indicated that:

hmmm, when it comes to some aspects of the subject, I have upper hand, but I am usually handicapped in some other areas due to my background training. So, in the areas that I have upper hand, I can teach very well but in the other areas, less emphasis is placed.

The views are clear indication that of the tendency for teachers to put more emphasis on one aspect of the curriculum and less emphasis on other aspect. This, however promote ineffectiveness in the teaching and learning of Social Studies.

Joana, on her part indicated the need to have both content and pedagogical content knowledge in Social Studies education. To her both content and pedagogical knowledge ensure effective teaching in Social Studies and for that matter, teachers must possess both. This is what she said:

It is not only in-depth knowledge in the subject that one requires to teach Social Studies effectively but also in-depth knowledge in the methods and techniques of teaching the subject. Because, without in-depth knowledge in the methods and techniques, the teacher wouldn't be able to know and select the best methods and techniques and combine them effectively with suitable topics for effective teaching.

A teacher must be sufficiently prepared before lesson delivery, but in the case of out-of-field teachers, teaching becomes difficult since they will be teaching outside their expertise [11]. The extra demands of planning and implementing curriculum for an unfamiliar subject for which they have not had university preparation are thought to be a particular challenge for graduates [12].

3.2.2. Difficulty in lesson delivery in integrated manner

Another theme that emerged from the interview was the problem of delivering lessons in integrated manner. According to the participants, Social Studies is integrated in nature and requires adequate knowledge in the integrated approach, hence, teaching will

become ineffective if teachers lack expertise in the integrated approach. On this issue, Michael indicated that:

I find it difficult to present lessons in the subject especially when it comes to the integration aspect. Let me be frank with you, I don't even understand what it means when we say to integrate content let alone its application.

A similar view was given by Joel who indicated that:

well, I can only say that I do teach the subject well, but to teach it in integrated way is a challenge. How to fuse ideas from the various subject areas when teaching, is rather a bit challenging due to my area of specialisation. I am limited in content knowledge of the various foundation subjects. You know, I'm more into geography, although I did a little bit economics, but to the best of my knowledge, that is not enough to prepare me adequately in the Social Studies content. So, whenever I am teaching, I feel more comfortable when the issue in my area [Geography].

Adding to these views, George, indicated that:

lesson preparation becomes ineffective due to lack of knowledge in the integrated approach. You need knowledge in all the subjects that constitute Social Studies, so, lack of knowledge in one leads to ineffective preparation which also results in effective lesson delivery.

3.2.3. Lack of knowledge in choosing appropriate techniques

Selection of appropriate and suitable teaching techniques in Social Studies depends on teachers' pedagogical content knowledge in Social Studies. This has become a source of problem to out-of-field teachers because they lack pedagogical content knowledge. Prince indicated that:

you see, there are several techniques for teaching, especially Social Studies. So, if you want your learners to better understand you, the best technique should be chosen, but here is the case, I don't have any knowledge in the best technique that will match a particular lesson. In fact, it is a challenge.

The teachers do not only attribute to the stress of needing to be proficient in both content and pedagogy, but they also stated that classroom management was a major issue in their out-of-field classes. In the view of Sylvanus:

certain topics require specific techniques for effective teaching. But if you don't know which technique will suit which topic, you struggle to teach to learners' understanding. Besides, class management techniques become a major source of worry in my case.

Similarly, Janet admitted that:

teaching certain topics becomes challenge when you lack knowledge in selecting appropriate techniques. And this is a major challenge whenever I am preparing for lessons in Social Studies.

Since out-of-field teachers do not have specialisation regarding their new assignment, lesson that is going to be taught takes a lot of time to prepare [13]. This interferes with their ability to select suitable methods, techniques and strategies and deprives students of opportunities for better understanding of social studies lessons.

3.3. What coping mechanisms are employed by out-of-field social studies teachers to teach social studies?

Out-of-field teachers need to address the struggles, particularly on the insufficient content knowledge and pedagogy, in order to lessen their discomfort in handling the subject. They therefore employ several coping mechanisms. It could be gleaned from the various views of the respondents that they readily accept the challenges in handling the subject. Furthermore, the challenges make them prepare adequately prior to the start of the class. They know their weaknesses and these make them more responsive to their status in order to do their function as educators in the teaching and learning process. Three themes were generated from the views of the participants. These included: consulting books and other online materials, peer coaching, engaging in professional development courses, and peer coaching.

3.3.1. Consulting books and online contents relating to Social Studies

Findings under this theme show that out-of-field teachers cope with the teaching of Social Studies by consulting books and other relevant materials that relate to Social Studies to teach effectively. Desmond, for instance, indicated that:

well, I read a lot. I consult different books that relate to Social Studies. Some of these books are interactive in nature and they really serve as source of knowledge in the content of the subject.

In a similar view, Emma was of the view that:

I do online content search. Everything you need is found online, so, I search for the concepts and topics I don't understand, especially, the classroom management and control techniques and strategies that are helpful when teaching.

The outcome of the interview show that teachers rely on external materials such as social studies textbooks, and any other book that relate to social studies like geography, history, economics, and sociology.

On his part, Susana shared that:

you see, because the subject is integrated in nature, to be able to cope well, teachers need to prepare well in all the integrating subjects. So, what I do is search for materials relating to all the integrating subjects and acquaint myself with them. With this strategy, I easily cope with the teaching of the subjects, especially, the teaching techniques.

Out-of-field Social Studies teachers have shown remarkable abilities to employ technological tools to enhance their content and pedagogical practices. Through online platforms, simulations, and interactive multimedia, they cope by creating immersive learning experiences that engage students and foster scientific curiosity. The practice of downloading and playing YouTube videos in the classroom to enhance students' understanding of the subject matter is key in coping to teach Social Studies. In support of the views already shared by the interviewees, Yiadom opined that:

now we are in information age. Whatever information or knowledge you need is readily available in all forms. So, for me, what I need to do is to search online for whatever information I need and through that I am able to get lots of information concerning the various content I teach.

Similarly, Kofi indicated that:

in fact, I rely a lot on teacher manual or teachers' handbook as well as learners' books. These books contain all the information and the facts one needs in order to teach the subject. So, these have become my major source of coping strategies towards the subject.

3.3.2. Engaging with professional learning communities

Another theme obtained from the results on the coping mechanisms employed by out-of-field teachers was teachers' engagement with professional development courses.

According to Janet, she usually copes with the subject by relying on the:

professional learning communities and the regular in-service training put me on the going. Most of the difficult concepts are presented during such professional development programmes. I always make sure that I am always present and I use the opportunity to ask a lot of questions about issues bordering me in teaching the subject.

Diana shared a similar view when she indicated that:

in-service training and attending workshops have been a great breakthrough. During such programmes, I get the opportunity to interact with other teachers, especially, those who teach Social Studies. I have learnt a lot and that is how I am coping with the subject. Or else, it wouldn't have been easy.

Sylvanus, rather believes that once opportunities are out there for teachers to overcome the challenges, he is able to cope although it has not been easy for him. He explained that:

coping with the teaching of the subject has not been easy but I am making headway. Through INSERT and other professional learning community sessions, I gradually overcome the challenges. The PLCs give me a lot of insights about some of the difficult issues in the subject. I really get better understanding of the integrated nature of Social Studies through some of these in-service training programmes.

Arthur, rather accepts the fact that although he was not trained in the integrated Social Studies and that has led her to teach the subject as an out-of-field teacher but believes that opportunity is available for him to upgrade himself in Social Studies education by pursuing further degree.

To me, pursuing further degree in Social Studies related programmes was a game changer. It really helped me to cope with the subject because I got better knowledge and understanding of the nature of the subject, especially, the methods and techniques of teaching the subject. Indeed, it was a good thing for me.

According to [14], the problem of out-of-field teaching can only be overcome if out-of-field teachers receive support from the authorities through efficient professional development programmes to ensure quality education.

3.3.3. Peer coaching

In the view of Susana, she receives support from teachers who have adequate knowledge in integrated Social Studies. To her, such teachers are her coach who guide her to teaching Social Studies effectively. She indicated that:

I got most of the help from my colleagues especially those who did Social Studies education in the university. You know, they have much knowledge in the content and methods of teaching the subject and they easily teach the subject without difficulties.

Out-of-field teachers who receive rigorous coaching from senior colleagues and experts have a considerable impact on student progress. In support of this, [17], indicated that most out-of-field teachers learn from subject specialists in order to cope. Furthermore, out-of-field teachers survived being assigned to teach outside their specialisation by asking colleagues for help.

It is in view of this that Elliot indicated that:

I am being mentored by the experienced teachers especially those who really pursued Social Studies in school. Their rich experience and content knowledge as well as knowledge in the pedagogy are great sources of comfort for most of us who are not in the area. I have really enjoyed their knowledge and expertise and that has really helped me to cope with the teaching of Social Studies.

A similar view, Desmond asserted that:

you know, we are all colleagues and we usually say that knowledge does not reside in the mind of one person. When I need help I go to them and in the same way when they also need help they come to me so I have relied on teachers who have much knowledge in the subject for quite a time. It has even gotten to a point where I am okay with the content and method because of the tuition I have been receiving from them.

Furthermore, Desmond, explained that peer coaching has been of a great help when teaching out-of-field. He shared that:

peer coaching, a great thing which has help most of us. We get explanations anytime we are in difficulty and that helps us to cope with the subject. Although we can read and teach but that cannot be compared to the kind of explanations we receive from our colleague teachers.

Emma rather relies on continuous and regular feedback he obtains from students as a major coping mechanism. According to him, the feedbacks enable him to restructure his teaching skills to meet the diverse needs of his students. He indicated that:

the feedback I obtain from students as well as questions asked by students help me to restructure my teaching to meet their needs and that has been a major coping strategy for me. I rely on their feedbacks, comments, suggestions etc. to build my experiences in teaching the subject. You know I am the free and approachable type so my students easily approach me with questions and issues relating to the content and due to that, as I am talking, I don't face any major challenge in dealing with the content.

According to [15], teachers' desire to learn and grow as teachers is fueled by a passion for the profession. The best ways for teachers to cope are through practice, reflection, collaboration with other teachers, and ensuring that they adjust or adapt to changes. This can happen through continuing professional development which allows teachers to discover what they have not learnt yet relating to their new assignment. The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of research that indicate the advantages of adaptability for out-of-field Social Studies teachers. As [16] asserted, adaptability enables out-of-field teachers to overcome challenges in the field. They willingly adapted to the changes, which assist them in enduring the difficulties they encountered as out-of-field teachers.

4. Conclusions

Out-of-field teachers are found to be unqualified for the subject they were assigned due to lack of teachers in integrated Social Studies programme. The phenomenon also occurs as a result of teacher attrition and the erroneous perception that anybody can teach Social Studies. Out-of-field teachers are insecure due to inadequate content and pedagogical content knowledge. Some of these teachers have knowledge in one or two of the integrating subjects of Social Studies whilst others do not have knowledge in any of the integrating subjects. They, however, lack knowledge in the pedagogical content knowledge of social studies.

Secondly, despite facing difficulties, out-of-field teaching provides opportunity for personal and professional growth. The teachers' will to take the assignment as a responsibility and the eagerness to fulfill their role to deliver quality instruction, make it possible to overcome the challenges that they will encounter along the way. The more they see the problem along the process, the more they cope. Thus, being adaptable allows these teachers to improve their ability to teach and manage difficult situations in the teaching and learning process. Thus, when teachers are assigned to teach outside their area of expertise, they may initially feel stressed and unprepared, but they can develop coping strategies to navigate these challenges effectively.

5. Pedagogical implications

When teaching the subject, out-of-field Social Studies teachers place more emphasis on aspects of the Social Studies curriculum where they have much knowledge and avoid or skip or put less emphasis on the other aspects they do not know, thus, the integrated approach to teaching Social Studies is not effectively adopted by out-of-field teachers. This will water down the content of Social Studies at the Senior High School level in all schools where Social Studies is taught by such teachers.

Secondly, appropriate pedagogical content knowledge will not be employed to teach Social Studies. Out-of-field Social Studies will only employ pedagogies they feel comfortable to use without necessarily ensuring whether the pedagogy commensurate the chosen content. Lastly, the combined effect of inadequate content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge may result in teachers' inability to attain the objectives of teaching Social Studies in Senior High Schools in Ghana.

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that teachers should be assigned appropriately to their subject specialisation and ensure that teachers are competent to teach since this will affect the total learning experiences of the learners and the quality of instruction.

Teacher training institutions should prepare teachers to be adapted to teach out-of-field. Besides, newly posted teachers should learn how to teach a new subject out of their specialty. Teachers can approach this with adaptability, resilience, openness, and attention, and they can frequently dedicate a significant amount of time and energy to this process. Out-of-field teachers should take advantage of the periodic in-service training, professional learning communities, workshops, seminars and conferences to improve their teaching practices both in the content and pedagogy of Social Studies. Besides, headteachers should identify the teaching needs of their out-of-field teachers and provide the needed technical support to empower these out-of-field teachers for effective teaching practices.

Addressing the problem of out-of-field teaching in Social Studies specifically requires a radical change of the perception that any teacher can teach Social Studies without prior content and pedagogical content knowledge in Social Studies. There is therefore the need to train and recruit more teachers who have background training and experience in the integrated approach. This will minimise the tendency of employing out-of-field teachers to occupy Social Studies classrooms.

Seeking support, collaborating with colleagues, and accessing resources can enhance content knowledge and pedagogical skills. Flexibility, adaptability, and a growth mindset are crucial when teaching out-of-field, as teachers should approach it as an opportunity for personal and professional growth and skill development.

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