# Social Studies Teachers' Knowledge Base in Authentic Assessment in Selected Senior High Schools in the Central Region of Ghana

**Anthony Bordoh[1, *], Isaac Eshun[1], Ama Mbeaba Quarshie[2], Thoephilus Kweku Bassaw[3], Patrick Kwarteng[4]**

[1]Department of Art and Social Sciences, Enchi College of Education, Enchi, Ghana

[2]Department of Art and Social Sciences, Holy Child College of Education, Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana

[3]Department of Art and Social Sciences, Komenda College of Education, Komenda, Ghana

[4]Department of Art and Social Sciences, Wiawso College of Education, Sefwi Wiawso, Ghana

## Abstract

The knowledge base of senior high school teachers' in authentic assessment will be paramount to both teachers' students if they are implemented effectively in a social studies classroom. The study used a descriptive case study design. Both the schools and teachers' were randomly selected from fifty seven (57) government assisted senior high schools in the Central Region of Ghana. The study used ten (10) senior high schools and twenty (20) teachers. Semi structured interviews were the main instruments used for data collection. The results indicated that knowledge in authentic assessment was relatively poor. Clearly, there were noticeable gaps and variations between the teachers' conceptions and theoretical knowledge of authentic assessment and their relevant practices in the classrooms. It was also discovered that authentic assessment use in the Social Studies classroom was limited by policy systems, time, resources and assessment methods employed by the various schools. It recommended that the teaching universities in Ghana should broaden their scope on the teaching of assessment to incorporate authentic assessment.

## Keywords

Assessment, Authentic Assessment, Social Studies, Authentic Assessment in Social Studies, Senior High Schools

## 1. Introduction

Assessment is central to teaching and learning. Assessment information is needed to make informed decisions regarding students' learning abilities, their placement in appropriate levels and their achievements. According to Sadler (2009), "assessment refers to the making of evaluation on students' overall performance and generating assumptions regarding their learning and production education-wise, which include the quality or achievement in tasks such as tests, projects, reports and examinations." The success of any assessment depends on the effective selection and use of appropriate procedures, as well as on the proper interpretation of students' performance. Thus, assessment procedures also help in evaluating the suitability and effectiveness of the curriculum, instruction and teaching methodology.

It has become common more recently among educational reformers to criticize traditional testing for its emphasis on outcomes that will not serve the students beyond the classroom. Authentic Assessment has emerged out of this criticism with the promise that assessment can be constructed so as to further both learning and teaching. The criticism has substance. For example Social Studies assessment in Ghana is dominated by traditional testing from the classroom to the

* Corresponding author

E-mail address: bordohlity@yahoo.co.uk (A. Bordoh)

national level. Analysis has been largely uncritical, however, and the emphasis on authentic outcomes poses problems as well as solutions. Assessment continues to be at the centre of a lively debate taking place in educational reform. The measure of student learning, whether the assessment is standardized or alternative, inevitably includes theories, techniques, practices, applications and outcomes (McMillan, 2001; Rudner & Schafer, 2002). The argument for assessment, as a measure of educational outcomes is that it is expected to improve teaching and learning, and contribute to overall school improvement (Shepard, 2000; McMillan, 2001).

According to Bekoe, Eshun and Bordoh (2013) assessment helps the teacher know the level of understanding of the students and their ability level. Wiggins (1998) argued that the aim or purpose of assessment is primarily to educate and improve student performance, and not to audit it. Schools tend to focus on teaching students to pass simplistic, multiple-choice tests that neither assesses what is valued and also do not provide feedback about how to teach and how to learn. The tendency is to sacrifice what should be assessed and settle for score accuracy and efficiency.

He contended that assessment reform is not simply achieved by simply throwing out the conventional tests. In order to promote excellence, Wiggins (1998) argued that instructors must change their way of thinking about how assessment is not germane to learning and therefore is to be best done expediently. He stated that "assessment is of no value unless it is educative; that is, instructive to students, teachers, and school clients and overseers" (p. 8). Assessment signals to teachers and students what is important in learning. Assessment tasks need to reflect actual teaching and learning processes and not the mechanistic approach that if the test is improved, teaching will also be improved (Cumming & Maxwell, 1999; Torrance, 1995).This shows that assessment is the bedrock in teaching and learning.

The assessment controversy or dilemma takes front and centre stage in education as the increasingly growing controversy of traditional and authentic assessment evolves. Wiggins (1998) argued that if there is agreement among educators that assessment reform is necessary, then we must imagine an educative assessment system that is designed to improve student performance. Shepard (2000) suggested that a framework for understanding a reformed view of assessment must be developed, where assessment is viewed as an integral part of teaching and learning. Assessment in the classroom must be transformed in two fundamental ways: (a) the content and the character of the assessments must be significantly improved; and (b) the gathering and use of assessment information and insights must become part of the ongoing learning process.

The discussion about assessment reform continues to include a discussion about authentic assessment. Finding a definition of authentic assessment in the literature revealed a more perplexing and challenging task because it produced a myriad of meanings (Gulikers, Bastiaens, & Kirschner, 2008). Authentic assessment is used interchangeably with authenticity, alternative assessment, performance assessment, portfolio assessment, as well as classroom-based assessment. Authentic assessment is the use of activities which resembles, as closely as possible, activities performed by adults in the real world. The activities would challenge students to produce or perform at high standards and instruction with assessment seamlessly integrated in order to foster a mastery-type learning environment (Warman, 2002). It appears that authentic assessment would include authenticity, alternative assessment, performance assessment, portfolio, authentic pedagogy, authentic learning and classroom-based assessment, which includes assessment of learning, assessment for learning and assessment as learning.

Furthermore, Boud and Falchikov (2005) suggest that educators need to move from traditional (paper and pencil) assessment that focuses on specifics, standards and immediate outcomes to more sustainable assessment that can aid students to become more active learners not only in managing their own learning, but also assessing themselves to life beyond the end of the course. They added that there has been considerable critique of both the inadequacy of current assessment practices by classroom teachers and external examination.

Boud and Falchikov (2005) further highlight that most of the critique has focused on the effect on learning within courses not on learning following graduation. They noted that balancing this however, has been the flourishing of an array of authentic assessment procedures designed to overcome the limitations of traditional unseen summative and norm-referenced standardized tests. Pellegrino, Chudowsky and Glaser (2001) assert that authentic assessments provide multiple paths to demonstration of learning in comparison to traditional assessments, such as answering multiple-choice questions that lack variety, owing to students' ability to demonstrate knowledge and skills they possess. Authentic tasks tend to provide more freedom to demonstrate their competencies, including business proposals, projects, portfolios, artwork and videos, among other tangible products, (Craddock & Mathias, 2009).

According to the CRDD (2010) the general aims of Social Studies syllabus for Senior High Schools are to help students to develop:

1. the ability to adapt to the developing and ever-changing Ghanaian society

2. positive attitudes and values towards individual and societal issues

3. critical and analytical skills in assessing issues for objective decision-making

4. national consciousness and unity

5. enquiry and problem-solving skills for solving personal and societal problems and

6. become responsible citizens capable and willing to contribute to advancement of society.

The primary purpose is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world. An outcome-based approach requires that we test in authentic ways what is considered to be most important in terms of knowledge, skill, values, and attitudes. Thus, if critical thinking, problem solving, positive attitudes and values, analytical skills and civic competence are highly valued, and then students should be able to demonstrate mastery of these through worthwhile activities which meet the demands and expectations of the society, hence the need to employ authentic assessment in our various classroom (CRDD, 2010).

The traditional classroom paper and pencil assessment offers a quick and simple method of learning about students' subject knowledge. These tests have a standard delivery and response format, with there typically being one correct answer using a forced choice response format, mainly that of multiple choice, matching, or true/false. The benefits of these tests are that they are relatively quick to score, easy to administer and are reliable, and may be given to small and/or large groups of students simultaneously. In addition, they are appealing to teachers already burdened by constraints of time and standards, but unable to measure learners' attitudes and values, which is the hallmark of social studies education. Social studies educators should embrace authentic assessment for its ability to assess critical and analytical thinking skills, problem solving, positive attitudes and values. Using multiple-choice tests consistently tends to benefit some students and not others (Sternberg, 2007). This made Bekoe et al. (2013) asserted that assessment can take place in any manner, but it does not mean that authentic assessment must merely happen in non-traditional ways - it must always be conducted in a formal way under the tutelage of the Social Studies teacher.

Relevant literature suggests that there are not many formal authentic assessment training programmes for social studies teachers in the Ghanaian educational context. The purpose of this study is to determine whether SHS Social Studies teachers in Ghana have knowledge of authentic assessment as

a process of improving learning in their classrooms. The research is meant to answer the question: what is the extent of the knowledge of SHS Social Studies teachers in terms of authentic assessment?

## 2. Literature Review on Knowledge Base of Authentic Assessment

Authentic assessment has best been described by Warman (2002) as the use of activities that would closely resemble those activities performed by individuals in the real world. Assessments that are related in some manner to real world or workplace performance are broadly described as 'Authentic,' although the term is used in a variety of ways by different authors. Eubanks (2009: 229) defines authentic assessment "as a subjective judgment resulting from direct observation of performance by an expert." This definition highlights the enactment of a practice that is judged by someone who is a 'member' of that practice and is intimate with its performance.

Cumming and Maxwell (1999: 2, 3) refer to authentic achievement as "the extent to which the outcomes measured represent appropriate, meaningful, significant, and worthwhile forms of human accomplishment." Raison and Pelliccione (2006:11) describe authentic assessments as "educative, explicit, relevant, valid and comprehensive." Authentic assessments are said to involve the performance of a task that involves the complexity of real world practice; a holistic response rather than component parts and a context-specific response that involves higher order thinking and problem-solving (Cumming & Maxwell, 1999). These indicate that authentic assessment is performance-based-assessment. According to Bekoe et al. (2013) cited in Eshun, Bordoh, Bassaw & Mensah (2014) "knowledge is constructed during the learning process and that a student discovers knowledge for him/herself, rather than receiving knowledge, and this inspires the notion of performance-based assessment." Cumming and Maxwell (1999) suggest that the validity of authentic assessment tasks should be focused on the situation and purpose of the assessment. This relates to notions of ecological relevance which is concerned with how the assessment meets the needs of the context of which it is a part. In this study the relationship of the assessments to authenticity can be visualized as occurring along a continuum that progresses from paper and pencil to involvement in real life productions.

While there are a range of definitions for authentic assessment, Gulikers, Bastiaens & Kirschner (2004) provide a five-dimensional framework for designing authentic

assessment task. They understand authentic assessments in terms of five dimensions: assessment task, physical context, social context, assessment result/form, and assessment criteria. Each of these dimensions is individually perceived on a scale or 'continuum' of authenticity. For example, a microteaching experience for a group of pre-service teachers that occurs in a university classroom may be relatively high on a scale of authentic practice, as this experience replicates the professional practice of a teacher, yet rate lower as an authentic physical and social context. Frameworks such as this may help with the development and evaluation of authentic assessments in practice

Authentic assessments are generally considered to be performance-based tasks done in an environment that actually is or closely approximates a real world setting. Physical education's real world environment might include playing games, dancing, rock climbing, or inline skating. Danielson (1997) identifies a second type of authentic assessment that involves work that someone in the profession would actually do. For example, a dance critic would be required to write a review of a dance performance. A sports announcer would describe the play-by-play of a game. Either of these examples could demonstrate cognitive knowledge of the respective activity and thus measure student learning.

There are eight characteristics that can be used to describe authentic assessments. According to Lund (1997):

● exhibits harmony with a shared aim, involve the presentation of meaningful or worthwhile tasks,

● requires higher levels of thinking,

● should be judged using criteria known by students in advance,

● should be so firmly embedded in instruction that they are difficult to separate from instruction,

● gives students multiple opportunities to demonstrate competence, and

● involves a public presentation of student work, and assess process as well as the product. Each of these characteristics serves as immediate feedback to teachers, parents and all who matter in education. A good assessment must provide immediate feedback to both learners and teachers (p.68).

There has been a movement from traditional assessment toward authentic assessments. Authentic assessment started being used as a means for educational reform due to the increasing awareness of the influence of testing on curriculum and instruction (Dietel, Herman & Knuth, 1991). Similarly, Reeves stated that "traditional assessment, which is generally called testing, is challenged by alternative assessment approaches" (Reeves, 2000:103).

According to Bailey (1998), traditional assessments are indirect and inauthentic. She also adds that traditional assessment is standardized and for that reason, they are one-shot, speed-based, and norm-referenced. Law and Eckes (1995) underline the same issue and state that traditional assessments are single-occasion tests. That is, they measure what learners can do at a particular time. However, test scores cannot tell about the progression of child. Similarly, they cannot tell what particular difficulties the students had during the test.

Bailey (1998) also mentions that there is no immediate feedback provided to learners in this type of assessment. The projects are mainly individualized and the assessment procedure is de-contextualized. Law and Eckes (1995) point out most standardized tests assess only the lower-order thinking skills of the learner. Similarly, Simonson Smaldino Albright and Zvacek (2000) state that traditional assessment often focus on learner's ability of memorization and recall, which are lower level of cognition skills. Additionally, traditional assessment techniques require learners to display their knowledge in a predetermined way (Brualdi, 1996). However, in the views of Kankam, Bordoh, Eshun ,Bassaw and Korang (2014) authentic assessment provide valuable information and improve students' learning regarding how effective a teacher's instructional strategies have been to date. Authentic assessment help teachers identify the level of understanding their students have reached, become aware of students' strengths and weaknesses, and to monitor their current progress during the learning process. This encourages teachers to employ alternative approaches or methods in their teaching, because certain methods can help certain students learn better (Kankam et al., 2014). More authentic assessment tools, such as portfolios, independent projects, journals and so on, motivate learners to express their knowledge on the material in their own ways using various intelligences (Brualdi, 1996). However, this suggests that proper usage of authentic assessment methods in teaching and learning provide feedback to both teachers and students.

Reeves (2000:108) believe the emphasis on authentic assessment is the ability of the learner to apply their knowledge and skills to real life situations. He further states that there are five main points in authentic assessment:

1. "It is focused on complex learning,

2. engages higher order thinking and problem solving skills,

3. stimulates a wide range of active responses,

4. involves challenging tasks that require multiple steps,

5. requires significant commitments of student time and effort."

Similarly, Simonson et al. (2000) discuss the several advantages of authentic assessment. First, they tend to simulate real-life contexts. Learners have opportunity to practice the authentic activities that they might encounter in real life. These activities allow them to transfer their skills to various real world related settings. Second, collaborative working is encouraged. Finally, authentic assessments assist instructors to have a better understanding of student learning (Winking, 1997). That is, looking at the student product rather than scores can allow instructor to get further insights regarding students' knowledge and skills (Niguidila, 1993). Bailey (1998:207) contrasted traditional and authentic assessment in a table form.

**Table 1.** Traditional and authentic assessment (Bailey, 1998:207).

| Traditional Assessment | Authentic Assessment |
|---|---|
| One-shot tests | Continuous, longitudinal assessment |
| Indirect tests | Direct tests |
| Inauthentic tests | Authentic tests |
| Individual projects | Group projects |
| No feedback provided to learners | Feedback provided to learners |
| Speeded exams | Untimed exams |
| De-contextualized test tasks | Contextualized test tasks |
| Norm-referenced score interpretation | Criterion-referenced score interpretation |
| Standardized tests | Classroom-based tests |

According to the information provided above, traditional assessments seem to have no positive characteristics at all. However, this is not true. There are advantages of traditional assessment, just as there are disadvantages of authentic assessment.

To begin with, traditional assessment strategies are more objective, reliable and valid. This is especially true for standardized tests and other types of multiple choice tests (Law & Eckes, 1995). Alternative assessment, on the other hand, carries some concerns in terms of subjectivity, reliability and validity. Eckes and Law express their concerns by stating "coaching or not coaching, making allowances, or giving credit where credit is not due are critical issues that have yet to be addressed; we simply do not have answers yet" (1995:47). While Bailey (1998) agrees with Law and Eckes about the reliability issue, she argues about the high validity in authentic assessments. She gives the portfolio example and claims that the wide variety in student products might cause reliability problems. However, the positive wash back they provide to the learner as well as validity let portfolios be a widely used effective assessment tool.

Similarly, Simonson et al. (2000:275) claims that "proponents of authentic assessment suggest that the content validity of "authentic" tasks is ensured because there is a direct link between the expected behaviour and the ultimate goal of skill/learning transfer." As Law and Eckes (1995)

mention, authentic assessments can be laborious in terms of time and energy spent by the teacher. For example, the diversity of products in portfolios, which is viewed as one of the most important strengths, can lead problems for the teacher in terms of practicality (Bailey, 1998). They might be harder to score and quite time consuming to evaluate the learner's performance (Simonson et al., 2000). Rentz (1997) claims that unlike multiple-choice tests, which are practical to score, performance assessments are viewed quite time consuming to grade. While the first involves machine scoring, the latter relies on human judgment.

## 3. Methodology

A descriptive case study was suitable for this study as it allows for the gathering of data in a real context, and it takes into account the political and ideological context within which the research is situated (Cohen et al., 2003, in Lunn, 2006). It is an intensive description and analysis of a bounded system (Bassey, 1999) used to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. As the study was carried out in ten SHSs in the central region of Ghana, the data were used together to form one case. Several research scholars including Yin (2003) and Bassey (1999) consider that case studies are particularistic, descriptive and heuristic and are particular to a certain context and have a more human face than other research methods, as it is strong on reality and context which enables 'thick' description.

The population in this study comprised all the Senior High School Social Studies teachers in the Central Region of Ghana. Simple random sampling technique was used to select Twenty (20) Social Studies teachers and ten (10) SHSs out of Social Studies teachers fifty seven (57) and the two hundred and eighty-five (285) SHSs in the Central Region of Ghana.

The study used both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data was made up of interview schedules. In each of the study schools two Social Studies teachers were interviewed. The interview guide was made up of fourteen semi-structured questions. Secondary data was obtained from existing documents on assessment practices in general, and policies on assessment in the schools. The main instrument for data collection was the interview schedule. Both the interview and document analysis solicited for qualitative information. The qualitative data analysis was done by the use of descriptive technique based on the themes arrived at the data collection. This was based on questions on the semi-structured interviews.

# 4. Teachers' Knowledge Base of Authentic Assessment

Teachers' knowledge base of authentic assessment is presented under this section. The main import of this objective was to find out the differences in the conception of authentic assessment by Social Studies teachers in Senior High Schools in the Central Region of Ghana. All the questions were placed in the interview checklist to elicit teachers' views on the issue. Their responses are discussed below:

When this question was posed- *how do you understand authentic assessment*? Five (5) of the teachers were of the view that it is any assessment strategy in which questions given to students are employed directly from the teaching syllabus. It is used by teachers to measure, and to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Another six (6) indicated that, authentic assessment is a form of formal and informal assessment procedures (i.e. tests, assignments, quizzes…exercise) undertaken by teachers in the classroom during the teaching of any unit of Social Studies which is directly linked to the content of the social studies syllabus. Eight (8) of these teachers also shared the same view that authentic assessment is any form of assessment that purely measures what teachers have taught in class. One teacher said "*an assessment that resembles as closely as possible those activities performed by adults in the real world*". This shows that theoretically almost all the Social Studies teachers involved in this present study appear not to have any general knowledge of what constitutes authentic assessment. Like Gulikers et al. (2004), and Messick, (1994) they perceived authentic assessment as an assessment that require students to use and demonstrate the same (kind of) competencies, or combinations of knowledge, skills and attitudes, that are applied in this situation in professional life. Also to buttress this, Cumming & Maxwell, 1999: 2, 3) refer to authentic achievement as "the extent to which the outcomes measured represent appropriate, meaningful, significant, and worthwhile forms of human accomplishment". Raison and Pelliccione (2006:11) describe authentic assessments as "educative, explicit, relevant, valid and comprehensive". Authentic assessments are said to involve the performance of a task that involves the complexity of real world practice; a holistic response rather than component parts and a context-specific response that involves higher order thinking and problem-solving (Cumming & Maxwell, 1999). Cumming and Maxwell (1999) suggest that the validity of authentic assessment tasks should be focused on the situation and purpose of the assessment.

When these teachers were asked - *what is the nature of authentic assessment?* A common opinion of nine (9) of these teachers was that, authentic assessment is all about assessing what has been learned and what still remains to be learned within the course of teaching after a particular unit or units have been covered as is the case with all types of assessment. What was discerned of six (6) of the teachers was that, it is about giving students ill structured and critical thinking questions that involve complex and analytical process in its solution." One (1) teacher indicated that "*It involves the use of project work, observations, interviews, classroom discussions, portfolios, debates and report writing and also it is performance based.*" Opinions of the last three (3) indicated that they had no idea of its nature. In response to the nature of authentic assessment Wiggins (1994) and Danielson (1997) consider authentic assessment to be performance based. Authentic assessments are designed to measure complex thinking (Wiggins, 1996). With authentic assessment, students are required to take basic learned information and evaluate, analyze, or synthesize it while demonstrating the ability to use this knowledge. Schools want students to use higher levels of thinking; authentic assessment creates situations where critical thinking skills are used and assessed in Social Studies. Good authentic assessments challenges students to build on prior knowledge and experiences as they demonstrate competence on the concepts evaluated by the assessment. They are designed to move students toward more sophisticated work, rather than something they can complete the night before the due date.

When this question was posed - *what tools support your effective usage of authentic assessment?* The answers from eight (8) of the teacher participants were quizzes, debates, classroom discussion, end of term examinations and class test. Four (4) also were of the opinion that authentic assessment tools are multiple choice and essay writing in an examination. Another three (3) indicated that it should include project work and assignments. However, the last five (5) did not state any special tool of authentic assessment that is supposed to be different from traditional assessment. They were emphatic that it has the same tools as traditional assessment. Authentic assessment strategies include open-ended questions, exhibits, demonstrations, hands-on execution of experiments, computer simulations, and portfolios (Dietel et al., 1991). The most common authentic assessment tools are; performance assessment, portfolios, self assessment, peer assessment, alternative assessment, authentic pedagogy, authentic learning and projects (Darling-Hammond & Pecheone, 2009; Wood & Joseph 2007).

Another question asked to answer the above theme was - *what are the differences between authentic assessment and traditional assessment?* Two (2) teachers indicated that authentic assessment involves the use of ill-structured questions and higher order thinking skills. Another four (4)

were of the view that it involves challenging tasks, but it is the same as traditional assessment. Eight (8) think the differences are not so wide, but are very close. Their views were that authentic assessment questions must always be found in the syllabus or textbook, but traditional assessment is not necessarily so. They also contended that authentic assessment can take place outside the classroom, but not for traditional assessment. However, they indicated that both involve the use of knowledge. Five (5) indicated that it is merely the use of semantics, for every examination be could considered either authentic or not. It depends on one's definition of authenticity. However, one teacher indicated that there are a lot of differences. She highlighted that authentic assessment is continuous, but traditional is one-shot. Authentic is untimed, but traditional is timed and authentic assessment is classroom based test, but traditional assessment is using a standardized test. However, many authors view these two as being wide apart. According to Bailey (1998), traditional assessments are indirect and inauthentic. She also adds that traditional assessment is standardized and for that reason, and that they are one-shot, speed-based, and norm-referenced. Law and Eckes (1995) outline the same issue and state that traditional assessments are single-occasion tests. They measure what learners can do at a particular time. However, test scores cannot tell about the progression of a child's learning ability. Similarly, they cannot tell what particular difficulties the students had during the test. Bailey (1998) also mentions that there is no feedback provided to learners in authentic assessment. The projects are mainly individualized and the assessment procedure is de-contextualized. Law and Eckes (1995) pointed out that most standardized tests assess only the lower-order thinking skills of the learner. Similarly, Simonson et al. (2000) stated that traditional assessment often focuses on learner's ability of memorization and recall, which are lower level cognition skills.

Additionally, traditional assessment tools require learners to display their knowledge in a predetermined way (Brualdi, 1996). Authentic assessments, on the other hand, assess higher-order thinking skills. Students have the opportunity to demonstrate what they learned. This type of assessment tools focus on the growth and the performance of the student. That is, if a learner fails to perform a given task at a particular time, they still have the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities at different times and in different situations. Since authentic assessment is developed in context and over time, the teacher has a chance to measure the strengths and weaknesses of the student in a variety of areas and situations (Law & Eckes, 1995).

When these participants were asked - *Have you ever had any lessons or in-service training on assessment and authentic assessment?* Fifteen (15) teachers indicated that they have had lessons on diagnostic assessment, formative assessment, summative assessment and continuous assessment. Four (4) stated that they are aware of portfolio assessment as type of assessment in addition to the above. One of the teachers who had a masters' degree in curriculum design added authentic assessment, alternative assessment, differentiated assessment, criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessment. It is plausible that teachers who pursue further education (e.g., a master's degree) are more likely to use alternative techniques (Baumann, Hoffman, Duffy-Hester, & Ro, 2000). Perhaps they became disinterested in the multiple-choice test, or maybe they have been exposed to alternative assessments, either through their mentoring at their local schools and/or through professional conferences. Additionally, graduate education may provide teachers not so much with the hands-on skills they need to teach, but with a critical perspective regarding the practices they use. Given this possibility, having a graduate degree in education and more experience (each individually) is expected to have a negative effect on traditional practices and a positive effect on alternative practices.

# 5. Conclusion

The findings of this present study indicated that authentic assessment, as a classroom assessment strategy, should be implemented in SHS in the central region of Ghana. The teachers in this study perceived that the form of authentic assessment used in their classrooms was limited by policies, time, resources and assessment methods employed by their schools. These policies affect their use of this assessment method because the subject is a core in the SHSs.

It was realized that theoretically, almost all the twenty participants in this study expressed no knowledge of authentic assessment. There were noticeable gaps, variations and confusions in their articulated understanding of authentic assessment. This was largely due to teachers' limited theoretical understanding of what authentic assessment is, and how it should be integrated into the classroom assessment process.

# 6. Implications for Teaching and Recommendations

In order to build a common knowledge base for teachers teaching Social Studies on authentic assessment in the SHSs, the University of Cape Coast and the University of Education, Winneba, and other stakeholders in education and government officials should broaden their scope on the teaching of assessment to incorporate authentic assessment.

This is because the interviews outcome reveals that there is a mismatch between teachers' knowledge on authentic assessment. Although they demonstrated some level of understanding in what constitutes authentic assessment processes, they still lacked comprehensive and profound understanding of the real benefits and uses of authentic assessment purposes to social studies teaching and learning. The curriculum content of social studies should be re-oriented to incorporate more authentic assessment practices at the SHS level, and even at the university level. This should emphasize classroom based testing, and not standardized tests.

# References

[1]    Bassey, M. (2003). Case study research. In J. Swann & J. Pratt (Eds.) *Educational research in practice: Making sense of methodology*. London: Continuum. Pp. 111-123.

[2]    Baumann, J. F., Hoffman, J. V., Duffy-Hester, A. M., & Moon Ro, J. (2000). "The First R" yesterday and today: U.S. elementary reading instruction practices reported by teachers and administrators. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *35*(3): 338-377

[3]    Bekoe, S. O., Eshun, I., & Bordoh, A. (2013). Formative assessment techniques tutors use to assess teacher-trainees' learning in Social Studies in Colleges of Education in Ghana. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences, 3*(4), 20-30.

[4]    Boud, D., & Falchikov, N. (2005). Redesigning assessment for learning beyond higher education. In A. Brew, and C. Asmar, C. (Eds.), *Research and Development in Higher Education*, 28, 34-41.

[5]    Brooks, V. (2001). *Assessment in secondary schools: The new teachers guide to monitoring, assessment, recording, reporting and accountability*. Burkingham: Open University

[6]    Brualdi, A. (1998). Implementing performance assessment in the classroom. *Practical Assessment, Research and Evaluation,* 6(2). Retrieved: 28-04-11. www.ericae.net/pare/ getvn. asp

[7]    CRDD (2010). *Social Studies syllabus for Senior Secondary Schools*. Accra: Ministry of Education.

[8]    Cohen L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2007) *Research methods in education* (6th ed.). London: Routledge Falmer.

[9]    Craddock, D., & Mathias, H. (2009). Assessment options in higher education. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education,* 34, 127-140.

[10]    Cumming, J., & Maxwell, G. (1999). Contextualising authentic assessment. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policies and Practices*, *6*(2), 177 – 194.

[11]    Danielson, C. (1997). *Designing successful performance tasks and rubrics.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

[12]    Davies, A., Herbst-Luedtke, S., & Reynolds, B. (2008). *Leading the way to making classroom assessment work.* Courtenay, BC: Connections Publishing Inc.

[13]    Darling-Hammond, L & Pecheone, R., (2009). Reframing Accountability: Using Performance Assessments to Focus Learning on Higher Order Skills. In Lyndsay Pinkus (ed). Measuring Performance in High School. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009.

[14]    Dietel, R. J., Herman, J. L., & Knuth, R. A. (1991). What does research say about assessment? NCREL,OakBrook.Availableonline:http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/stw_esys/4assess.hm

[15]    Eubanks, D. A. (2009). A case study of authentic assessment. In C. Schreiner (Ed.), *Handbook of research on assessment technologies, methods, and applications in higher education*. Hershey, USA: Information Science Reference.

[16]    Gulikers, J., Kester, L., Kirschner, P., & Bastiaens, T. (2008). The effect of practical experience on perceptions of assessment authenticity, study approach, and learning outcomes. *Learning and Instruction.* 18, 172 –186.

[17]    Kankam, B., Bordoh, A., Eshun, I., Bassaw, T. K., & Korang, F. Y. (2014). Teachers' perception of authentic assessment techniques practice in social studies lessons in Senior High Schools in Ghana. *International Journal of Educational Research and Information Science. 1*(4), 62-68.

[18]    Law, B., & Eckes, M. (1995). *Assessment and ESL*. Manitoba, Canada. Peguis Publishers.

[19]    Lund, J. L. (1997). Authentic assessment: Its development and applications. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (JOPERD)*, *68*(7), 25-28.

[20]    Lunn, J. (2006). A study on teacher professionalism and teacher leadership: The teachers' viewpoint. (Master's Thesis, University of Waikato, 2006), Hamilton, New Zealand. Retrieved: 20-12-2008. www.adt.waikato.ac.nz/public/adt-uow2007.

[21]    Marzano, R. J., Pickering, D. J., & McTighe, J. (1993*). Assessing student outcomes: Performance assessment using the dimensions of learning model.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

[22]    McMillan, J. H. (2001). *Classroom assessment: Principals and practice for effective instruction* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

[23]    Pellegrino, J. W., Chudowsky, N. & Glaser, R. (2001). *Knowing what students know: The science and design of educational assessment*. Washington, DC.: National Academic Press.

[24]    Raison, G., & Pelliccione, L. (2006). Aligning assessment practices with long term outcomes in higher education. Paper presented at the Evaluations and Assessment Conference 2006: Enhancing Student Learning.

[25]    Reeves, T. C. (2000). "Alternative assessment approaches for online learning environments in higher education." *Educational Computing Research*, *3*(1) 101-111.

[26]    Rudner, L. M., & Schaffer, W. D. (Eds.). (2002). "What teachers need to know about assessment." *National Educational Association*, Washington, DC.

[27]    Sadler, D. R. (2009). "Fidelity as a precondition for integrity in grading academic achievement." *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education,* Retrieved: 04-09-2009.

[28]    Shepard, (2000). The role of classroom assessment in teaching and learning. In V. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (4th ed).Washington: AERA.

[29] Simonson M., Smaldino, S, Albright, M. and Zvacek, S. (2000). Assessment for distance education (chapter 11). *Teaching and learning at a distance: Foundations of distance education*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

[30] Sternberg, R. J. (2007). "Assessing what matters." *Educational Leadership*, *65* (4) 20-26.

[31] Torrance, H. (1995). "The role of assessment in educational reform." In H. Torrance (Ed.), *Evaluating authentic assessment: problems and possibilities in new approaches to assessment.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

[32] Warman, J. (2002). Authentic assessment: A systematic review of the research. Masters Thesis, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. Retrieved: 10-6-12 (UMI. Proquest Digital Dissertation).

[33] Wiggins, G. (1990). The case for authentic assessment. Washington, DC: *Clearinghouse on Tests, Measurement, and Evaluation.* (ERIC Digest, EDRS No. ED 328 606).

[34] Wiggins, G. (1993). *Assessing student performance.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

[35] Wiggins, G. (1998). *Educative assessment: Designing assessments to inform and improve student performance.* San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass.

[36] Wiggins, G. P., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: ASCD. Wood, A. M., & Joseph, S. (2007). Grand theories of personality cannot be integrated. American Psychologist, 62, 57–58.