

Instructional resources teachers utilise in teaching and learning of social studies in Senior High Schools

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Abstract: This study investigated teachers' utilisation of instructional resources in teaching and learning of Social Studies in senior high schools in the Effutu Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana. Qualitatively, this study employed the interpretivist lens with a case study design. The study's target population comprised all Social Studies teachers in senior high schools in the Effutu Municipality. The accessible population comprised fifteen teachers who had taught for at least three years and met the study's inclusion criteria. The study employed semi-structured interviews and classroom observations to collect data from twelve purposively selected Social Studies teachers. Data were analysed using thematic analysis within an interpretive framework. The findings of this study underscore the critical implications for educational resource allocation and teacher training programmes, while also contributing to the broader scholarly discourse on the utilisation of instructional resources in Social Studies education. The study concluded that teachers utilised a combination of traditional resources (such as textbooks and charts) and digital resources (such as online videos and images), as well as resources from people (such as community leaders and professionals). However, they required additional resources. Most schools struggled to access modern digital resources due to fundamental infrastructure issues, including unreliable electricity and insufficient projectors. It is recommended that the Effutu Municipal Educational Directorate establish robust professional development programmes to equip teachers with the skills to utilise technology and innovative teaching methods. These programmes should include hands-on training with modern teaching tools and digital resources. The training should also include ways for teachers to create and adapt resources to maximise their effectiveness in this era of digital literacy.

Keywords: Digital literacy, Instructional resources, Senior High Schools, Social studies, Teachers, Teaching and Learning

1. Introduction

Employing instructional resources to enhance student comprehension and engagement is a crucial aspect of adequate Social Studies pedagogy. The resources encompass traditional tools such as chalkboards, maps, and textbooks, as well as contemporary digital media, including interactive simulations, films, and educational software (Curry & Cherner, 2016). To enhance the accessibility, engagement, and significance of Social Studies for students, a variety of instructional resources must be employed (Anim, 2024). The utilisation of these materials is particularly crucial, as it affects students' academic achievement and their critical understanding of social issues.

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Conventional materials have historically served as the foundation of classroom education, esteemed for their organisation, clarity, and capacity to convey historical facts and geographical information coherently (Abdi, 2016; Sinjela, Kijai, & Katenga, 2019). Despite the emergence of digital technologies, these traditional methods remain pertinent, particularly in environments with inadequate or unreliable technological infrastructure. Educators continue to utilise textbooks, maps, posters, and charts to effectively convey fundamental knowledge and maintain a clear and structured learning environment (Osaat, 2019). The significance of these resources corresponds strongly with Dale's Cone of Experience, which underscores observation and direct experience as essential for substantive learning (Dale, 1969).

Digital resources, by contrast, have become increasingly important and are reshaping the educational landscape by providing dynamic, interactive, and contextually relevant learning opportunities (Tondeur et al., 2017). Using resources like instructional videos, virtual tours of resource centres, and online visual aids improves classroom instruction and encourages greater student participation (Jayaraman & Aane, 2024). By bringing abstract Social Studies concepts to life with visual and auditory stimuli, digital tools can improve students' comprehension and boost motivation and retention (Suryani et al., 2021). Adopting digital resources successfully requires teachers to be proficient in digital literacy and to have access to adequate infrastructure, such as computers, projectors, and internet connectivity (Suryani et al., 2021).

The incorporation of resource persons - experts, professionals, or community members significantly enhances Social Studies education. Inviting resource persons provides authentic viewpoints, practical insights, and experiential learning opportunities, thereby strengthening the vividness and relevance of teachings (Edinyang, Ejoh, & Adams, 2020). A lawyer discussing criminal law or a business leader sharing entrepreneurial experiences can substantially enhance students' comprehension by linking academic knowledge to societal realities. The engagement of resource individuals promotes active participation and critical inquiry, therefore enhancing learning outcomes.

Notwithstanding the evident advantages of integrating traditional methods, digital platforms, and resource persons, obstacles remain. Educators frequently encounter infrastructural limitations, restricted access to digital resources, and inadequate instruction in digital literacy. Moreover, some educators continue to rely heavily on traditional resources because of their familiarity and perceived efficacy, particularly in settings where technological advancements are slow or erratic (Nordlöf, Hallström & Höst, 2019). Understanding how educators manage these issues and allocate various resources is essential for developing effective policies that enhance instructional methods. This study highlights the importance of diverse instructional resources in enhancing Social Studies education. It identifies persistent challenges and opportunities for improving resource utilisation in senior high schools within the Effutu Municipality.

According to current research and educational practices, Social Studies classrooms primarily use traditional teaching resources like textbooks, charts, and pictures. Due to infrastructure limitations and educators' lack of digital literacy, digital resources and guest speakers are also underutilised (Bordoh et al., 2022). Despite studies demonstrating the benefits of digital resources and staff in raising student interest and understanding, there remains a significant gap in understanding how to optimally integrate these resources within the specific context of senior high schools in the Effutu Municipality, Ghana. Limited access to digital tools and infrastructure barriers prevent their widespread use. This gap highlights the need to develop strategies to enhance instructors' capacities and to explore practical solutions for integrating resource personnel and digital assets in resource-constrained environments. To improve Social Studies instruction and bridge the gap between theoretical advocacy and real-world implementation in resource-constrained settings, this study aims to explore the strategic use of resource persons and digital resources. This article seeks to deliver context-specific recommendations to enhance resource utilisation, hence promoting better student engagement and learning outcomes in Social Studies education within the Effutu Municipality.

The study investigated the types of instructional resources teachers utilise in the teaching and learning of Social Studies in senior high schools in the Effutu Municipality of Ghana. The objective of the study was to: Identify and examine the types of instructional resources teachers utilise in teaching and learning Social Studies in senior high schools in the Effutu Municipality. The following research question guided the study: What types of instructional resources do teachers utilise in the teaching and learning of Social Studies in senior high schools in the Effutu Municipality?

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The review began with an examination of the study's theoretical framework and then addressed the key themes raised by the research question.

2.1. Theoretical Framework – Dale’s Cone of Experiences

Dale’s Cone of Experiences guided this study. American educator Edgar Dale (1900–1985) made significant contributions to media literacy and audiovisual education. First presented in his 1946 book "Audiovisual Education," Edgar Dale’s Cone of Experience is a valuable tool for determining, selecting, and producing educational media suitable for specific learning tasks and student groups. Teachers can use this visual model as a helpful guide when choosing instructional resources. As illustrated in Figure 1, the Cone of Experience assists educators in deciding which resources to utilise, why to use them, and how to implement them to produce the most effective learning outcomes.

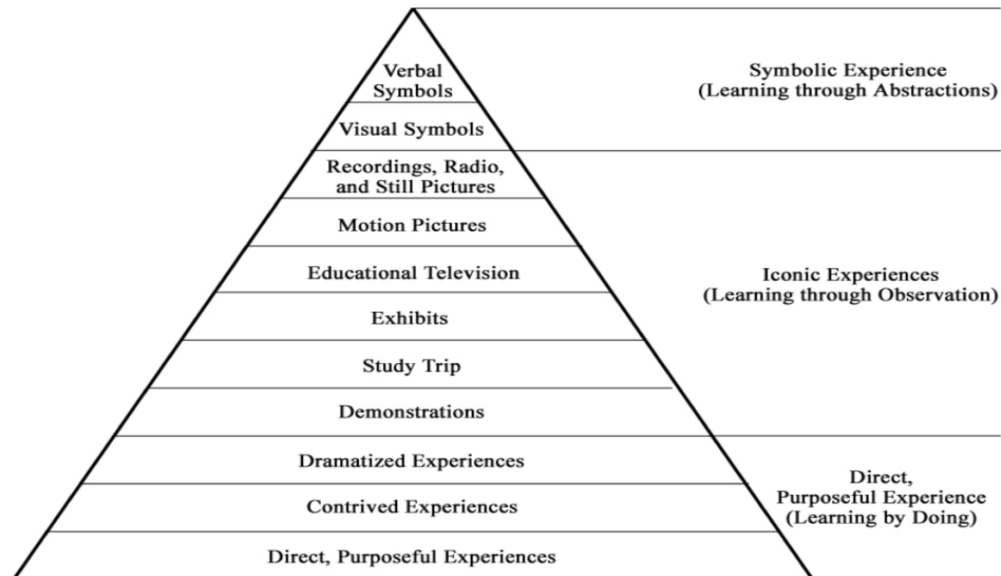


Figure 1: Dale’s Cone of Experience

Dale’s model presents a hierarchy of learning experiences, from concrete to abstract (Cecep et al., 2024). Teachers can select instructional materials that best suit their goals and students’ needs using this visual analogy. Teachers can choose strategically materials that foster optimal engagement and comprehension by considering the different levels of the cone (Nilson, 2016).

According to Cecep et al. (2024), the Cone of Experience encourages educators to consider the nature of the material they teach, the characteristics of their students, and the most effective strategies for bridging concrete and abstract experiences, thereby ensuring that resources are appropriate to the subject matter. For students, this methodical approach to resource selection can result in more significant and lasting learning experiences (Wickersham, 2020).

Teachers can make well-informed decisions about their instructional resources by using Dale’s Cone of Experience as a framework. This could improve student engagement, comprehension, and retention of the material. This model remains applicable in contemporary classrooms, providing educators with a flexible tool for leveraging both traditional and modern teaching resources (Nnadika, 2018).

2.1.1. Relevance of the theoretical framework

For the study, this theory was chosen for several reasons. Dale’s theory emphasises the importance of relating new material to students’ prior knowledge. To help students make this connection, Social Studies teachers can use a variety of teaching resources. Tangible examples that connect the abstract to students’ past experiences include charts, graphs, and audiovisual aids (Onyekaba, 2019). Additionally, students can interact more directly with historical events or social phenomena through immersive experiences that interactive simulations can offer (Nnadika, 2018). Furthermore, using primary source documents can strengthen the connection between new and existing knowledge by helping students relate historical perspectives to their own experiences when presented through appropriate visual or audio media (Dash, 2023). Since they give students several ways to interact with and internalise Social Studies, these varied approaches to instructional materials are consistent with Dale’s Cone of Experience.

2.1.2. Application of the theoretical framework

The most tangible and direct experiences, such as practical exercises, actual objects, and field trips, form the foundation of Dane’s Cone of Experience (Dash, 2023). These teaching tools can be handy for teaching Social

Studies. Students can observe and engage with their studies through a hands-on, immersive learning experience, such as visiting a historical site or a local government office. In a similar vein, using authentic artefacts, like historical records or cultural objects, can help students relate to and be more interested in the material.

Experiences become more representational and abstract as we move up the cone; examples include models, diagrams, and audiovisual aids (Dash, 2023). These teaching aids can be helpful in Social Studies classes because they make complex ideas easier to understand and visualise. For example, students can better comprehend spatial relationships, demographic patterns, or economic trends by using maps, charts, or multimedia presentations. Teachers can enhance students' comprehension and retention of the subject matter by providing visual and aural aids, thereby improving the effectiveness of the learning process.

The most abstract forms of representation, such as verbal explanations and symbols, are at the top of Dane's Cone of Experience (Dash, 2023). These could be lecture notes, textbooks, or class discussions in the context of Social Studies. Although these teaching tools are crucial, they should be complemented by more tangible and engaging materials. By incorporating a variety of instructional resources that span the Dane's Cone, teachers can create a more balanced and effective learning environment for their Social Studies students, catering to different learning styles and fostering a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

2.2. Types of Instructional Resources

In the modern era of science, technology and modernisation, a wide array of instructional aids is available and significantly impacting the teaching and learning process. The effectiveness of teaching and learning largely depends on the diverse resources available in the classroom. Notwithstanding this, no one can choose any concept or materials to teach in the social studies classroom. Eshun (2020) asserts that defining the boundaries of social studies education taught in schools requires decisions about which knowledge is most imperative, which skills and behaviours are most valuable, which values are most significant, and what sequence of content, skills, and materials best fits the subject matter and the students.

There are numerous types of teaching resources. Various instructional resources are available to teach any subject effectively, but not all topics require the same types or qualities of resources. These resources can be purchased, locally made, improvised, or imported as needed to support effective instructional delivery. Kinyua (2015) categorises teaching and learning resources into the following groups:

1. Non-projected resources: These include books, photographs, drawings, charts, maps, chalkboards, flannel boards, and similar items.
2. Projected resources: This category encompasses slides, film strips, overhead transparencies, and motion pictures.
3. Audio resources include lectures, audio tapes, compressed speech, radio, telephone, television, and related media.
4. Real and three-dimensional resources: This group includes models, globes, sculptures, demonstrations, field trips, and resource persons.

Dale's (1969) classification system for instructional resources, cited by Dash (2023), on the other hand, offers an alternative classification system for instructional resources, dividing them into three primary types:

1. Visual Resources: This includes non-audio resources such as books, images, photographs, flashcards, maps, posters, chalkboards, drawings, and cartoons.
2. Audio Resources: This encompasses sound-based resources like radio broadcasts, tape and disc recordings, telephone communications, and various sound distribution systems.
3. Audiovisual Resources: These combine visual and auditory elements, including films, television programmes, video recordings, print resources with accompanying audio, and live demonstrations.

Dale's classification is summarised in his "cone of experience," a visual model that organises learning experiences from concrete to abstract. As Kinyua (2015) discusses, this model provides a comprehensive overview of the range and relationships between different types of instructional resources.

According to Tety (2016), instructional resources are devices that help an instructor convey facts, skills, attitudes, knowledge, understanding, and appreciation to learners. The author categorises instructional aids into seven types:

1. Audio aids: These are resources that assist with hearing.
2. Visual aids: Resources that assist through sight.
3. Audiovisual aids: Resources that assist through both hearing and sight.
4. Three-dimensional aids: Physical models and objects.

5. Classification of teaching aids into software and hardware: Digital and physical teaching tools.
6. Activity-based aids: Simulations and games.
7. Miscellaneous aids: Includes journals, newspapers, and magazines.

For this study, teaching resources may be classified into four categories: visual, audio, audiovisual, phenomenal, and manipulative.

2.2.1. Visual aids

It is commonly asserted that a picture or visual can convey as much information as a thousand words. However, visuals without accompanying text often remain “pretty pictures” and can be ambiguously interpreted. What is less frequently acknowledged and can be seen as a counterpoint is the immense power of a single word like “freedom,” “democracy,” or “friend”, which can evoke profound meanings and emotions, as poets and novelists understand well. Text, with its ability to tap into rich and nuanced semantic networks, is argued to be more potent and generative than visuals, especially in today’s era dominated by moving images and sound bites, often termed the “presentation culture” by contemporary sociologists (Gubenko & Houssemand, 2023).

Research in Gestalt psychology and cognitive theory has provided strong evidence that visual aids play a crucial role in illustrating, demonstrating, and establishing relationships. These theories posit that all learning fundamentally involves understanding relationships (Dash, 2023). However, it is essential to note that while visuals excel at presenting the broad, they may not always capture the subtle nuances, intricate details, and specific aspects of these relationships.

The category of visual resources encompasses a wide array of educational tools that engage the visual sense. This includes books, chalkboards, charts, pictures, posters, maps, models, diagrams, wall charts, and specimens. By giving abstract ideas and relationships tangible forms, these resources enhance learning. This understanding of visual resources emphasises the need for a balanced approach to instructional resources, recognising both their value and their limitations in the classroom.

The aforementioned discourse suggests that the use of visual aids in education is warranted, given their substantial capacity to improve learning across a variety of subjects and settings. Visual aids are helpful tools for explaining abstract ideas, illustrating relationships, and communicating complex information in a way that is frequently easier to understand and retain than text alone. When paired with auditory or kinaesthetic methods, visual aids support other learning modalities and benefit visual learners. They can simplify complex concepts, making them easier to understand and more relevant to students' prior knowledge. Visual aids are especially useful in multicultural or multilingual educational settings because they can help overcome language barriers. Additionally, as students analyse maps, graphs, and diagrams, they can foster analytical and critical thinking abilities. Visual aids are essential to modern education because of their capacity to engage, clarify, and enhance understanding, although they should be balanced with other teaching strategies.

2.2.2. Types of visual aids

1. **Chalkboard/Whiteboard (Writing board):** One of the most popular and easily accessible teaching tools in classrooms is the writing board. It becomes a potent teaching tool when used properly, with readable, clear writing and thoughtful colour selection (Montgomery, 2017). When teachers use it effectively, its simplicity improves comprehension and promotes active learning. Because of its adaptability, collaborative problem-solving and interactive learning can be demonstrated in real time, which makes it essential to classroom dynamics. When educators skillfully utilise its capabilities, focusing on the upper portion for visibility and maintaining learner engagement, the writing board’s simplicity enhances understanding and facilitates active learning.
2. **Textbooks:** Textbooks are reading resources essential for the Social Studies class. The textbook is organised in a meaningful and logical way. It serves as the starting point for learning. It develops the skill of identifying needed information on various issues, persons and processes. It also stimulates pupils' thinking and interest (Babajo, 2017). Historically, textbooks have been the predominant instructional resource across educational levels beyond primary grades, often serving as teachers' sole resource. Sinjela et al. (2019) affirm that textbooks are well-organised, coherent, unified, relatively current, and generally impartial. This reflects their scrutiny by scholars and educators.
3. **Models:** These objects serve as replacements for actual items. Zeman (2017) argued that models simplify the representation of natural objects, making them more understandable for children. Aggarwal defines a model as a three-dimensional depiction of an actual entity. Due to their three-

dimensional nature, models generate significant interest and simplify complex concepts. They can be crafted from a variety of materials, including cardboard, clay, plastic, and wood. Models are valuable because they condense complex concepts that would be difficult to study into manageable sizes.

4. **Charts:** A chart integrates pictorial, numerical, and sometimes textual elements to provide a concise visual summary. Common types include bar charts, histograms, pie charts, flowcharts, and organisational charts, which illustrate proportions or relationships. According to Montgomery (2017), charts visually animate figures and convey meaning more effectively than mere lists of numbers or percentages. Using charts in the teaching and learning process helps motivate learners, presents abstract ideas visually, and illustrates relationships between variables, utilising facts, statistics, and figures. Charts convey ideas that can be challenging to grasp when presented verbally alone.
5. **Pictures:** Pictures refer to visual representations of ideas or information (Zeman, 2017). They can range from simple illustrations to complex photographs or diagrams. Using pictures during instructional activities has significantly increased learner motivation and improved learning outcomes (Hawlitshchek & Joeckel, 2017). For students to focus their cognitive resources on learning the content covered in class, pictures are essential for managing intrinsic cognitive load and reducing extraneous cognitive load. Pictures can aid in the visual presentation of information, simplifying complex ideas, giving context, and improving memory retention - all of which contribute to a more effective and efficient learning process.
6. **Wall charts and posters:** Large-format visual aids like wall charts and posters are used in classrooms to convey information in an understandable, succinct, and eye-catching way (Shabiralyani et al., 2015). To make processes or data easily visible to the entire class, these teaching resources typically combine text, images, and graphics. While posters may cover more ground or serve as motivational tools, wall charts often focus on specific subjects or themes, such as historical timelines, scientific procedures, or grammar rules (Wiradimadja et al., 2022). Because of their permanence and size, they can be referred to repeatedly during lessons, which helps students retain important information over time (Hawlitshchek & Joeckel, 2017). Additionally, wall charts and posters can create an engaging classroom environment that supports active learning, stimulates class discussions, and encourages visual learning (Vale & Barbosa, 2021). When properly designed, these visual aids can significantly improve students' comprehension and retention of difficult material across a variety of subjects (Shabiralyani et al., 2015).

2.2.3. Audio aids

Audio aids are valuable teaching tools that leverage auditory learning channels to enhance learning enjoyment (Vale & Barbosa, 2021). These resources include numerous audio-based materials, such as podcasts, audiobooks, recorded lectures, and music, that can be used with traditional teaching methods to enhance instruction (Zeman, 2017). Audio aids are invaluable for teaching languages because they help students understand what they hear and improve their pronunciation (Wiradimadja et al., 2022). They also cater for a variety of learning styles, supporting individuals who learn best through auditory methods and those with visual impairments (Atmowardoyo et al., 2017). Additionally, audio aids can help people understand abstract ideas more effectively, evoke emotional responses, and make learning more engaging (Wiradimadja et al., 2022). When used judiciously in the classroom, audio aids can significantly improve students' interest, memory, and overall learning outcomes across a wide range of subjects and grade levels (Berk, 2019).

2.2.4. Types of audio aids

1. **Record players:** Audio playback devices are handy for learning. Compact record players are helpful in many school subjects, such as language learning, identifying animal sounds, and Social Studies. To maintain the quality of audio resources, it is crucial to handle records carefully, protecting them from fingerprints, chalk dust, and scratches. This careful maintenance ensures the longevity and effectiveness of these auditory learning aids across different educational contexts.
2. **Tape recorder:** A tape recorder can be very effective for classroom instruction. Pre-loaded tapes of lessons by eminent teachers on any subject can be played in the class. Paradowski (2015) argued that such instructions become impressive not only because of their novelty but also because they are well thought out and planned.
3. **Radio:** There is little doubt regarding the potential of the radio as an instructional aid. Radio is the most significant medium for education in its broadest sense, and it has been introduced since the turn of the

century (Paradowski, 2015). By utilising the rich educational and cultural offerings of the radio, however remote, children and adults in communities can access the best of the world's stores of knowledge and art. Wiradimadja et al. (2022) highlighted several benefits of school radio broadcasting, including connecting schools to the broader world and facilitating the dissemination of elementary education. Additionally, it promotes adult education and supports the dissemination of non-formal education. These merits underscore the valuable role of radio in educational outreach and engagement.

2.2.5. Audiovisual aids

Audiovisual aids are instructional resources that simultaneously engage two critical senses: vision and hearing. These resources employ visual and auditory elements to present information or subject matter within the classroom. As defined by Wiradimadja et al. (2022), audiovisual aids engage both aural and visual perception simultaneously. When an educator combines an audio aid, such as an audio recording, with visual aids or resources, such as images or videos, they effectively engage learners' auditory and visual faculties.

These resources utilise both sight and sound to convey information, serving as supplementary tools that allow teachers to clarify, establish, and correlate interpretations and appreciation through multiple sensory channels (Owusu, 2016). Audiovisual aids in teaching and learning communicate through the senses of hearing and sight, helping to bridge gaps among learners.

Sivakumar (2018) noted that audiovisual devices and resources are now available as diverse teaching tools. These educational technologies are used in various ways, from a teacher using miniature cameras to display close-ups in the classroom to an airborne studio broadcasting in multiple states. All types of teaching can benefit from a self-contained classroom television system, camera, videotape recorder, and film strips. This is a classification for tapes and discs, a disc, as it is commonly known.

Combining visual and auditory inputs can significantly enhance a person's ability to retain information. Allou (2016) highlighted several well-known sayings about audiovisual aids: boredom stems from a lack of engagement; audiovisual aids alleviate boredom and mental fatigue by providing focal points of interest; and the more senses involved in a learning experience, the better the learning outcomes and recall. AIS (2022) also noted that audiovisual resources provide a concrete foundation for conceptual thinking, thereby enriching conceptual development through relevant associations. Consequently, they serve as an effective remedy for the overuse of verbal explanations.

2.2.6. Types of audiovisual aids

1. **Television:** Television began being used for teaching in Ghana in July 1993, targeting senior secondary school students (Acquah-Doughan, 2015). Nicolaou, Matsiola, and Kalliris (2019) identified several key advantages of using television in teaching. It enables a single teacher to reach many students while preserving expert teaching for future use. Television allows teachers to learn from expert instructional methods and gain new teaching ideas. Additionally, it offers technical benefits not available in a traditional classroom, such as close-up magnification of small objects and detailed demonstrations. Television effectively captures students' attention, reduces distractions, and creates rapid, lasting visual and auditory impressions, often reducing the time required to teach a concept or technique. It also enables the electronic presentation of large, rare, or complex equipment in the classroom. Television is a vital instructional resource in Social Studies teaching and learning because of its impact on values and on people's impressions (Eshetu, 2015). Aside from all the significance outlined, education through TV is limited to one-way communication from the teacher to the students. Additionally, the total cost of teaching via television is higher than that of regular classroom instruction, unless television is used to reach many students simultaneously or sequentially over time. Another limitation of educational TV is that it does not address the differences between students in a TV lesson.
2. **Film strips:** Generally, a film strip is a multifaceted medium of communication. According to Nicolaou et al. (2019), films realistically present facts, dramatise human relationships, evoke emotions, and convey attitudes. Film may communicate ideas, perspectives, and experiences to a broad audience. A film strip is an advancement over a slide projector. A single continuous strip of still film is used instead of multiple slides for different or the same topics. Film strips, made from film, are typically 2 to 5 feet long and 16mm or 35mm wide. They usually contain 40 to 100 individual photographs or slides, all related to the same subject, topic, or theme.

Motion pictures offer several advantages that make them powerful audiovisual aids for educational purposes. Firstly, they boost students' interest in reading; studies have shown that films stimulate children to seek more

information about what they have seen. Additionally, educational films motivate learning by capturing students' interest and effectively conveying complex topics, such as ecosystems, that might take weeks to understand through traditional study methods. Nicolaou et al. (2019) summarise the educational benefits of films as tools for imparting information, developing attitudes, expanding interests, and fostering problem-solving skills.

Some limitations of educational films include the use of fictional elements and content that are unfamiliar to the local context. Additionally, producing educational films can be costly, and prolonged viewing may have adverse effects on eyesight.

2.2.7. Phenomenal and manipulative resources

These are community resources that support the teaching and learning of moral values and cultural activities among learners.

1. **Phenomenal resources:** Phenomenal resources refer to instructional situations in which learners directly interact with features, resource persons, and other community resources, thereby gaining firsthand experience that exceeds the knowledge conveyed in written literature (Ondicho, 2015). Phenomena are underutilised due to time constraints, financial limitations, the teacher's knowledge, the inflexibility of the school timetable, and other infrastructural issues. This class of teaching aids or instructional resources primarily addresses the affective domain, but does not preclude the psychomotor and cognitive domains in Social Studies education.
2. **Manipulative resources:** Manipulative resources are educational tools that students actively use to develop specific skills and achieve the intended learning outcomes. These hands-on tools foster practical abilities during professional training programmes (Ondicho, 2015). Manipulative resources in Social Studies enhance students' grasp of historical, cultural, and civic while meeting specific learning objectives. These hands-on resources are valuable for instruction and assessment in the social sciences. They serve as crucial channels for experiential learning, encompassing various aspects of social understanding and the development of critical thinking. In Social Studies education, manipulative resources are adequate for demonstrating and practising skills such as cultural empathy, civic engagement, and historical analysis. Students can more readily observe, learn, and apply complex social concepts through simulations, role-playing activities, and interactive maps.

3. Methodology

This study employs an interpretivist paradigm that focuses on how people's experiences differ. The research supports the idea that reality is not a single, objective entity, but rather a complex system of many relative entities. This aligns with Yin's (2016) assertion that different people's views can shape reality. This research is best conducted using the interpretivist paradigm because it examines how Social Studies teachers utilise teaching materials in richly contextual settings. It does not attempt to generalise about the results; instead, it examines and interprets the participants' lived experiences. Flick (2015) says that philosophical ideas about knowledge and reality shape the methodological choices made in any research. The study sought to understand social events from the perspectives of the people involved. Following this line of thought, the researcher sought to determine what Social Studies teachers think about the teaching materials they use in the classroom. The study aimed to provide an insider's view of teaching by capturing teachers' real-life experiences and unique perspectives.

A qualitative research approach was chosen because the study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of how Social Studies teachers utilise teaching materials. Merriam and Grenier (2019) argue that qualitative research enables examination of social realities through rich narrative data. It is a good way to study how people act and feel in real-life situations. This approach allows researchers to engage directly with participants, understand their emotions, and gain insight into how they perceive the teaching tools. The study aimed to gather detailed information about a specific educational practice rather than generalising from statistics, making qualitative research the most appropriate approach. Nassaji (2020) argues that qualitative research is best suited to studies that aim to describe and understand phenomena rather than to predict or control them.

This study adopted a case study design. A case study is a comprehensive examination of a single case or a set of cases within a limited system (Levitt et al., 2018). In this case, the study examined how Social Studies teachers in senior high schools in the Effutu Municipality utilise teaching materials. The case study method

enabled a close examination of teaching methods, taking into account the specific situation. Bryman (2016) argues that a case study is the best way to examine a complex problem in depth within its real-life setting. Algozzine and Hancock (2017) add that case studies are flexible enough to study individuals, groups, or institutions. The research focused on schools, enabling a multidimensional exploration of pedagogical practices, available resources, and their impact on teaching outcomes.

The study was conducted in the Effutu Municipality of the Central Region of Ghana. The municipality is geographically located between latitudes $5^{\circ}16'$ and 20.18° N and longitudes $0^{\circ}32'$ and 48.32° W, with Winneba as its administrative capital. Known historically as "Simpa," Winneba has been a significant educational and commercial centre. The municipality covers approximately 95 square kilometres and has a population of 107,798, according to the 2021 Population and Housing Census.

A rich cultural history, coastal landscapes, and diverse economic activities, including fishing, salt mining, and trade, characterise the area. It has several schools, including one public and three private senior high schools. Effutu Municipality is an ideal setting for studying how to teach Social Studies. The map of Winneba is shown in Figure 2.

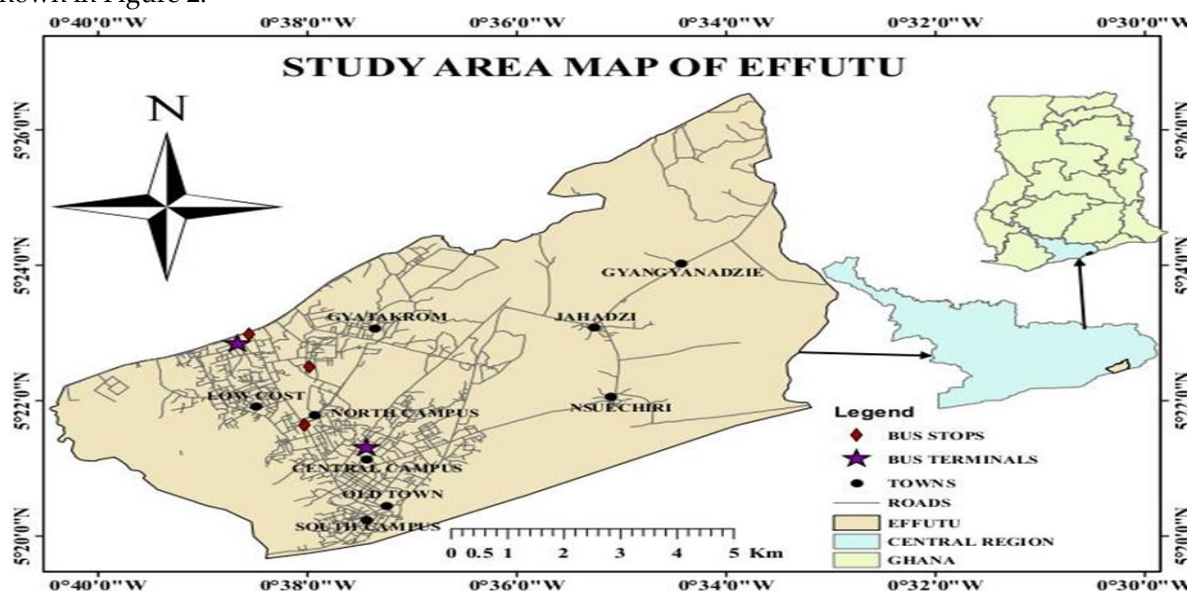


Figure 2: Map of Effutu Municipality
Source: Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) (2010)

All Social Studies teachers in senior high schools in the Effutu Municipality were the target group. The accessible population consisted of fifteen teachers who were readily available and met the study's inclusion criterion of at least 3 years of teaching Social Studies. Merriam and Grenier (2019) state that the research population comprises all individuals who can provide the study with valuable data.

The study employed purposive sampling to select twelve participants. Purposive sampling involves selecting individuals based on specific characteristics relevant to the study (Maxfield & Babbie, 2017). In this case, the sample comprised teachers who had taught Social Studies at the senior high school level for at least 3 years. The decision to work with twelve people was based on the inclusion criteria and saturation principles. Morse (2015) states that data saturation occurs when no new insights are gained, and collecting more data is no longer beneficial. This approach allowed for in-depth data collection and analysis while maintaining a manageable scale.

A semi-structured interview guide and an observation checklist were the main tools used to collect the data. These tools enable researchers to gain insight into participants' thoughts, feelings, and experiences and to observe how they function in the classroom.

After obtaining permission from school officials, the researcher visited the schools to explain the study's goals and get participants' informed consent. The interviews were conducted semi-structuredly, allowing exploration of emerging themes. Classroom observations were also conducted to ascertain the outcomes from the interviews. Twelve Social Studies teachers' lessons were observed in any of the class levels, that's SHS 1-3. The observed Social Studies lessons focused on determining the availability, frequency, and manner of use of instructional resources in teaching and learning concepts in the subject. The observation tool was a structured checklist with descriptive field notes. The observation rating scale ranges from 0 to 12, with corresponding score descriptors. This is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Observation Rating Scale (0–12)

Score range	Descriptor	Operational definition
0	Not Observed	The resource was not used in any of the 12 lessons
1–3	Very Low Utilisation	Resource used in very few lessons (sporadic use)
4–6	Low Utilisation	Resource used occasionally with limited impact
7–9	Moderate Utilisation	Resource used in several lessons to support instruction
10–12	High Utilisation	Resource used consistently and meaningfully

To ensure the rigour of the study, the researcher applied Guba and Lincoln’s (1994) four criteria for trustworthiness: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability.

Member checking made sure that the information was credible. Participants reviewed their interview transcripts and confirmed that they were correct. This process helped ensure that the data accurately reflected the participants' preferences and experiences (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Maintaining a detailed audit trail of the research process brought about trust in the results. The steps involved in collecting, analysing, and interpreting the data were documented to enable others to replicate the study under the same conditions.

Thick description facilitated the transfer. The study's setting, participants, and results were described in detail so that readers could determine whether the results could be applied to other situations (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

The research was confirmable through reflexivity and by maintaining clear records throughout the process. The researcher documented biases, assumptions, and thoughts to ensure that the results were grounded in participants' statements rather than in the researcher's own interpretations (Cohen & Morrison, 2018).

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data. The researcher transcribed the interviews, read the transcripts several times, and assigned codes to the essential parts of the data. The codes were categorised into groups based on themes related to the research question. This process used Braun and Clarke’s (2019) six-phase model, which included familiarising oneself with the data, developing initial codes, identifying themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and writing up. Themes were derived from both interview and observational data to provide a comprehensive view of instructional practices.

The study adhered to the ethical guidelines. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, their right to withdraw at any time, and the voluntary nature of their participation. Informed consent was obtained, and confidentiality was assured by anonymising participants’ identities. The researcher also avoided plagiarism by properly citing all sources and acknowledging others' contributions.

4. Findings and Discussions

The presentation and discussions were grounded in themes derived from the research questions and the data collected during the field observation.

4.1. Instructional Resources Teachers Utilise in Teaching and Learning of Social Studies

The study aimed to examine the kinds of teaching materials used by teachers to teach and learn Social Studies in senior high schools within the Effutu Municipality of the Central Region, Ghana. To achieve this goal, questions were designed to elicit participants' opinions. The main ideas that emerged were traditional and digital resources, as well as resource persons. The teachers' classroom activities were also observed to verify the accuracy of their statements during interviews. Table 2 shows the empirical alignment with the 12 observed lessons.

Table 2: Empirical Alignment with the 12 Observed Lessons

Instructional Resource Type	Lessons Observed (n = 12)	Level of Use
Chalkboard / Whiteboard	12/12	Very High
Students’ Notebooks	12/12	Very High
Textbooks	10/12	High
Maps / Charts / Posters	5/12	Moderate
ICT / Audio-Visual	2/12	Low
Improvised Materials/Resource Persons	1/12	Very Low

The composite findings from Table 2 guide the analytical discussion of the observation data. The outcome is expanded in the following sub-sections: traditional resources, digital resources, and resource persons.

4.1.1. Traditional resources

This is the most common type of teaching material found in classrooms. These are the standard tools that Social Studies teachers use to help their students learn and teach. These include textbooks, maps, charts, posters, and chalkboards, which have long been essential for classroom instruction. In Social Studies, these materials help organise and make historical facts, geographical information, and social structures more straightforward to understand. For example, textbooks provide in-depth coverage of topics such as democracy and historical events, while maps and charts illustrate the location of places and the significance of the data. Despite the rise of digital tools, traditional resources remain valuable for grounding students in foundational knowledge and facilitating a transparent, organised approach to learning Social Studies. The participants' responses and experiences confirm this.

When this question was posed: What are the types of instructional resources teachers utilise in teaching and learning Social Studies? One participant stated,

"Since the beginning of my teaching career, I have consistently employed instructional resources, particularly chalkboards, pictures, videos, and charts, which significantly enhance students' understanding of the lesson I present". (A male teacher with 4 years of experience)

Again, another participant said,

"I commonly use textbooks, pictures, charts and sometimes magazines in my Social Studies classes". (A female teacher with 5 years of experience)

Similarly, one participant said,

"I taught marriage recently, and I used pictures and videos and showed them some of the items that constitute the bride price (kente, Schnapp, beads)". (A male teacher with 16 years of experience)

It was realised from the classroom observation that most of the resources participants purported to have used were not available and not put into practice. For example, the observed type of instructional resources, which were *textbooks and other printed materials*, resulted in this outcome. Instead, the observation data revealed that textbooks were the most frequently used instructional resource among teachers. The observed practices were as follows: teachers relied on approved Social Studies textbooks for lesson content; lessons often began with references to specific pages in the textbook; and printed handouts were largely absent. Use of textbooks and other printed materials was rated 10 out of 12. This is the field note excerpt:

The teacher guided the lesson strictly using the recommended Social Studies textbook, asking students to read sections and copy key points.

However, the outcome of the classroom observed type of instructional resources, which was *Chalkboard / Whiteboard*, had a unique result. The chalkboard or whiteboard was universally used across all observed lessons. The observed practices were as follows: teachers wrote lesson objectives and key points on the board; the board was used primarily for note presentation and summarisation; and limited student interaction with the board was observed.

Use of the *Chalkboard / Whiteboard* was rated 12 out of 12. This is the field note excerpt:

The teacher wrote all the major points on the board while students copied them into their notebooks.

Furthermore, it was realised from the classroom observation that most of the resources participants purported to have used were unavailable or not implemented. For example, the observed type of instructional resources, which were *maps, charts, and posters*, had this outcome. Visual instructional resources were present in some classrooms but were utilised inconsistently. The observed practices were as follows: wall maps and charts were visible but often not referenced during instruction; when used, explanations were brief and teacher-led; and students were rarely asked to interact with these visuals. Use of the *maps, charts, and posters* was rated 5 out of 12. This is the field note excerpt:

Although a chart on national symbols was displayed, the teacher did not actively engage students with it during the lesson.

Based on the observation outcomes and participants' accounts, it can be inferred that Social Studies teachers in this context rely heavily on traditional instructional resources in their teaching practice. They consistently utilise conventional resources, such as chalkboards/whiteboards, textbooks, pictures, and charts to support their lessons. The teachers recognised the value of these resources in enhancing student understanding and engagement with Social Studies. They use visual aids (e.g., pictures and charts) moderately and rely more on textual resources (e.g., textbooks), indicating that they recognise the need to accommodate different learning styles. Sinjela et al. (2019) assert that traditional sources are well-organised, coherent, consistent, up-to-date,

and generally unbiased. This indicates that scholars have examined them closely. Abdi (2016) examined traditional teaching tools in Social Studies classrooms, finding that teachers relied heavily on textbooks, maps, and charts to teach effectively.

The study showed that these resources helped students develop a solid grasp of core Social Studies concepts, which are consistent with participants' reports. Osaat (2019) also looked into how traditional teaching materials affected students' learning in Social Studies. Their research showed that using resources such as textbooks, charts, and chalkboards systematically improved students' academic performance and retention of key Social Studies facts. This supports the teachers' findings in this study, indicating that traditional resources remain useful for student understanding. This corroborates Bordoh et al.'s (2022) research, which states that Social Studies concepts in the classroom affect learners' ability to apply what they learn to real-life situations and, consequently, students' performance on expository questions. Dale's Cone of Experience, which emphasises learning through observation, parallels how teachers utilise traditional resources such as textbooks, maps, charts, and visual aids in their Social Studies classrooms.

The participants' responses indicate that Social Studies teachers in the Effutu Municipality still use a variety of traditional teaching tools, such as chalkboards/whiteboards, textbooks, pictures, and charts, to present material in a structured and easy-to-understand manner in lesson delivery. These resources are essential for providing students with a solid foundation of knowledge and for helping them understand complex Social Studies concepts. The classroom observation outcomes did not corroborate the interview findings. Instead, it was observed that there was frequent use of chalkboards/whiteboards and textbooks, and the less frequent use of pictures, charts, posters, and maps. These findings have a significant effect on how Social Studies is taught. They argue that, although technology has advanced, traditional resources remain essential for effective instruction in this subject (Sung et al., 2016). This highlights the importance of schools continuing to invest in and maintain a diverse range of traditional teaching tools.

4.1.2. Digital resources

In today's science and technology landscape, numerous tools are available to support teaching and learning, which can significantly impact the educational process. Digital educational resources encompass a variety of online and electronic tools that support learning and teaching. Hamill (2017) states that digital resources can be created digitally or by converting analogue resources to digital formats. Similarly, Dukare (2020) defined digital resources as those requiring access to a computer or other electronic devices that collect data, including full-text databases, electronic journals, image collections, and other multimedia and social media-based products. These include educational software and apps, online databases, vast collections of digital information accessible via the Internet, multimedia presentations, videos, and animations that combine text, images, and audio. These digital resources offer several advantages, including increased engagement, personalised learning experiences, access to up-to-date information, and the ability to learn anytime and anywhere. However, their practical use requires proper infrastructure, digital literacy skills, and careful integration into the curriculum to ensure they enhance rather than distract from the learning process.

Some participants reported using digital resources in the teaching and learning of Social Studies. One of the participants said,

“My go-to method often involves utilising visual aids, particularly pictures from Google directly related to the lesson content. I present these images to my students to enhance their understanding and engagement with the subject matter. Additionally, I occasionally organise visits to resource centres, providing students with hands-on experiences that further reinforce their learning and offer real-world context to the topics we cover in class”. (A male teacher with 7 years of experience)

Another participant also said,

“Recently, I used a documentary film about influential leaders in African history to teach leadership and followership lessons. The documentary showcased various leadership styles and their impacts on societies, providing visual context and real-life examples. This helped students engage with the content more deeply”. (A female teacher with 11 years of experience)

During the classroom observation, most of the resources participants reported using were unavailable and not implemented. For example, the observed type of instructional resources, which were *ICT-based and audio-visual resources*, resulted in this outcome. The use of ICT and audio-visual resources was minimal. The observed practices were as follows: occasional use of PowerPoint presentations; no use of videos, simulations,

or interactive digital tools; and ICT use was contingent on the availability of equipment and power supply. Use of the *ICT-based and audio-visual resources* was rated 2 out of 12. This is the field note excerpt:

A PowerPoint slide was projected to explain civic responsibilities, but student participation remained limited.

Although digital resources were rarely available or used, participants noted that their use in Social Studies lessons increases students' interest and improves their understanding of the material. Teachers can make abstract ideas more concrete by using visual aids such as images from the internet and educational documentaries. These resources provide real-world context and accommodate diverse learning styles, making lessons more engaging and memorable. The idea is that digital tools can enhance traditional teaching methods by making learning more interactive and engaging, thereby helping students connect more deeply with the material. According to Tuimur and Chemwei (2015), digital resources make the classroom more realistic, thereby increasing lesson engagement. However, this study found that teachers could not access projectors, and schools with some projectors could have only one functioning projector. Most teachers had difficulty reaching them due to the pressure. There is evidence in the literature that digital tools can help students connect more deeply with their learning. Jayaraman and Aane (2024) argue that using digital resources in the classroom helps students learn actively and think critically by enabling them to interact with these resources to improve their understanding and memory. Tondeur et al. (2017) also found that carefully integrating digital tools into the curriculum can enhance student motivation and make learning more meaningful by connecting theory with practice. Schools need appropriate infrastructure, such as projectors, and teacher training in how to use technology to realise these benefits. Suryani et al. (2021) also looked at how digital instructional resources affected students' grades in Social Studies. The findings showed that students who learnt with both traditional and digital resources performed significantly better on tests than those who learned only with conventional methods. This aligns with the teachers' observations in this study, which suggest that digital tools can enhance learning by creating more authentic and meaningful connections.

4.1.3. Resource persons

According to Edinyang et al. (2020), humans are the most valuable resource in teaching Social Studies. They said that "material resources in themselves are not self-instructing but are only intended to be used to supplement normal daily teaching activities directed by the teachers". They referred to human resources as individuals, known as resource persons, who can be utilised to enhance understanding in specific areas of human endeavours. Mulang (2021) stated that human resources encompass all human beings who contribute to the teaching-learning process. A resource person may be within and outside the school community. Examples of resource persons include subject teachers, lecturers, students, farmers, and professionals such as medical doctors, nurses, lawyers, and police officers. For example, a lawyer can be invited to teach on "crimes: causes, consequences and prevention". Resource persons are another emerging theme from the participants' responses. Some participants reported inviting resource persons to assist with Social Studies instruction and learning. One of the participants said,

"In a class where I taught rights and responsibilities. To provide learners with a vivid explanation of why some individuals' rights are curtailed, I invited a local police officer to serve as a resource. He facilitated the topic with my students, and they asked many critical questions". (A male teacher with 3 years of experience)

Another participant also said,

"During a lesson on entrepreneurship, I invited a successful local business owner to speak to the class. The entrepreneur shared insights about starting and running a small business, discussing challenges faced and strategies for success. Students were highly engaged, asking numerous questions". (A male teacher with 5 years of experience).

Although the classroom observation outcome was inconsistent with the interview outcomes, all teachers attested to the usefulness of resource persons, individuals with relevant expertise who provide valuable knowledge and insights in a learning environment, particularly when the instructor is not an expert in the subject matter. To them, resource persons contribute their subject expertise and real-world experiences, making the learning process more engaging and enriching for participants. The participants described resource persons as aligning with the lower, more concrete levels of Dale's Cone of Experience, as these human resources provide direct, hands-on learning experiences that enable students to engage with and

internalise Social Studies in a tangible, interactive manner. The involvement of resource persons in Social Studies teaching has important implications for student engagement and the depth of learning.

Teachers provide students with direct access to real-world knowledge and skills by inviting experts, such as a police officer or a local business owner, into the classroom. This makes the material more relevant, enabling students to become more engaged, ask essential questions, and learn material that textbooks alone might not teach. Having resource persons in the classroom encourages interactive learning, bridges the gap between theory and practice, and helps students relate what they learn in school to real-life situations, thereby making lessons more meaningful and memorable. According to Ukadike (2013), resource persons benefit both teachers and students. They help students better understand concepts and are motivating, providing real-life examples that inspire them to pursue careers in nursing or medicine. Resource persons also help students find relevant information for their educational careers, making learning more enduring and valuable. They also broaden students' experiences by covering a variety of topics and fostering critical thinking through interactive lectures and discussions. Resource persons enhance the learning process by engaging students more and improving their understanding of the material.

Barkley and Major (2020) examined the impact of resource persons in Social Studies education on students. They found that students were more motivated, participated more, and remembered more when their teachers brought in outside experts to share relevant experiences and insights. The study showed that when teachers used resource persons, students' understanding of Social Studies improved, leading to deeper understanding and higher grades. This aligns with the teachers' observations in the current study, which indicated that engaging a resource person can increase students' interest in the subject and deepen their understanding. In addition, Zevin (2015) found in his research on the role of resource persons in Social Studies instruction that their involvement improved students' academic performance and developed their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The study found that students were better able to think critically about social issues, make informed choices, and apply their knowledge in real-life situations when they could talk to and learn from resource persons. This supports the participants' statements that resource persons enhance learning and help connect theory and practice in Social Studies. Teachers of Social Studies in Effutu Municipality should consider hiring resource persons to engage students more effectively and make learning more interesting. Teachers bring in professionals to give students real-world knowledge that goes beyond what they learn in books. This method makes lessons more relevant and interactive, encourages students to think critically, and prompts them to consider other career options. Ultimately, involving resource persons can help connect theory and practice, making Social Studies more relevant and valuable for students in the municipality.

The analytical summary of the classroom observation findings indicates that instructional resource utilisation in Social Studies lessons at the senior high school level is primarily dominated by traditional resources, particularly chalkboards, textbooks, and students' notebooks. Although some visual and ICT-based resources were available, their utilisation was limited and did not significantly promote interactive or learner-centred pedagogy. The near absence of locally improvised materials suggests a continued reliance on teacher-centred instructional approaches, which may constrain experiential learning in Social Studies classrooms.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Teachers utilised a combination of traditional resources (such as chalkboards/whiteboards, textbooks, and charts) and digital resources (such as online videos and images), as well as resources from people (such as community leaders and professionals). Although most of the resources teachers purport to utilise were unavailable or underutilised, they relied more on traditional than on digital resources. This indicates that teachers require additional resources. Most schools struggled to access modern digital resources due to fundamental infrastructure issues, including unreliable electricity and insufficient projectors. This made it hard for them to use technology effectively in their teaching. The implication is that differences in how easily schools obtain resources could widen achievement gaps, since schools with more resources can offer better learning experiences than those with fewer resources. We need to act quickly in this situation to make sure that everyone in the municipality has the same educational opportunities. Better access to and use of resources could completely change how Social Studies is taught and learnt. With the right tools, teaching could be more hands-on, student-centred, and interactive, thereby helping students learn more and remember what they have learnt.

Recommendations are based on the findings and their implications for the effective use of instructional materials in Social Studies classes. The Effutu Municipal Educational Directorate should establish robust

professional development programmes to equip teachers with the skills to utilise technology and innovative teaching methods. These programmes should occur frequently, be useful, and be tailored to teachers' needs. They should include hands-on training with modern teaching tools and digital resources. The training should also include ways for teachers to create and adapt resources to maximise their effectiveness in this era of digital literacy.

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