

Factors Influencing Formative Assessment Practices of Junior High School Social Studies Teachers

Isaac Eshun¹ and Anthony Bordoh²
Department of Social Studies Education,
University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

Benjamin Kwabena Ochour
Department of Social Science, Offinso
College of Education, Offinso, Ghana

Abstract

The study investigated factors that influence formative assessment practices of Social Studies in the Techiman Municipality of the Bono East Region of Ghana. A quantitative approach with a descriptive survey research design was employed for the study. For the target population, all eighty-four public junior high school (JHS) Social Studies teachers in the Techiman Municipality of the Bono East Region of Ghana were chosen for the study. All the Social Studies teachers in the public JHSs in the Techiman Municipality were sampled for the study. The census sampling technique was employed to select the population for the study. Because the population was homogenous, all the Social Studies teachers, comprising ninety-five (95) teaching the subject at the JHS in the municipality, were selected for the study. The primary data collection instrument for the study was a twenty-two (22) five-point Likert itemized questionnaire used for the collection of data. Descriptive statistical tools were employed in analyzing the quantitative data. The quantitative figures were prearranged into frequency tables, simple percentages, weighted mean, and standard deviation for easy interpretation. The findings revealed that most teacher assessments are mainly influenced by external factors such as the nature and demand of the West Africa Examination Council's (WAEC) questions and requirements set by the Municipal Director of Education or the school district. Therefore, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) should consider introducing interventions in teacher training universities and colleges that help improve classroom practices, including formative assessment practices.

Keywords: assessment feedback, assessment practices, formative assessment, Social Studies, junior high schools

Introduction

Several authors highly attested that "recent years have seen increased research on classroom assessment as an essential aspect of effective teaching and learning" (Eshun, 2015; McMillan et al., 2002; Stiggins, 2006). It is becoming increasingly "evident that classroom assessment is an integral component of the teaching and learning process" (Black & William, 1998; Quashigah et al., 2015).

The educational assessment provides the necessary feedback to maximize the outcomes of educational efforts. The assessment of learners' learning provides objective evidence necessary for the decision-making process in Education (Ochour et al., 2022). There is, therefore, the notion that without feedback, the impact of formative assessment will be difficult to be realized. Grounding on this, Omonigho (2023) states, "Good measurement resulting in accurate data is the foundation of sound decision-making. There is little doubt among educational practitioners about the special value of assessment as a basic condition for effective learning. The major problems of assessment of learners have been in the approaches or methods."

As teachers, learners typically ask questions about why we usually teach them throughout the term, semester or the whole academic year and are allowed to write a sit-in examination, which takes a few hours to determine whether or not they were able to grasp the fundamental understanding of the content taught in the subject. The question is how one or a single-shot examination adequately assesses what a student has learned over a lengthy period of studying in a school setting. This question is to be answered through properly laid out formative assessment practices.

In answering this question, Ochour et al. (2022) assert that "educational assessment experts and educational policymakers have come up with the concept of continuous assessment. Continuous assessment has been a feature of the Ghanaian school system since 1987. It is unfortunate, however, that continuous assessment has not made the expected contribution to pupils' school performance due to the way it was conceptualized and also due to some other inherent problems in its operation." There is seemingly increased reproach in high-stakes examinations in the field of Education, which to the connoisseurs of formative assessment, goes a long way to affect learners. Such assessment practice seems to affect students learning negatively and must be

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Anthony Bordoh, Department of Social Studies Education, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana. **Email:** abordoh@uew.edu.gh

reduced to the bare minimum to help boost students' interest in learning (Morrison & Tang, 2002; Eshun, 2023; Bordoh, 2022; Osman et al., 2021). Black and William (1998) stated, "formative assessment, if properly implemented in schools, is a powerful means to improve student learning." From the perspective of the global milieu, "formative assessment has already been practiced in schools in various Western countries including Australia, Canada, Denmark, England, Finland, Italy, New Zealand and Scotland" (OECD, 2005).

A close look at assessment in Ghanaian Schools shows that we use only two assessment forms: formative and summative. "There are good reasons to have summative assessments, such as the need for certification, comparability (norm-reference), and system feedback. This is why many countries are introducing them" (West & Crighton 1999). In the present Ghana Educational Structure, the first summative assessment is the Basic Education Certificate Examination, followed by the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations which leads an individual into the University and other tertiary institutions. We should pause now and ask ourselves if two external assessments in a pun of twelve years are enough for children and educators. Do these two examinations validly measure what a child has learned?

The classroom usually serves as a place for assessment practices in the countless functions. Assessment practices "aid in planning instruction, shaping instruction as it unfolds, gauging students' achievement, and evaluating curriculum" (Stiggins, 2006). "When teachers assess their students, they often attempt to gauge their knowledge and skills acquisition, as well as different social factors, including student participation, interaction, and attendance" (Coombe et al., 2020). This indicates that proper formative assessment practices in schools can help realize the positive attitudes Social Studies seek to achieve. Several scholars believe that proper and conscious formative assessment practice help will help in realizing the worthwhile production of reflective, participatory, concerned, and responsible citizens (Bekoe & Eshun, 2013; Bordoh et al., 2021; Eshun, 2020; Martorella, 1991). It is only when students constantly perform such activities in the form of projects, group assignments, and drama, among others that the targeted skill remains with them. Teachers, in most cases, neglect such basic techniques, which can make a targeted skill a permanent experience for learners, as the researcher observed during his duty as a supervisor of student-teacher practices and many other regular or classroom teachers he has known relegate this to the background.

"Although it is obvious that not all learning outcomes are equal in complexity and skills required, they are all essential in achieving Social Studies goals" (Killen, 2003). The effective use of formative assessment in the instructional processes is essential in ensuring that the instructional processes in Social Studies will be executed only for certification purposes. Assessment has a direct correlation with curriculum designing, which also impacts significantly on teaching, so it should result in the acquisition of relevant values and skills and positive attitudes, values, and skills by all students. It is on this that Bordoh et al. (2018) reasoned why teaching concepts in Social Studies should be tailored toward the inculcation of positive attitudes and values. Many have complained and wondered what might have gone wrong, for there is a remarkable fall in the cherished attitudinal standards with an increase in disrespect for the elderly by the youth, an increase in streets owing to divorce, neglect of the aged, indecent dressing among the youth of today, ascending bribery and bureaucratic corruption everywhere here in our society. All of these have contributed to low productivity in our present society. Social Studies emphasizes value acquisition and attitudinal change within the cultural milieu. Therefore, its assessment ought to go beyond mere recall of facts. In this way, the emphasis teachers place on the acquisition of knowledge by students to pass their final national examinations to the disadvantage of positive attitudes and values, which are well done by formative assessment practices, would be minimized.

Review of the Related Literature

Several informed factors are believed to influence assessment, particularly formative assessment. McMillan (2004) asserts that "the factors that influence the use of formative assessment are defined as pressures that need to be considered when planning

for assessment" (p. 10). McMillan further found "many internal and external influences on teachers' use of classroom assessment. Investigating the factors that influence the use of classroom assessment may help one understand teachers' formative assessment practices." It is highly believed that "formative assessment is the only fair way to evaluate students' learning" (Bordoh et al., 2022).

In the views of Wormeli (2006), "What is fair is not always equal, and our goal as teachers is to be fair and developmentally appropriate, not one-size-fits-all equals" (p. 6). "If we give every child the same assessment, we are not paying attention to students' different learning styles and academic readiness" (Ochour et al., 2022). This study is based on the notion that teachers make a curriculum plan in social studies to target a given learning focus for diverse categories of learners. However, teachers may consciously check whether or not the progression of learners is in tandem with the curriculum goals in the course of the lesson delivery. This helps to adjust to the proposed plan when the outcome seems otherwise. That is the essence of formative assessment.

This makes the growing desire to introduce assessment literacy in the pre-service teacher training programs clear to us. On this note, according to Linn and Miller (2005), "the American Federation of Teachers, the National Council on Measurement in Education, and the National Education Association released the following teacher competencies for classroom assessment: Teachers should be skilled in choosing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions; Teachers should be skilled in developing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions; The teacher should be skilled in administering, scoring, and interpreting the results of both externally produced and teacher-produced assessment methods; Teachers should be skilled in using assessment results when making decisions about individual students, planning teaching, developing curriculum, and school improvement; Teachers should be skilled in developing valid pupil grading procedures which use pupil assessments; Teachers should be skilled in communicating assessment results to students, parents, other lay audiences, and other educators; and Teachers should be skilled in recognizing unethical, illegal, and otherwise inappropriate assessment methods and uses of assessment information" (Linn & Miller, 2005, pp. 519-522).

With the appropriateness of assessment, Shepard (2000) asserts that it "should be moved into the middle of the teaching and learning process instead of being postponed as only the end-point of instruction" (p. 10). Her theory "connects classroom assessment, a reformed curriculum vision, and cognitive and constructivist learning theories." She further asserts, "Although instructional methods have improved in recent years, assessment methods have yet to evolve; only by making connections across the educational community can progress occur." Shepard finally resolved that "our goal should be to find ways to fend off the negative effects of externally imposed tests and to develop instead classroom assessment practices that can be trusted to help students take the next steps in learning" (p. 12).

Stiggins (2006) offered three barriers to prevent instructors from successfully implementing assessment processes. According to Stiggins, as cited in Ochour et al. (2022), the stages are as follows: "The first barrier involves teachers' emotions about their past assessment experiences. As former students, teachers have various positive and negative memories about assessment that influence their current practice. Teachers who have had negative experiences with assessment as a student may avoid assessing their students; alternatively, they may try to reconcile their emotions by learning how to be better assessors. The second barrier is the lack of instructional time for assessment. Teachers can be so overwhelmed with instructional responsibilities that assessment occurs infrequently. They need assessment methods that require minimal time and yield high-quality information about student learning. The third barrier is the lack of assessment expertise among teachers." Teacher training and education programs hardly ever embrace more than elementary topics in educational assessment. Connecting formative assessment in Social Studies instruction with learning theories is essential. What follows displays how specific researchers propose choosing theory-based assessment processes (adapted from Demir et al., 2019).

“Theory: We construct knowledge from our interactions with the world. We learn by using our prior knowledge and experiences to create meaning. Applying theory to formative assessment in Social Studies suggests teachers should Assess students’ discussions and conversations, assess opportunities to show divergent thinking (multiple paths to answers that vary), assess various ways of demonstrating learning, assess critical thinking skills such as the highest levels of “New Bloom” (Darwazah, & Branch, 2015); and assess students’ connections to their own experiences and prior knowledge.

Theory: Learning occurs at all ages and stages and does not occur linearly and sequentially. Applying theory to formative assessment in Social Studies suggests teachers should: Assess students at all ages and stages of development in problem-solving and not require mastery of basic skills before assessing students’ abilities to have high-level discussions, solve complex problems, or demonstrate critical thinking.

Theory: Students exhibit varied intelligence, learning styles, attention spans, memory ability, aptitude, and developmental stages. Applying theory to formative assessment in Social Studies suggests teachers should: Assess using a wide variety of tasks (not just reading and writing); evaluate assessment products students choose, allow enough time for complex assessment products, allow time for students to think about their responses to assessments (do not use timed tests too often); allow students to revise their work based on teacher and peer feedback; and address all learning styles when assessing learning.

Theory: Students will be more likely to succeed on an assessment if they understand its goals, see representative models, and can compare their response to an excellent example. Applying theory to formative assessment in Social Studies suggests teachers should: Discuss the goals of an assessment with students, allow students to have input into what might represent standard and excellent responses to an assessment, show students a variety of examples of responses to an assessment and discuss these examples with them; allow time for self and peer evaluation of assessments; and make assessment criteria clear.

Theory: Students’ motivation, self-esteem, and effort affect their performance on and learning from any assessment. Applying theory to formative assessment in Social Studies suggests teachers should: Relate assessment to students’ real-world interests and concerns and encourage students to see the connection between the effort they make and the results of their performance on an assessment.

Theory: Students learn well in social activities, such as in collaborative group work. Applying theory to formative assessment in Social Studies suggests teachers should: Assess students as they work in groups, assess using group products, and assess students as they perform different roles within the group.

Theory: Determining how students are learning material while they are learning allows teachers to adjust instruction to meet students’ needs. Applying theory to formative assessment in Social Studies suggests teachers should: assess students often and in many ways while they are learning (i.e., formative assessment); provide prompt feedback on formative assessments so that students know how well they are learning; adjust instruction based on results of formative assessments; and use summative assessment based on evidence from formative assessments” (pp. 18-20).

It is, therefore, imperative to add how these theories may apply specifically to formative assessment in Social Studies by the teachers of the subject. Formative assessment, evaluation, and feedback work closely together. For example, Ochour et al. (2022) elaborate that “assessment is collecting or sampling students’ work, evaluation is judging that work based on criteria, and feedback is letting students know specifically and accurately how well they did compared to those criteria. The criterion can be a “right” answer, a rubric, or a product guide, and students should have access to those criteria on which teachers plan to evaluate their work.”

External examination brings competition among teachers in the same school setting and their counterparts in other school environments. Competition among instructors indicates that teachers need to think of instructional processes or strategies to advance classroom teaching and learning. On these competitive grounds, Ochour et al. (2022) indicate, “External examination is some kind of litmus paper testing how good a teacher is, at least by

students, parents, school administrators and the public.” It should be noted that although students can pass external examinations, it does not mean they have achieved the learning goals. For this reason, much attention should be given to incorporating formative assessment techniques in the social studies classroom.

Martorella (1984) defines Social Studies as “an applied field which attempts to fuse scientific knowledge with ethical, philosophical, religious and social consideration which arise in the decision-making process as practiced by citizens.” Also, Social Studies can be seen as being interested in humans and their interaction with their social and physical environments. Its prime focus is making democratic citizens (Kochhar, 1984). According to Banks (1990), “Social Studies is that part of the elementary and high school curriculum which has the primary responsibility for helping students to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to participate in the civic life of their local communities, the nation, and the world.” (p. 3). From these definitions and many others, it can be seen that Social Studies and the social sciences have the same goals of “awakening of social consciousness, the development of democratic values and a feeling for social justice and national integration” (Aggarwal, 1993, p. 9).

Therefore, the uniqueness of Social Studies as a subject of study rests not primarily on the goals or aims but on the approaches used in presenting all the knowledge, skills and desirable attitudes and, even more importantly, on the levels of emphasis placed on each aspect of the subject, in the teaching as well as in the assessment of the subject.

Aim of Research

This research aim to establish the factors that influence formative assessment practices of JHS teachers.

Research Question

The research focused on factors that influence formative assessment practices of Social Studies teachers at the JHS level in the Techiman Municipality in the Bono East Region of Ghana. This research question guided the study.

1. What factors influence JHS Social Studies teachers’ classroom assessment practice?

Methodology

Design

A quantitative approach with a descriptive survey research design was employed for the study. “Survey research is an efficient method for gathering data from a large population, and is a common and valuable approach to determine status” (Tayo et al., 2023). “Surveys help to describe the trends in a population or describe the relationship among variables or compare groups” (Levitt et al., 2018). The descriptive survey design was considered relevant for this study because it aimed to investigate the factors influencing formative assessment in public JHSs. As a survey method, descriptive research designs will help researchers identify characteristics in their target market or particular population. These characteristics in the population sample were identified and measured to guide decisions.

Population and Sample

For the target population, all eighty-four public JHS Social Studies teachers in the Techiman Municipality of the Bono East Region of Ghana were chosen for the study. The population also included all the municipality’s JHS social studies teachers. The target population encompassing all the Social Studies teachers in all the public JHSs in the municipality was also the same as the accessible population. This process was done to “ensure that all the needed population characteristics were captured in the study” (Fowler, 2008).

All the Social Studies teachers in the public JHSs in the Techiman Municipality were sampled for the study. The census sampling technique was employed to select the population for the study. “This technique involved collecting data on the whole population rather

than just a sample of it" (Levitt et al., 2018). The reason for employing the census sampling technique was "an attempt to avoid biases and because of the relatively small population size. Even more importantly, it ensured that all the needed characteristics of the population were captured in the study" (Fowler, 2008). Because the population was homogenous, all the social studies teachers, comprising ninety-five (95) teaching the subject at the JHS in the municipality, were selected for the study.

Tool

The primary data collection instrument for the study was a twenty-two (22) five-point Likert itemized questionnaire used to collect data. The five-point Likert-type items were scaled, ranging from 1 to 5. An extreme level of influence was represented with an ordinal code of 5, strongly influential was coded 4, the number 4 represented strongly influential, the number 3 represented a midway point and was coded 3, representing somehow influential and 2 represented a little influential, while 1 represented not influential at all and was coded as such. The instrument for data collection was adapted from "the 1998-99 Local Systematic Change. These are instruments developed by Horizon Research, Inc. The questionnaire was further put into reliability and validity tests through a pilot study for area compliance.

In order to ensure validity and reliability, the questionnaire was pre-tested on twenty junior high Social Studies teachers at Kwame Danso in the Sene West district. The items on the questionnaire were critically analyzed and the results revealed 80% potency. This gave the researchers the confidence in the instrument. However, It was noted that some respondents consulted their colleagues or other relevant materials before completing the items. This became manifest when the researchers engaged five in a casual conversation. In order to ensure that the correct information was obtained, the respondents were made to complete the questionnaire in the presence of the researchers and submit it on the same day.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

In the data collection procedure, the researchers visited all 84 Public JHSs and administered the questionnaires. Before the questionnaire was administered, the researchers visited about 50% of the schools to familiarise themselves with the school plant. During these visits, some field notes were made.

Descriptive statistical tools were employed in analyzing the quantitative data. The quantitative figures were prearranged into frequency tables, simple percentages, weighted mean, and standard deviation for easy interpretation. Ethically, the anonymity of respondents was assured.

Results and Discussion

This segment deals with the findings and discussion of the factors influencing JHS Social Studies teachers' formative assessment practices at the Techiman Municipality in the Bono East Region of Ghana. The research question - what factors influence JHS Social Studies teachers' classroom assessment practice? It was stated to provide data regarding the factors influencing teachers' formative assessment practices. All response choices from twenty-two five-point Likert-type questionnaire items were used in gathering the data—all the outcomes of mean influence in Table 1 are presented in descending order. Influencing factors have been grouped into six. They are external control factors. These influencing factors are the nature of the mandate and requirements of institutional national examinations and institutional bodies.

Curriculum-based factors identified are the lesson duration, lesson topic, and lesson objective, ranking students according to individual performance level, and determining what concepts students fail to understand. School-based factors embrace available facilities in the school setting and the ideal teacher-student ratio. Additional factors identified were the educators' factors: "motivating students to learn, his/her philosophy, the teacher's experience with the class, participation in professional

development programmes, or the teacher's undergraduate coursework." Students' factors were also identified as the students' number in the classroom, and students' expectations. Factors like students' parents' expectations and influence from the teacher's colleagues were identified as non-institutional factors.

Table 1 contains specific factors which influence the use of formative assessment. The mean of means was used to describe the level of influence of the attributes on the use of formative assessment by teachers. The 22-item response choices on the factors were grouped into; external control factors, curriculum-based factors, school-based factors, students' factors, educator's factors and non-institutional factors. The mean ranking is based on: very influential 4.6-5; influential 3.6-4.5; somehow influential 2.6-3.5; little influential 1.6-2.5 and not influential 1-1.5. It is evident from the table that external control factors had a mean ranking of 4.3 out of 5. Curriculum-based factors had a mean ranking of 3.8 out of 5. Out of the highest mean of five, school-based and student factors had a mean of 3.6, respectively. Teacher's factors had 3.4 out of a highest mean of 5. Non-institutional factors had the lowest mean of 2.4 out of 5.

External control factors (mean of means 4.33), such as the nature and demand of West Africa Examination Council's (WAEC) questions and the set of requirements by the Municipal Director of Education, were considered influential on formative assessment. Also, curriculum-based factors such as ranking students, lesson topics, and objectives, as well as school-based factors such as maintaining a credible school standard and requirements set by school authority, were considered influential. These findings suggest that JHS Social Studies teachers consider the nature and demand of WAEC questions and requirements set by the Municipal Director of Education to significantly influence their formative assessment practice. The preceding findings contradict Tracy's (2002) research outcome "that a teacher's belief in the importance of assessment exercises the greatest influence over practice" (p. 147). This study supports (Stiggins, 2006), who wrote that we use formative assessment "to see whether our students are meeting standards set by the state, the district, or the classroom teacher." By this, Stiggins further appraised that "assessments of learning are important if we are to ascribe grades to students and provide accountability." The findings of this study seem to indicate that teachers' assessments are influenced by the factors that will make their students pass their examinations as opposed to making the skill and/or concept studied part of the learners. This is what made Stiggins urge "teachers to focus more on assessment for learning. These types of assessment - formative assessments - support learning during the learning process."

Also, the factors identified by the study to influence teachers' formative assessment practices are more external control factors, curriculum-based factors and school-based factors than teachers' factors. This means that using formative assessment is not a novice's skill. It takes a wide range of conscious fundamental content knowledge, a thorough foundational understanding of pedagogy, skills in classroom instructions, appropriate classroom management and student engagement skills to be able to practice or implement the formative assessment. Sixty-one of the respondents, representing 64.3% indicated that their formative assessment practices are influenced greatly by conditions such as the nature and demand of the West African Examinations Council's questions.

This seems to suggest that these teachers compel their students to grasp the content of their topics only at the cognitive level. The findings also confirm (Coombe et al., 2020) that "teachers commonly use formative assessments to measure content knowledge, typically in terms of factual recall and other rote learning achievements." Brookhart (2007) supported this assertion: "Teachers typically assess to assign grades, which constrains the types of assessments they use." Rather, these findings parallel Kotora (2001), who found that "standards set by the local school district, the state, or the Municipal Directorate had almost no influence on the assessments used by teachers."

Ranking pupils was a very significant reason for practicing formative assessments, as emphasized among public JHS Social Studies teachers. "One purpose of assessment is to sort individuals on one or more dimensions" (Kohn, 1994). For educators managing large class sizes, the figure of variations is high, and the variances can be insignificant. Pupils can be graded for purposes

such as mastering a learned skill, explaining a concept taught to colleagues or stating key ideas of the newly treated concept. According to the current study, Social Studies teachers at JHSs use formative assessment mainly to rank learners according to their level of performance.

Student factors (mean of means 3.57) such as the expectations of students were also considered influential according to the current study's findings. This implies that such factors are considered conditions that compel teachers to assess their students in the course of teaching. The findings of this study are confirmed by a study by Black and William (1998), who stated that formative assessment should broadly "include all activities that teachers and students undertake to get information that can be used diagnostically to alter teaching and learning." The authors further stated that "formative assessment encompasses teacher observation, classroom discussion, and analysis of student work, including homework and tests." Assessment becomes formative when the information is used to adapt to the teaching and learning

process to meet the needs of students. It is important to note that the formative assessment process can strengthen students' abilities to assess their progress, set and evaluate their learning goals, and adjust accordingly. Formative assessment can also elicit valuable feedback from students about what teachers are doing effectively and what they could do better.

Teacher's factors (mean of means 3.38) such as motivation and teacher's philosophy, were considered somewhat influential as indicated by the respondents, though it does improve instruction and learning. The current study's findings supported Fautley's (2023) assertion "that one of the three main purposes of formative assessment is to increase motivation and individual responsibility for learning."

The non-institutional factors such as influence from colleagues, were considered virtually not influential. This finding implies that such factors are not considered as conditions that compel teachers to practice formative assessment in the classroom.

Table 1

Level of Influence Attributed by Social Studies Teachers to Itemised Influencing Factors in the Use of Formative Assessment

Statement	SD	M
External control factors		
The nature and demand of WAEC's examination questions	1.3	4.65
Set of requirements by the municipal director of education	1.83	4.01
Average of means		4.33
Curriculum-based factors		
Ranking learners according to individual performance level	1.5	4.61
The duration of the lesson	1.77	3.66
Type of topic under discussion	1.83	3.63
The objectives of the lesson topic	1.82	3.63
Determining what concept/topic students are failing to understand	1.82	3.42
Average of means		4.52
School-based factors		
The number of learners in the class	1.74	3.76
Requirements set by school authority	1.62	3.1
The available facilities	2.45	2.82
Establishing or maintaining a credible school standard	1.23	4.52
Average of means		3.55
Students' factors		
The teacher-student ratio in class	1.69	3.97
The expectations of students	1.74	2.80
Identifying the general class needs	1.8	3.93
Average of means		3.57
Teacher's factors (mean of means 3.4)		
Motivating students to learn Social Studies	1.54	4.23
My philosophy of Education	1.69	3.97
My experience with a specific class	1.7	3.45
Professional development programmes I have Participated	1.9	3.1
My undergraduate coursework	1.98	2.16
Average of means		3.38
Non-institutional factors (mean of means 2.4)		
The expectations of the student's parents	1.9	2.74
Influence from my Social Studies colleagues	1.46	2.22
Influence from my colleagues from other subject area	1.46	2.22
Average of means		2.39

Note. Mean ranking: Not influential at all 1-1; A little influential 1.6-2.5; Somehow influential 2.6-3.5; Influential 3.6-4.5; and Very influential 4.6-5.

Conclusion

It was discovered that most of the teachers' assessments are mainly influenced by external factors such as the nature and demand of the West Africa Examination Council's questions and requirements set by the Municipal Director of Education or the school district. This seems to suggest that the teachers are not allowed to assess their students based on learning goals but rather on performance. Curriculum-based factors such as ranking of

students according to individual performance levels, duration of the lesson, the topic under discussion and the objectives to be achieved were also found to influence the teachers' classroom assessment. It also revealed that most of the teachers frequently frame their questions to monitor their students' progress. This they do by allowing them to ask questions on issues or concepts they [students] do not understand during the teaching and learning process.

It can therefore be concluded that so much pressure is mounted on the teachers by the school district and/or other external factors

which put much pressure on the teachers' calling for marked scores for the students' continuous assessment as against their professional practices. The teachers emphasized how to complete their topics in the syllabus with little or, in some cases, no attention paid to what the student has learnt. Their teaching and assessments are therefore controlled by the time available for the lesson and not the series of activities such as pair discussion which enhances students/learner understanding since they [students] feel free to ask for further explanation from their colleagues than the teacher due to the formal nature of the relationship, but most of the teachers do not do this at all.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the universities which train teachers and the colleges of Education which also train teachers for our basic schools are not doing so much to train teachers in formative assessment practices; they mostly train these teachers in acquiring the content as against assessment skills. This deduction was made because the teachers' formative assessments were frequently done orally when they wanted to monitor their students' progress.

It is also recommended that the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) should introduce friendly interventions in teacher training universities and colleges to help improve classroom assessment practices. To do this, all the teacher training institutions must well articulate the interventions for both their in-service and pre-service programs. Again, the training of teachers should also consider making classroom assessment an integral part of the professional training of the teachers that will equip them with the knowledge and skills of assessment. This enables the teacher-trainee to understand the ideal role and purposes of assessment without confusing them with assessment which occurs spontaneously at the end of a lesson, unit or semester. Similarly, the classroom instructors will come to understand the assessment that teachers can use to decide in advance how they [teachers] will provoke learners' thinking during the instructional process and those which have been rooted in the current curriculum at various key points in a learning sequence as a matter of soliciting conscious feedback.

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