

Influence of Graduate Teachers' Knowledge of the Senior High School Social Studies Curriculum/ Instructional Objectives on Assessment Items

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Abstract

Aim: This study aimed at determining the influence of graduate teachers' knowledge of the Senior High School Social Studies curriculum/ instructional objectives on assessment items.

Methods: This study employed a qualitative and interpretive methodology, using the case study design. The population for the study included all the 15 graduate Social Studies teachers at the Senior High Schools in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The researchers by the use of the purposive sampling technique, selected ten (10) trained graduate Social Studies teachers out of the fifteen (15) teachers for the one-on-one interview. Qualitative data collection instruments were used in gathering data for the study. The data collection methods involved an interview guide made up of fifteen (15) semi-structured items for ten (10) graduate Social Studies teachers at the Senior High School level.

Results: Findings from the study indicate that teachers' assessment practices were to a very large extent not influenced by the objectives of the subject. The observational session revealed that not only did the performances in the test items match with performances in the curriculum/instructional objectives; but the choice of assessment techniques was inappropriate as the participants for instance used pencil-and-paper test in evaluating learning objectives dealing with valuing and the development of skills. Interestingly enough, even though all the participants agreed that the overall goal of Social Studies is citizenship education; their assessment practices did not reflect the curriculum/instructional goals of the subject.

Conclusion: From the findings, the participants failed to consider the curriculum/ instructional objectives in their assessment practices. Most of the participants' choices of assessment techniques were incongruent with their instructional objectives. Even though the participants demonstrated a very good knowledge of the objectives of teaching the subject, they failed to translate theory into practice.

Recommendations: In order to ensure success in improving the educational system, there must be monitoring in the curriculum design, and its implementation. Educational policy could fail if there are lapses at any of the levels, that is, curriculum design, implementation and monitoring. In this study, however, the improvement of attitudes must be seen as the hallmark of social studies programme at the training institutions. This can be done with an increase in supervisory role carried out by the training institutions or universities in the country to see how their products are performing. These could help the programme to achieve its goals and objectives of teaching it.

Keywords: *Graduate teachers, social studies, knowledge, instructional objectives, assessment*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the words of Offorma (1994) and Nzewi, Okpara and Akudolu (1995), implementation of curriculum is normally done in the classroom through joint efforts of the teacher and learners as well as other stakeholders. A very significant component of curriculum implementation is assessment or evaluation of learning outcomes. This means that classroom teachers actions and or inactions particularly in the area of assessing learning outcomes, have the tendency to greatly influence the successful implementation of Social Studies curriculum and subsequently the realization of the curriculum goals and objectives.

Assessment has direct correlation with curriculum designing which also greatly impact on teaching and learning and therefore should end up in the acquisition of positive attitudes, values and skills by all learners. This is confirmed by (Black & William, 1998) when they postulated that classroom assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning process. Accordingly, the senior high school (SHS) social studies curriculum emphasizes that both instruction and assessment be based on the profile dimensions of the subject. In developing assessment procedures, teachers of the subject are encouraged to select specific objectives in such a way that it assesses a representative sample of the syllabus objectives (Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD), 2010). That means the SHS social studies curriculum describes and explains assessment requirements and guidance for its content areas.

Apart from the above, the curriculum also describes levels of learning, termed ‘profile dimensions’, whereby outcomes can be determined from a lower level to higher order learning (Bloom, 1969). The Ghana Education Service (GES) provides detailed guidelines on Social Studies pedagogy for teaching the subject at all levels. These guidelines are broken down into themes containing a vast array of concepts. Consistent with the national educational policy, the curriculum is aligned with behavioural cognitive framework that outlines the cognitive levels to be covered. These levels follow Bloom’s (1969) taxonomy of fact recall, application of knowledge and understanding, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Teachers of the subject are to be guided by the weight assigned to each level in planning lessons and assessment for that matter.

Teachers, as part of their assessment procedures, are to identify the number of items belonging to recall of facts, comprehension, application, analysis and synthesis to evaluation. Meanwhile, as Quartey (1984), proposes, any good test intended to assess the achievement of learners must take cognizance of the goals or objectives of the subject. He further argued that for any worthy discussion on the subject of assessment in Social Studies, it is relevant for teachers to refresh their memories about what the subject’s goals are; to enable teachers plan lessons adequately for the attainment of these goals (Quartey, 1984). This goes to suggest that no meaningful teaching and learning as well as valid assessment practices could take place unless teachers become conversant with the subject goals.

Surprisingly, in spite of the highly acclaimed role that classroom assessment plays in teaching and learning, research has identified a number of problems with the quality of classroom assessment. In the UK and America for instance, problems have been found with the use of poorly focused questions, a predominance of questions that require short answers involving factual knowledge, the elicitation of responses that involve repetition rather than reflection, and a lack of procedures designed to develop higher order skills (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Similarly, an investigation

conducted in the Western Region of Ghana by Eshun and Mensah (2013), indicated that there are discrepancies between what teachers say they assessed and what they actually assessed.

It is therefore quite relevant to discuss issues about what Senior High School Social Studies teachers test or measure in the classroom and how they correlate with the subject goals. It is as a result of the above, that the researcher intends to significantly assess graduate teachers' knowledge base of the Social Studies curriculum objectives and how their knowledgeability of the curriculum objectives influences their assessment practices.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Constructivism Theory

The theory that underlines the researchers attempt to understand the issues raised is rooted in the works of the constructivists. The constructivist theory was propounded by Vygotsky who asserted that social interaction and social context are essential for cognitive development (Charanjit, Eng, Tunku, Tarsame, & Nor, 2020). To him, constructivism is based on the belief that learners work to create, interpret, and reorganize knowledge. He further asserts that in constructivism, learners participate actively to reconcile the information they receive in the classroom with their existing knowledge, within the cultural and social contexts in which the ideas occur; interact with people who are more knowledgeable students and that classroom activities which are normally organised in groups foster active learning.

Adam, Bekoe and Ngaaso (2018) assert that constructivism is basically a philosophy of education based on observation and scientific study about how pupils/students learn. To them, with this belief in mind, it is argued that learners construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. They further argued that if it is maintained that by nature, social studies as a subject of study in the Ghanaian school curriculum is problem solving, then the constructivists may argue that, as citizens of Ghana, the learner(s) can construct their own understanding and knowledge of some of the problems Ghana faces as they experience and reflect on them in the teaching, learning and assessment processes. Adams et al, (2018) further stressed that Social Studies assessment should be done in a more authentic manner in the sense that it aligns itself to the ideals of constructivism, hence, appropriateness of the theory to the study. The theory is relevant to the study because, it allows learning to be regarded as individually unique process whereby learners construct their own knowledge and understanding of the world around them in the teaching, learning and assessment sessions of Social Studies lessons.

2.2 Influence of Curriculum/Instructional Objectives on Teachers' Assessment in Social Studies

2.2.1 Definition of assessment

Eshun and Effrim (2011) define assessment as a broad term used to mean a process of obtaining information that is used for making decisions about students, curricula and programmes, and educational policy. According to Airasian (1996) assessment is the process of collecting, synthesizing, and interpreting information to help in decision making. Again, Stiggins (2005) holds the view that classroom assessment is "the process of gathering evidence of student learning to inform instructional decisions". From the above given definitions, one can deduce that assessment

is a process rather than an event, that is to say that assessment involves series of activities such as collecting pieces information about learners (through observation, assignments and pencil-and – paper test), synthesizing and interpretation of results. The description of the term by Zhang and Burry-Stock (2000) confirms the researcher’s assertion when they describe classroom assessment as “a broad spectrum of activities from construction test items, performance measures, to grading, interpreting test scores, communicating test results and using assessment results in decision making.

2.2.2 Purposes of Assessment

Table 1: Purposes of assessment

Who Needs to Assess?	Purposes of Assessment
Policymakers	Policymakers use assessment to: * Set standards * Focus on goals * Monitor the quality of education * Reward/sanction various practices * Formulate policies * Direct resources including personnel and funds * Determine effects of tests.
Administrators and school	Monitor programme effectiveness planners use assessment to: * Identify program strengths and weaknesses * Designate programme priorities * Assess alternatives * Plan and improve programmes
Teachers and administrators	Make grouping decisions use assessment to: * Perform individual diagnosis and prescription * Monitor student progress * Carry out curriculum evaluation and refinement *Provide mastery/promotion/grading and other feedback * Motivate students * Determine grade.
Parents and students	Gauge student progress assessment to: * Assess student strengths and weaknesses Determine school accountability

Source: Adapted from Babo (2015)

2.3 Assessment in Social Studies

Assessment in social studies needs to go beyond focusing on how well a student uses a memorized facts or procedure but must also elicit, assess and respond to learners’ understanding and problem-solving skills. To do this, and in an attempt to minimize memorization in Social Studies classrooms, assessment technique needs to include more than the traditional practice of relying on end-of-unit tests and mid-unit quizzes, both of which tend to focus on knowledge recall and procedural learning (Quartey, 1990; Airasian, 1996; Shepard, 2005). This goes to imply that assessment is expected not only to take care of students’ knowledge and comprehension but, beyond that, evaluation of skills, growth in application, analysis, synthesis as well as development of positive attitude are equally crucial. Assessment needs to be embedded in instruction and must be used persistently to prompt learners’ thinking. There is therefore the need for the teacher to be a good listener and be responsive to the learners’ thinking. Assessment should also be seen as a constructive exercise which can promote active and lifelong learning among Social Studies students (Stobart, 2008).

Activities which should develop understanding and insights into students' critical thinking prowess include observations, interviews, performance tasks, reflective journals, projects, portfolios, presentations and self-assessments (Wiliam, 2006). These are considered essential parts of implementing current approaches to teaching and assessment in Social Studies. Both assessment and Social Studies education reforms point to the consistent messages that one short test cannot adequately assess the complex nature of students' critical thinking skills. This point suggests that teachers need to pay attention to learners' critical thinking abilities. Undoubtedly, one of the surest ways to achieving this is to ensure that teachers focus on effective assessment that improve learning and brings out the best in Social Studies students.

Banks (1990) suggest that it is “virtually impossible to evaluate” or assess learning in Social Studies without first carefully considering the curriculum goals and the instructional objectives. Brophy and Alleman reminds us of the goals of teaching the subject when they postulated that the goal of Social Studies education is “providing students with the knowledge, skills, and values that they will need to understand modern life and participate effectively as pro-social group and responsible citizens” (Brophy & Alleman 1991). Expressing the same opinion, Banks (1990) asserts that “Social Studies is that part of the elementary and high school curriculum which has 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”. To Banks, Social Studies has the sole aim of developing civic competencies as its primary goal. Also, citizenship education according to Aggarwal (2002) is the development of the ideas, beliefs, habits, behaviours and attitudes of the individual so that he or she may become a useful member of the society and contributes his or her share for the uplift of the society. This means that the main aim of this conceptual perspective is that Social Studies is to prepare students to be responsible, productive and concerned citizens with the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse democratic society in an interdependent world. This implies, Social Studies deals with solving the problems of man. This view is also supported by (Barr, et al., 1977; Kissock 1981; Banks 1985).

2.4 Kinds of Assessment Methods and Tools used in Social Studies Classroom

Essay Test

An essay type test item is described as the test which gives the students the freedom to compose his or her responses to the items in a form of a number of logically arranged and related sentences (Eshun & Effrim, 2009). This means that the individual student is given the opportunity to give his or her responses using his or her own words; in the words of Ayaaba and Odumah, no plausible answers are given to the students so that whatever the answer is, the students express them in their words (Ayaaba & Odumah, 2013).

Objective-type Test Item

The objective type test items are questions that demand short and brief responses usually not more than a sentence long (Ayaaba & Odumah, 2013) in some cases the response could just be as short as a word which are normally covered up among other distractive responses (Quartey, 1990). Among the objective-type items are multiple-choice Test, Matching test, completion test, Yes or No test which is also known as true or false test.

Multiple-choice Test

Multiple choice test is one of the selected response objective-type test in which the student is given a stem that introduces a problem or a question with three or more options or responses from which the student is required to select from (Eshun & Effrim, 2009; Ayaaba & Odumah, 2013). There are two types of the multiple-choice test items; (1) the single best response type and (2) the multiple response type.

True-false Test Item

True-false test is one of the alternative response items which require students to arrange a statement into one of two categories as True-False; Yes-No and Correct-Incorrect (Ayaaba & Odumah, 2013). The true-false is also a good assessment technique in Social Studies since a student is expected to demonstrate his or command of content by indicating whether a given statement is true or false. Again, this test format apart from helping students to demonstrate their ability to recall information, it also calls for students to apply principles in the attempt to “judge the accuracy of statement of correlation” (Eshun & Effrim, 2009). However, in spite of all its benefits, it should be sparingly used in Social Studies classroom since it promotes guessing among students.

Short Answer Test and Completion Test

The completion test which is very similar to short answer item present the learner with a problem to solve basically by completing a statement or a question that requires students to supply their own response in the form of a word or a phrase or a name other than a sentence (Eshun & Effrim, 2009; Ayaaba & Odumah, 2013).

Attitude Scales

According to Schneider (1988), ‘Attitudes are evaluative reactions to persons, objects, and events. This includes one’s beliefs and positive and negative feelings about the attitude object. Again, Vaughan and Hogg (1995) take attitude to mean, ‘A relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings and behavioural tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols. It is general feeling or evaluation (either positive/ negative) about some person, object or issue.’

The Likert scales

The likert scale an attitude scale type which is constructed by making a statement and followed by several levels of agreement: strongly agree, agree, no opinion, disagree, strongly disagree. This five-point scale is commonly used, but other scales, from four to ten points, can be used as well (Yount, 2006).

Wray Behavioural Scale

The Wray behavioural scale according to Quartey (1990) is a modified version of attitude scale that is specially designed to measure fifteen behavioural symptoms and their opposites that seem to be indicative of certain personality characteristics that can be observed in learners from early stages and follow as the learner develops. Between each characteristic and its opposite are five gradations usually from 1 to 5. The Individual learner is to be carefully observed and checked or ticked to indicate where the learner stands on each pair of the characteristics.

Observational sheets

According to Quartey (1990), observation is a method of assessment where the teacher sets out to note down learners' attitudes, feelings and interest by closely monitoring each learner in and out of the classroom, for possible changes in him or her. This means that the Social Studies teacher must take keen interest in the learner's interactions with his or her peers in order to observe whether or not there is evidence of progress in the attitude(s) being observed or appraised.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative and interpretive methodology, using the case study design. The population for the study included all the 15 graduate Social Studies teachers at the Senior High Schools in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The researchers by the use of the purposive sampling technique, selected ten (10) trained graduate Social Studies teachers out of the fifteen (15) teachers for the one-on-one interview. Qualitative data collection instruments were used in gathering data for the study. The data collection methods involved an interview guide made up of fifteen (15) semi-structured items for ten (10) graduate Social Studies teachers at the Senior High level. Lesson observation checklist made up of eighteen (18) items and documents on Social Studies end of term examination questions were collected from five (5) trained Social Studies teachers at the Senior High School level. With the objectives of the study serving as a guide, the researchers began the analysis of data first and foremost by the transcription of data. The tape-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim from the oral to the written forms as notes and subsequently typed out. After a careful and repetitively reading through the qualitative data from the transcribed tape-recorded interview and observational data were analyzed by the use of the interpretive method based on the themes arrived at in the data collection.

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 Influence of Graduate Teachers' Knowledge of the Senior High School Social Studies Curriculum/ Instructional Objectives on Assessment Items.

Note: The researchers made use of pseudonyms. All names used in the narratives were not the real or actual names of the participants. Hence, the names in this study should not be read as the names of the real participants who were engaged in the research.

At the pose of this question: *How do you know whether your instructional objectives have been achieved?* The participants made some obvious comments as follows:

“Okay, for me to get to know whether my objectives or the instructional objectives have been achieved, determines on the test items that I would administer. If the students respond very well to the test items it tells me that they have understood the lesson and that will make me to get to know that the objectives have been achieved but if they respond poorly to the test items then it tells me that the objectives were not properly achieved, so I would have to maybe re-teach it or do something about it” [Somoah].

“After every topic, apart from asking oral questions, I use other forms of assessment and evaluations at the end of lessons i.e., questions and answers” [Kankam].

“Based on the feedback from the students through tests, exercises and oral questions, yeah, through assessments” [Ben].

The following participants, Gabriel, John and Eva made similar comments as indicated with direct quotes from the participants as follows:

“That is where at the end of the lesson you give students assignments, some within class time for them to work on and then to know whether they’ve actually gotten what you want by the objective stated, others as home works, some at the beginning of the lesson. Thus, through assessment in general”. [Gabriel]

“Well, after every lesson I give evaluation question and because those questions are and should also be in line with the objectives, so when they are able to answer them the way the teacher wants, then it means I have achieved my instructional objective. So, I do that through evaluative questions”. [John]

“Base on my class assessments. After the lesson I assess orally to find out whether they understood what I have taught. And also find out if I have taught according to the objectives I have set in my lesson. I give students work, discussions and when we come to the whole class to discuss; I’m able to determine if my objectives have been achieved”. [Eva]

The comments made by the participants above suggest that the graduate teachers teaching Social Studies at the senior high-level share similar views relating to how teachers get to know whether their instructional objectives have been met. Comments of all the ten (10) participants revealed that they get to know whether instructional objectives have been achieved through various forms of assessments. The literature supports the views expressed by the participants above as Heritage (2007) stated that formative assessment is designed to provide feedback at multiple levels. First, it provides feedback to the teacher about current levels of student understanding. This feedback also informs what the next steps in learning should be. That is to say, all the ten (10) participants recognized that the essential purpose of formative assessment is to identify the gap between learners’ current status of learning and some desired educational goals.

When this question was asked- *In what way(s) do curriculum/instructional objectives influence your choice of assessment technique;* the graduate teachers sampled for the study came out with the following comments:

“Curriculum or instructional objectives influence my assessment technique because it guides and directs me on the type of question to set and also the type of question I should ask students which will cover the 3 profile dimensions such as knowledge, understanding and use of knowledge, attitudes and values” [Gabriel]

“Yeah, you see the curriculum and the instructional objectives especially, at the period of time when you have dealt with the student and you try to question how far they understand and how they do things, then when they are in line with what you have taught, then it means, that one will let you know the type assessment you should give them-either it should on field trip, role play, simulation and others.....” [Samuel]

“Assessment must always be based on your objectives. That’s one thing we should always know. So, if the objectives tell me what you should assess, for example if I should set an objective that by the end of the lesson the student will be able to explain, then I must ask my assessment question to be in line that they should explain. In other words, the objectives are pre-stated and it guides you to know the kind of evaluation question I should set” [John]

The comments made by the participants above, are satisfactory. As indicated above, the graduate teachers share similar views which are in line with literature. For example, Gabriel (one of the participants) as part of his views indicated that:

“Curriculum or instructional objectives influence my assessment technique because it guides and directs me on the type of question to set and also the type of question I should ask students which will cover the 3 profile dimensions.....”

This view is consistent with that of Quartey (1990) when he postulated that a good test intended to assess the achievements of learners must take cognizance of the goal of the subject and the objectives of the topic. He further suggested that in assessing students’ progress of learning in Social Studies, three broad areas of knowledge and understanding, attitudes, values and feelings and instruction and practice in intellectual and basic home maintenance must be considered. To him, every good assessment technique which seeks to assess a representative sample of the profile dimension or even all the dimensions must necessarily be in line with the curriculum and instructional objectives.

This goes to say that graduate Social Studies teachers as a matter of necessity must consider the curriculum/instructional objectives in the selection of appropriate assessment techniques in assessing learning in Social Studies. In emphasizing this same point, Jerolimek (1986) remarked that it is inconsistent, for example, to state objectives dealing with the development of enquiry skills and valuing and at the same time use teaching procedures that are wholly expository and evaluate only subject matter outcomes with paper- and- pencil test. Martone and Sireci (2009) stated that in a classroom setting, agreement must exist between a teacher’s objectives, activities, and assessments so that they are mutually supportive.

In another development, on the same question, some of the participants made comments that could best be described as unsatisfactory. The following comments shared by Wisdom and Paul affirm this assertion.

“The technique happens to be the various varieties of methods that we use in teaching. The instructional period gives me the opportunity to apply some of these methods such that I will be able to know whether I am in line with the curriculum objectives as stated in the syllabus and during then instructional period I tailored it to get my result”. [Wisdom]

From the above comment by Wisdom, it shows that he has inadequate knowledge about the subject matter. For example, his comment that *“the technique happens to be the various varieties of methods that we use in teaching”* clearly indicate that the participant equates methods of teaching to assessment technique. Again, the participant’s comment suggests that curriculum or instructional objective is dependent on the teaching methods or procedure. For example, this comment *“The instructional period gives me the opportunity to apply some of these methods such*

that I will be able to know whether I am in line with the curriculum objectives as stated in the syllabus....” this suggestion is contrary to Banks’ (1990) assertion that Social Studies teachers would evaluate learning very well if the instructional objectives are clearly stated from the onset. This goes to confirm that the teaching methods and evaluation techniques are all dependent on the curriculum/instructional objectives and not vice versa as the participant seeks to suggest.

Similarly, Paul (one other participant) commented as follows:

Mmm, with the assessment techniques we have various types; the assessment can be in the form of oral or written. But basically, we do more of the oral part of assessment than the written. [Paul]

From the above, even though the participant identified that there are various types of assessment techniques, he only mentioned that *“we do more of the oral part of assessment than the written”* failing to indicate whether the curriculum/instructional objectives in any way influences his choice of a particular assessment technique as per suggested by literature (Jerolimek, 1986; Banks, 1990; Quartey, 1990).

The implication of the comments made by the participants above is that they (the participants) do not evaluate learning in Social Studies any better as it is indicative from the above that they are not guided by the instructional/curriculum objectives in their assessment practices. This practice is inconsistent with best practices as prescribed by the Social Studies syllabus for Ghanaian Senior High Schools and the literature in general. What this means is that the failure on the part Social Studies teachers to assess learning with respect to curriculum/instructional objectives is affecting the successful implementation and attainment of the general objectives of Social Studies in the study area.

When this question was posed, *how do the questions you set assist in the attainment of your instructional objectives?* All the participants shared similar views as shown below:

“It helps me because as a teacher, as a teacher, I have objectives for my lesson so through that assessment is....it can help me to achieve the objectives for my lesson” [Gabriel]

“Mmmm... that one is also more or less like related to; because the instructional objectives are what I seek to achieve at the end of the lesson. So, for me to attain all these then it depends on the students’ ability to also let say respond well to the kind of questions i will administer or give to the students to answer. This is because as a teacher when I go to class to teach, I go if some specific objectives and such objectives are going to guide me to deliver my lesson. So, if I have any question to set, I must consider the objective” [Somoah]

The following participants also hold similar views as follows:

“Because they are always in line with my objectives, it helps me to realize that based on the feedbacks, my objectives are attained” [Ben]

“The questions i set are based on instructional objectives, and then if the questions are based on the instructional objectives, then the set objectives of the curriculum are also met” [Eva]

The comments by the participants above show that almost all the graduate teachers interviewed for study are convinced that in setting assessment items, they must be set in line with the instructional objectives so as to help attain the very specific instructional objectives being sought to be achieved. The views of the participants are authenticated by Ellis (2002) when he remarked that it is important that teachers recognize the necessity of developing unit or instructional objectives using clear terms and all domains of learning. He further suggested that these objectives will serve as guides to test items or other means of evaluation on the child's progress.

When this question was called for, *how relevant is the syllabus reference number (SRN) to your assessment practices?* Just a few of the participants expressed good knowledge about the concept, the following responses were elicited from John, Eva and Somoah to support this claim.

“The SRN falls in order. It gives you the unit where you are, the objective number and the unit number. So, when you are able to follow it very well in your assessment, helps to know whether you have assessed these objectives already or not. For example, if we have 4 objectives, we are going to have 2:2:1, 2:2:2, up to 2:2:4, you may not be able to assess them on all. So, if you want select dot one (1) and four (4), its serves as reference point for the teacher in assessing” [John].

“Okay, the SRN helps me to know the specific objectives of the lesson i am teaching and that helps me to assess students based on what is required of me at that particular lesson” [Eva].

Okay, the SRN helps to communicate between the objectives in reference to maybe the section, the unit, and the rank code, so it helps to distinguish between the section, unit and the rank of the syllabus [Somoah]

Per the comments made by the participants above, it is evident that the graduate Social Studies teachers have a very good knowledge about the concept of the Syllabus Reference Number (SRN). All the three participants demonstrated by their comment how relevant the SRN is to their assessment practices. For instance, Eva's comment which reads in part as *“the SRN helps me to know the specific objectives of the lesson I am teaching and that helps me to assess students based on what is required”* is in accordance with the suggestion made in the Social Studies Syllabus for Ghanaian Senior High Schools (CRDD, 2010).

By this, it is extrapolated that these graduate Social Studies teachers engage in effective assessment practices which culminate into the attainment of the major goals of the subject. This is because the participants assess their learners with the instructional objectives serving as strong bases for their assessment techniques and assessment tools as confirmed by the literature (Banks, 1990; Quartey, 1990; Dynneson & Gross, 1999). This is to say that the use of the Syllabus Reference Number (SRN), enable the participants to select the objectives within units and within sections to be able to develop a test that accurately reflects the importance of the various skills taught in class.

In another development, the comments by the majority of the participants on the same question were rather interesting. Among the comments made by the participants were as follows:

“Yes, it is relevant. You have to use it alongside that of the curriculum and the syllabus as well” [Paul]

“You know, they are orderly arranged, sequential so it helps me know that I have finish with the first part and the second part and that follows. I am able to teach the students and assess according to the.... the.... the (giggled) according to the topic or the numbers, the serial numbers” [Wisdom].

“It is relevant because it gives me quick reference to the topic to be treated or covered. It also...., I think direct me the teacher on what topic I should also treat at a particular time” [Gabriel].

“Mmm.... Yes, (paused for about a minute) ... you know, It actually guides you the teacher to know from one from stage to the other that you are actually going and then it shape your course of teaching and the students following in that direction” [Isabella]

“Yes, yes, yes, off course, it is important. It gives you the morale and enthusiasm to be able to go on well with what you are about attaining or achieving” [Samuel].

From the comments above, it appears that the participants are less conversant with the concept of Syllabus Reference Number as the responses they gave could be described as highly unsatisfactory. A participant like Samuel talked about the SRN giving him the morale and enthusiasm to be able to go on well with what you are about attaining or achieving. His assertion appears not to be visible in the literature. The comment of Paul and Isabella, suggests that they lack idea about the relevance of the syllabus reference number to their assessment practices. The proposition drawn from the above comments is that most graduate Social Studies teachers in the study area do not make use of the syllabus reference number at all in their assessment practices. This means that their test items are not likely to assess the specific knowledge and skills required (CRDD, 2010).

In order to corroborate the information or comments made by the participants during the interview session, the researcher also observed the participants during their lesson delivery in their various classrooms all in an attempt to find answers to research question two. All the ten (10) graduate Social Studies teachers’ lessons were observed with an observation checklist made up of the following (very good, good, average, below average and not available) were used. In all, four (4) items thus, items 7-10 on the observation checklist as indicated by table 2 were very useful in finding answers for the second research question. The researcher employed simple table, frequencies and percentages in the analysis of the data gathered.

Table 2: Observation of the Influence of Graduate Teachers’ Knowledge of the Curriculum/ Instructional Objectives on Assessment Items

Items	Very Good N (%)	Good N (%)	Average N (%)	Below Average N (%)	Not Available N (%)	Total N (%)
1. Extent to which performances in the instructional objectives and the items match	1(10.0)	2(20.0)	_	1(10.0)	6(60.0)	10(100)

2. Extent to which teachers' questions assist the attainment of instructional objectives	–	3(30.0)	1(10.0)	6(60.0)	–	10(100)
3. Teacher employs assessment technique that assist attainment of instructional objectives	–	2(20.0)	1(10.0)	7(70.0)	–	10(100)
4. Teachers' questions challenge students to apply their knowledge to issue/problems	–	2(20.0)	2(20.0)	4(40.0)	2(20.0)	10(100)

Source: Authors' Field Observation, June (2018)

From Table 2, shows that on the 1st item which focuses on extent to which performances in the instructional objectives and the items match, out the total population of ten (10) sampled for the study, 1(10%) was rated as Very good but as many as 6(60%) were rated as Not Available because the performances in their instructional objectives were highly incongruent with performances in the test items. Whereas only 1(10%) was rated below average, there were 2(20%) of the participants were however rated Good with none (0%) rating Average. On aggregate, there are 7(70%) participants who performances in their instructional objectives failed to sufficiently match with performances in their assessment items. It is important to note that this practice is contrary to the literature. According to Banks, (1990) the performance(s), in other words, the action words are to be blended with Social Studies content to complete the instructional objectives.

From Table 2, however, the data revealed that on item 2 which reads extent to which teachers' questions assist the attainment of instructional objectives, out of the 10 participants, whereas none of them (0%) was rated as Very good or not available, 3(30%) of the participants were rated as Good. Again, 1(10%) was rated as Average with as many as 6(60%) being rated as Below average. In all, 4(40%) of the participants' assessment items satisfactorily linked-up enough with the instructional objectives and so were rated Good and Average respectively. However, 6(60%) of the participants could not demonstrate a clear linkage of the assessment items with instructional objectives thus, performances in the items did not match with the instructional objectives hence, were rated as Below Average. Here again, the literature appears to be against what the practice of the majority of the participants are. For instance, Airasian (1994), suggest that teachers ensure that test items match as much as possible with subject objectives and instruction not to only guarantee content validity but also to enhance test validity and higher order thinking skills. By this, it helps student to consider assessment as a non – threatening tool, which only help them improve upon learning (Gronlund & Waugh, 2009).

Furthermore, on the 3rd item which focuses on teacher employ assessment techniques that assist attainment of instructional objectives, out the ten (10) graduate Social Studies teachers observed, none of the participants was rated as Very good or Not Available. Meanwhile, whereas 2(29%) were rated as Good, (10%) was rated as Average, with as many as 7(70%) of the participants rated as Below Average. In all, only 3(30%) of the participants sufficiently employed relevant

assessment techniques to assess relevant instructional objectives, hence, were rated as Good and Average accordingly. The data also indicates majority, 7(70%) out of the ten (10) participants could not adequately select appropriate technique to assess appropriate instructional objectives; they were therefore rated as Below average. The development of evaluative objectives is significant in identifying the type of assessment techniques to be employed (Dyngeson & Gross, 1999), as it is very difficult to create a test- device which is realistic enough to give a valid indication of a student's possible behaviour in a natural non-test situation (Quartey, 1990). This means that the Social Studies teacher's choice of assessment instrument should match the type of instructional objectives or instructional needs.

Finally, on the 4th item on the observational sheet, which reads teachers' questions challenge students to apply their knowledge to issue/problems, indicated that none (0%) was rated as Very good but there were 2(20%) were rated as None Available. Meanwhile, it is also gathered from the data that whereas 2(20%) were rated as Good, there were equally 2(20%) of the participants who were also rated as Average, with 4(40%) of them being rated as Below Average. In all, an aggregate of 6(60%) of the participants' test items did not challenge the students to apply their knowledge to the items, hence were rated low as evident from Table 2. There were only 4(40%) of the participants whose test items seemed to encouraged learners to really apply their knowledge in answering the questions and for that matter, were rated high as shown by table 2.

Results revealed from the interview session that majority of the participants' assessment practices are to a large extent not influenced by the curriculum/ instructional objectives of teaching the subject. The data gathered from the observational session also confirms the data collected from the interview session, i.e., that graduate Social Studies teachers in the study area do not consider the curriculum/ instructional objectives in their assessment practices. Again, not only did the data from the observation revealed that 5(50%) of the participants did not prepare lesson notes but as many as 7(70%) of the graduate Social Studies teachers also failed to apply the syllabus reference number in their assessments. This made it almost impossible for the teachers to evaluate their lessons in order to attain the stated specific behavioural objectives. The result is inconsistent with the literature, as Ellis (2002) put it, it is important that teachers recognize the necessity of developing unit or instructional objectives using clear terms. These objectives will serve as guides to test items or other means of evaluation on the child's progress. That is to say that it is virtually impossible to effectively teach and assess learning without first clearly identifying the curriculum/ specific instructional objectives (Banks, 1990).

5.0 CONCLUSION

From the findings, the participants failed to consider the curriculum/ instructional objectives in their assessment practices. Most of the participants' choices of assessment techniques were incongruent with their instructional objectives. Even though the participants demonstrated a very good knowledge of the objectives of teaching Social Studies, they failed to translate theory into practice.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Graduate teachers are to be constantly reminded of the fact that, the basic role of facilitating learning depends largely on their familiarity with the major objectives in the subject area and to be abreast with formulating objectives in all the domains of learning as proposed by

the literature. Teachers should recognise that to adequately measure learning to cover the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains play major role in producing holistic individuals capable of using the head, the heart and the hand in finding solutions to the numerous and diverse problems that confront our society today.

2. Since most teachers resort to the use of pencil-and-paper form of assessment, training institutions or the universities should design their training programmes to include enough non-test assessment techniques such as observational sheets, Likert scale, project and portfolio and encourage student-teachers to combine these authentic forms of assessment with other forms of assessment to help bring out the true pictures of learners in terms of values, attitudes and skills. This will give both teachers and students alike a measure of their progress in order to make appropriate educational decisions, and refocus teaching and learning to make it more efficient and effective.
3. In order to ensure success in improving the educational system, there must be monitoring in the curriculum design, and its implementation. Educational policy could fail if there are lapses at any of the levels, that is, curriculum design, implementation and monitoring. In this study, however, the improvement of attitudes must be seen as the hallmark of Social Studies programme at the training institutions. This can be done with an increase in supervisory role carried out by the training institutions or universities in the country to see how their products are performing. These could help the programme to achieve its goals and objectives of teaching it.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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