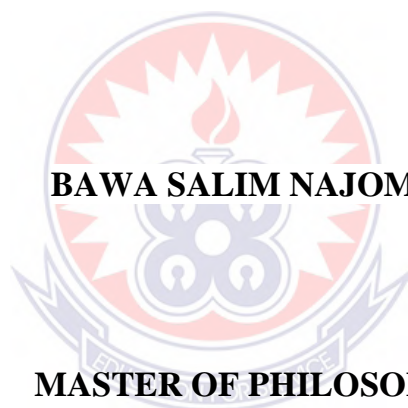


UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA



**SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS FORMATIVE ASSESMENT
PRACTICES IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE KRACHI EAST
MUNICIPALITY OF GHANA**



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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA



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SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE KRACHI EAST MUNICIPALITY OF GHANA**



**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Philosophy
(Social Studies)**

**Department of Social Studies,
Faculty of Social Sciences Education**

SEPTEMBER, 2024

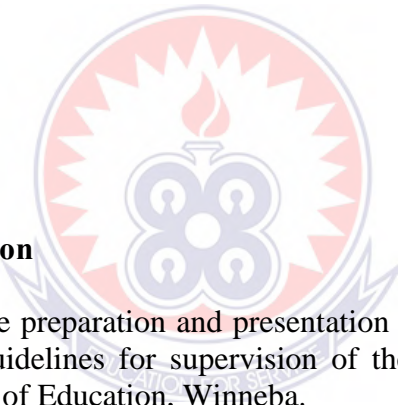
DECLARATION

Student Declaration

I Bawa Salim Najombe, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature.....

Date.....



Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis/dissertation/project as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Name of Supervisor: Dr. Anthony Bordoh

Signature.....

Date.....

DEDICATION

I dedicate this piece of work to my lovely wife madam Moador Suzanna, my mother who is more than a pillar, madam Tale Gado, to my children, Bawa Precious Wunseu, Bawa Andy Gbande, Bawa Favour Fare and Bawa Jessy Sai, I love you all.



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GLOSSARY/ABBREVIATION

CCT	Classical Test Theory
FACOLPT	Formative Assessment Classroom Observation Lesson Plan Tool
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GES	Ghana Education Service
IDM	Inquiry Design Model
IRT	Item Response Theory
MOE	Ministry of Education
NCSS	National Council for the Social Studies
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
QSR	Quality System Research
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SHS	Senior High School
SHTS	Senior High Technical School
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
WASSCE	West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination

ABSTRACT

This study examines the formative assessment practices of Social Studies teachers in the Krachi East Municipality in the Oti Region of Ghana. The primary objective was to explore current formative assessment strategies, identify challenges faced in their implementation, and examine their implications on student learning objectives. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and observations involving nine teachers from three senior high schools, namely Asukawkaw Senior High, Oti Senior High/Tech, and Yabram Comm. Day School. The collected data were analysed thematically in line with the study's objectives following Braun and Clarke's six phases of thematic analysis. The findings from this study revealed that the Social Studies teachers employed a variety of formative assessment techniques, including quizzes, oral questioning, group discussions, and project-based assignments, to promote dynamic and interactive learning environment. Innovative strategies such as peer assessments and reflective activities were noted for enhancing students' critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills. Despite these positive practices, several constraints were identified. Key issues included insufficient resources, large class sizes, and lack of professional development, which hindered the effective implementation of formative assessments. These limitations often resulted in a reliance on traditional methods and inconsistencies in the application of assessment strategies. The study concluded that while formative assessments significantly contribute to improving student engagement, understanding, and overall academic performance, addressing the challenges is important for maximising their potential. Recommendations include investing in educational technology, enhancing professional development, and allocating resources effectively could better support the adoption of innovative assessment strategies and align with national educational goals, ultimately enhancing the quality of education and preparing students for real-world challenges.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Assessment in education serves as an important mechanism for gauging student progress, motivating learning, and ensuring readiness for higher education and professional life. The validity, reliability, and comparability of assessments are fundamental to achieving these objectives, highlighting the need for assessments that accurately reflect student learning (Black & Wiliam, 2018). There are a number of assessment in education, the predominate ones are formative and summative assessments. Formative assessment, a critical pedagogical tool, facilitates the monitoring of student learning to provide continuous feedback that can be used to improve the teaching and learning process (Black & Wiliam, 1998). This approach contrasts with summative assessments, which evaluate student learning at the end of an instructional period. Formative assessment is dynamic, involving a variety of methods and activities that teachers use to adjust their teaching strategies to meet student needs (Sadler, 1989).

Formative assessment empowers teachers to tailor their instructional methods, promoting an environment that supports student learning and achievement (Popham, 2008). The effectiveness of formative assessment lies in its ability to enhance student motivation, engagement, and understanding, leading to improved academic outcomes (Yorke, 2003). The dichotomy between summative and formative assessments, often portrayed in research and policy, oversimplifies the complex interplay between different types of assessment and their collective impact on education (Black & Wiliam, 2018; Lau, 2014).

Formative assessment in Social Studies education takes on an essential role, shaping students' understanding of cultural, political, and social concepts. It encourages critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills essential for civic participation and global awareness (NCSS, 2013). Through formative assessment, teachers can measure or evaluate the students' comprehension and perspectives on complex social issues, adjusting pedagogical approaches to promote deeper engagement and learning (Levin & Wagner, 2006). The process supports academic growth and also nurtures informed, responsible citizens capable of contributing to society (Banks, 2008). The application of formative assessment in Social Studies thus becomes an important conduit for promoting democratic values, social justice, and intercultural understanding, laying the groundwork for a more informed and empathetic populace (Torney-Purta & Vermeer, 2004).

Globally, formative assessment practices vary widely, reflecting diverse educational systems, cultural values, and pedagogical philosophies (Stiggins, 2005). In Ghana, the adoption of formative assessment practices within the educational framework signifies a shift towards more learner-centered approaches, aiming to enhance the quality of education and student outcomes (MOE, 2012). This shift is part of broader educational reforms that seek to align Ghana's educational practices with international standards, emphasizing the importance of continuous assessment and feedback mechanisms in improving teaching and learning processes (Akyeampong, 2009; Oduro, 2015).

That notwithstanding, Social Studies education in Ghana has evolved from a subject focused on transmitting factual knowledge to one that emphasizes the development of critical thinking and socio-cultural awareness (Bordoh et al., 2015; Yalley, 2017; Nyantakyi, Bordoh, Anim & Brew, 2020). The curriculum has been revised multiple

times to incorporate themes relevant to Ghana's social, economic, and political contexts, aiming to prepare students for active and informed citizenship (Eshun, 2020; Bariham, Yirbekyaa & Bordoh, 2022). These changes reflect Ghana's commitment to promoting a sense of national identity and unity while promoting an understanding of global issues and perspectives.

Moreover, despite these commendable reforms, implementation challenges persist, particularly in how teachers in Ghanaian schools apply these practices. Studies indicate a continued dominance of traditional pen-and-paper testing and a significant portion of instructional time devoted to test preparation, revealing a narrow interpretation of "continuous assessment" as frequent testing (Ababio & Dumba, 2013; Kankam et al., 2014; Oduro, 2015). This misinterpretation underlines the need for a re-evaluation of assessment strategies to promote an education system that stimulates critical thinking and creativity, essential for addressing 21st-century challenges (MOE as cited in Oduro, 2015). The significance of formative assessment in improving student learning, instructional practices, and teacher-student interactions has led researchers to call for investigations into the efficacy of formative assessment practices and their integration into teaching and learning (Heritage, 2013; McMillan, 2013; Smith, 2013; Awoniyi, 2016; Quyen & Khairani, 2017). Given the global importance of these practices, this study aims to explore the execution of formative assessment by senior high school (SHS) teachers in Ghana, with a focus on the Krachi East Municipality in the Oti Region. This investigation seeks to understand the strategies employed, the challenges faced, and the potential for improvement in formative assessment practices. The need for context-specific research is emphasized by Amua-Sekyi (2016), who noted the variations in formative assessment strategies are based on contextual factors and highlighted the difficulty teachers' face in providing meaningful feedback, often

resorting to normative grading practices. This study, therefore, aims to highlight on the formative assessment practices among SHS teachers in Ghana, contributing to the broader dialogue on enhancing educational assessment methodologies to better serve students and teachers alike.

The Krachi East Municipality, located in the Oti Region, represents a microcosm of Ghana's educational challenges and opportunities. Secondary education in this area is characterized by resource constraints, teacher shortages, and varying levels of student achievement (Abubakari, 2022; Nomah et al., 2022). Despite these challenges, there are concerted efforts to improve educational quality through the adoption of innovative teaching practices, including formative assessment, to better meet the needs of diverse learners.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

Formative assessment is widely recognized as a powerful tool for enhancing student achievement, motivation, and self-regulation, as well as informing instructional decisions and practices (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Black & Wiliam, 2018). Formative assessment is a critical pedagogical tool that enables teachers to monitor student learning, provide ongoing feedback and adjust instructional strategies to improve educational system, particularly following curriculum standard (Williams 2018). Formative assessment has been emphasized as essential for developing critical thinking, problem solving and civil competencies in social studies education (Williams 2018).

However, despite national policy directives and curriculum frameworks advocating for continuous assessment, there remains significant gap between policy expectations and classroom implementation, particularly in the rural and underserve municipalities which Krachi East is part.

Despite the recognized importance of formative assessment in enhancing teaching and learning outcomes in Social Studies, there is limited empirical on Social Studies in the Krachi East municipality of Oti Region implement formative assessment practice in their classroom.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the formative assessment practices of Social Studies teachers in Senior High Schools in the Krachi East Municipality of Ghana. Although national educational reforms encourage the use of formative assessment to promote continuous feedback, critical thinking, and learner-centred instruction, classroom assessment practices in many schools remain largely examination-oriented and summative in nature. This raises concerns about whether formative assessment is being effectively implemented to support student learning. Given the limited empirical evidence on how Social Studies teachers apply formative assessment at the Senior High School level, particularly within the Krachi East Municipality, this study sought to investigate current practices, identify challenges, and assess their effectiveness in improving teaching and learning.

1.4 Research Objectives

This study seeks to;

1. explore the formative assessment strategies employed by Social Studies teachers in the Krachi East Municipality, Oti Region.
2. identify the challenges faced by Social Studies teachers in implementing effective formative assessment techniques in the Krachi East Municipality, Oti Region
3. examine the implications of formative assessment practices on student learning objectives in the Krachi East Municipality, Oti Region.

1.5 Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following questions;

1. How do Social Studies teachers in the Krachi East Municipality of the Oti Region employ formative assessment strategies in their teaching?
2. Are there challenges being faced by Social Studies teachers in implementing effective formative assessment techniques in the Krachi East Municipality, Oti Region?
3. What are the implications of formative assessment practices on student learning objectives in the Krachi East Municipality, Oti Region?

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study investigates the formative assessment practices of Social Studies teachers in the Krachi East Municipality in the Oti Region of Ghana, using a qualitative approach. The study covered all the public and private senior high schools in the municipality, and selected a sample of 9 teachers out of 21 professional Social Studies from three SHS

in the Krachi East Municipality in the Oti Region of Ghana (Asukawkaw Senior High, Oti Senior High/Tech, and Yabram Comm. Day School) for data collection.

Purposively, 6 teachers were selected for this study whilst 3 were also conveniently selected for this research. The study used interviews and observations to explore the strategies, challenges, implications, and alignment of formative assessment in Social Studies education.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

While this study provides valuable insights into formative assessment practices in Social Studies education in the Krachi East Municipality, several limitations should be noted. First, the small sample size of nine teachers from three schools, while suitable for qualitative depth, limits the breadth of perspectives and may not capture the full diversity of practices across the municipality or other regions. Relatedly, participants were selected based on availability and willingness to participate, which may introduce selection bias, as teachers who were more motivated or confident in their practices may have been more likely to participate.

Second, the study relied on semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. While these methods provided rich qualitative data, they are subject to researcher bias in interpretation and social desirability bias, as teachers may have presented their practices in a more favourable light. Classroom observations were also limited in time, so the data may not fully reflect the day-to-day variation in formative assessment practices.

Third, the study focused solely on teachers' perspectives and did not include direct input from students or quantitative measures of learning outcomes. This limits the ability to determine the actual impact of formative assessment practices on student achievement beyond teacher-reported observations.

Finally, contextual factors such as school resources, class sizes, and scheduling constraints may have influenced both the implementation of formative assessment and the data collected. These factors may affect the transferability of the findings to other schools with different conditions.

1.8 Delimitation of the Study

The research is restricted to the Krachi Municipality, with focused on Dambai, in the Oti Region of Ghana. Schools, teachers or assessment practices outside this municipality or region are excluded.

The study is confined to social studies teachers currently employed in senior high schools with the specified areas. Teachers from other discipline, non-social studies teachers and those teaching at the basic or tertiary levels are excluded.

Only formative assessment practices related to Social Studies instruction are considered. The study does not address practices in the other school subject

1.9 Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the formative assessment practices of Social Studies teachers in the Krachi East Municipality in the Oti Region of Ghana. The study aimed to explore how these teachers use various strategies to monitor and support student learning, what challenges and constraints they face in implementing formative assessment, what effects formative assessment has on student outcomes and

educational quality, and how formative assessment aligns with the educational goals and policies in Ghana. The study was theoretical significance for the field of formative assessment and Social Studies education. It will contribute to the existing body of theories by confirming, refuting, or adding nuance to the currently accepted models or frameworks of formative assessment, such as the assessment for learning model (Black & Wiliam, 2018), the feedback model (Hattie & Timperley, 2007), and the assessment literacy model (Popham, 2014). It will also provide new perspectives on the specific features, challenges, and opportunities of formative assessment in Social Studies education, such as the role of critical thinking, civic engagement, or global citizenship.

The study will also have practical significance for the field of formative assessment and Social Studies education. It will have implications and applications for improving the quality of teaching and learning in Social Studies classrooms in Ghana, by identifying the best practices, strategies, or techniques of formative assessment, as well as the barriers, facilitators, or recommendations for overcoming them. It will also have implications or applications for improving the policy and practice of formative assessment in Social Studies education in Ghana, by examining the alignment or misalignment of formative assessment with the national curriculum and assessment guidelines for Social Studies, as well as the potential areas or ways of enhancing them.

Finally, the study will have significance for future research in the field of formative assessment and Social Studies education. It will open up new areas or questions for further investigation, such as the impact of formative assessment on student motivation, self-regulation, and metacognition in Social Studies learning, or the comparison of formative assessment practices across different regions, levels, or contexts in Ghana. It will also provide new methods and tools for conducting or evaluating formative

assessment in Social Studies education, such as the use of interviews, observations, rubrics, portfolios, or digital technologies.

1.9 Operational Definition of Terms

For this study, the following terms are operationally defined as follows;

Formative assessment: A cyclical process that involves interactions among teachers and students, prompting thinking and eliciting information, gathering and analyzing information, and providing and using feedback to improve teaching and learning (Black & Wiliam, 2018).

Formative assessment strategies: The specific methods or techniques that teachers use to collect and use evidence of student learning during the learning process, such as questioning, observation, feedback, self-assessment, peer assessment, rubrics, portfolios, etc. (Popham, 2014).

Formative assessment challenges: The factors or conditions that hinder or impede teachers from implementing formative assessment effectively, such as large class sizes, lack of resources, time pressure, curriculum overload, insufficient training and support, etc. (Bordoh et al., 2013; Eshun et al., 2014; Kankam et al., 2014;).

Formative assessment implications: The effects or outcomes of formative assessment on student learning and educational quality, such as student achievement, motivation, self-regulation, conceptual understanding, skill development, citizenship, etc. (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Barton & Levstik, 2004).

Formative assessment alignment: The degree of consistency or compatibility between formative assessment practices and the educational goals and policies in Ghana, such as the national curriculum and assessment guidelines for Social Studies, the vision of

becoming a middle-income country by 2030, and the achievement of the SDGs by 2030 (Ministry of Education, 2018; GES, 2010).

1.10 Organisation of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one provides the background and context of the study, the significance and rationale of the study, the scope and delimitation of the study, the operational definition of terms, and the organization of the study. Chapter Two, Literature Review, presents the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study, the review of related studies and literature on formative assessment and Social Studies education, and the synthesis and gap analysis of the literature. Chapter Three presents the Research Methodology. This chapter describes the research design and approach, the population and sample, the sampling technique, the data collection methods and instruments, the data analysis methods and techniques, and the ethical considerations of the study. Chapter Four presents the Results and Discussion. This chapter presents and analyses the data collected from the interviews and observations of Social Studies teachers and students, interprets and discusses the findings in relation to the research questions and hypotheses, and compares and contrasts the findings with the literature. Chapter Five presents the Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations. This chapter summarizes the main findings and arguments of the study, concludes and answers the research questions and hypotheses, discusses the implications and limitations of the study, and provides recommendations for future research and practice.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews the existing literature on formative assessment and Social Studies education, and identifies the gaps or problems that need to be addressed by the current study. The chapter discusses the relevant theories and concepts that inform the study, such as assessment theory, feedback theory, and Social Studies education. The chapter reviews the previous studies and literature that are related to the topic and the research problem, and summarizes their main findings, methods, strengths, and limitations.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study is rooted in Feedback Theory. This framework is instrumental in exploring the dynamics of formative assessment in Social Studies education. Feedback Theory delves into the impact of feedback on student development. The theory provides the foundation for understanding nuances of formative assessment practices in Ghana educational setting, particularly in understanding their implementation, challenges and effects on student learning outcomes.

2.1.1 Feedback theory

Feedback Theory in education focuses on the communication of information about performance or learning that can be used as a basis for improvement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). It encompasses the ways in which student responses to tasks and activities are communicated back to them, with the goal of enhancing their learning and future performance (Shute, 2008). The theory posits that effective feedback is critical in the learning process, acting as a bridge between what is understood and what is aimed

to be understood (Sadler, 1989). Feedback Theory has been defined through various lenses. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) describe it as information that is provided by an agent (teacher, peer, book, parent, experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding. Hattie and Timperley (2007) define it as information communicated to the learner that is intended to modify their thinking or behaviour to improve learning. Ramsden (2003) emphasizes that feedback should provide a clear picture of the gap between actual and desired performance.

Feedback Theory has evolved significantly over the decades. Initially conceptualized as a one-way process from teacher to student, contemporary understanding views feedback as a more interactive, bidirectional process (Sadler, 1989). The 1960s behaviourist models of feedback focused on immediate reinforcement, while the 1970s and 1980s brought cognitivist perspectives, emphasizing internal cognitive processing of feedback (Skinner, 1957; Bruner, 1961). Recent developments highlight the importance of self-regulation and the learner's active role in seeking, interpreting, and using feedback (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

The various tenets and concepts of the theory

Feedback Theory encompasses several key tenets. Firstly, it emphasizes the need for feedback to be timely, specific, and relevant to the learner's needs (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). The concept of constructive alignment stresses the importance of aligning feedback with learning outcomes and assessment tasks (Biggs, 2003). The theory also highlights the importance of formative feedback, which focuses on providing constructive guidance for future learning (Sadler, 1989). Additionally, it stresses the role of learner engagement with feedback, advocating for an interactive process where learners are active participants (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

The Relevance of Feedback Theory to the Study

Feedback Theory is highly relevant to this study, which focuses on formative assessment practices in Social Studies education in Ghana. Feedback, as a central component of teaching and learning, plays a critical role in shaping educational interactions, particularly within formative assessment processes. The theory emphasizes that effective feedback provides students with clear, actionable guidance to improve their learning and performance (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In the context of this study, applying the principles of Feedback Theory can enhance students' understanding of complex Social Studies concepts and support the development of critical thinking skills. Since formative assessment is inherently continuous, feedback is integral to transforming assessment from a mere evaluation tool into a dynamic learning mechanism (Black & Wiliam, 1998). This aligns directly with the study's objective of exploring current formative assessment strategies, as feedback underpins their effectiveness.

The application of Feedback Theory by teachers can significantly influence the success of formative assessment. Providing quality feedback requires both mastery of the subject matter and an understanding of students' learning needs (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). By focusing on teacher practices and perspectives, this study draws on the theory to examine how feedback can be informative, motivational, and supportive of student learning. Feedback Theory also highlights the potential of effective feedback to increase student engagement and motivation (Shute, 2008), which are essential for achieving positive learning outcomes in Social Studies.

Moreover, the theory offers a framework for considering the cultural and educational context of Ghana. Students' reception and use of feedback are influenced by local norms, communication styles, and educational traditions (Boud & Molloy, 2013). This study leverages Feedback Theory to explore feedback strategies that are not only pedagogically sound but also culturally appropriate, ensuring that formative assessment practices in the Krachi East Municipality are effective and contextually relevant.

Contribution of the Study to Feedback Theory

The findings of this study contribute to Feedback Theory by providing empirical evidence from the context of Senior High Schools in the Krachi East Municipality of Ghana. While Feedback Theory emphasizes that timely, specific, and constructive feedback enhances student learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007), the findings of this study confirm that formative assessment practices such as quizzes, peer discussions, and classroom interactions significantly improve student engagement and understanding in Social Studies. This supports the core assumption of the theory that feedback acts as a bridge between current and desired performance.

However, the study also extends Feedback Theory by demonstrating that the effectiveness of feedback is influenced by contextual and structural factors such as large class sizes, limited instructional resources, and insufficient professional development. Although the theory highlights the importance of quality feedback, it does not fully account for the institutional constraints that may affect its implementation in resource-constrained educational settings. The findings therefore suggest that the practical application of Feedback Theory must consider contextual realities, particularly in developing educational systems.

Furthermore, the study reinforces the theory's emphasis on learner engagement by showing that students respond more positively when feedback is interactive rather than purely evaluative. This highlights the importance of dialogic and participatory feedback practices within formative assessment. Overall, this study strengthens the applicability of Feedback Theory within the Ghanaian Senior High School context and provides contextual insights that enhance its practical relevance in Social Studies education.

Practical Significance of the Study

The practical significance of this study lies in its potential to improve formative assessment practices in Senior High Schools within the Krachi East Municipality and similar educational contexts in Ghana. The findings provide Social Studies teachers with practical insights into effective feedback strategies, classroom assessment techniques, and interactive practices that enhance student engagement and understanding. By identifying both effective practices and existing challenges such as large class sizes and limited instructional resources, the study offers realistic recommendations for improving classroom assessment processes.

For school administrators, the study highlights the need to support teachers through structured professional development, adequate teaching and learning resources, and monitoring systems that encourage formative assessment implementation. The findings also provide education policymakers and curriculum planners with context-specific evidence on how formative assessment is being practiced at the classroom level, thereby informing policy refinement and assessment reforms.

Furthermore, teacher training institutions may benefit from the study by integrating more practical feedback and formative assessment training into pre-service and in-service programs. Ultimately, the study contributes to improving the quality of teaching

and learning in Social Studies by promoting assessment practices that support continuous learning, critical thinking, and student-centred instruction in Ghana's Senior High Schools.

2.2 Current Formative Assessment Strategies in Social Studies Education

Formative assessment is a process of collecting and using evidence of student learning to provide feedback and support to enhance learning and teaching (Black & Wiliam, 1998). It is not a type of assessment, but rather a pedagogical approach that involves a cyclical process of interactions among teachers and students, prompting thinking and eliciting information, gathering and analyzing information, and providing and using feedback to improve teaching and learning (Black & Wiliam, 2018). Formative assessment can be defined and conceptualized in different ways, depending on the perspective, purpose, and context of the assessment. Formative assessment can be termed as the *Assessment for learning*. This perspective emphasizes the role of assessment in supporting and enhancing student learning, rather than measuring and reporting it. Assessment for learning involves the use of assessment information to identify and close the gap between the current and the desired performance, and to provide feedback that helps students improve their learning strategies and outcomes (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

Formative assessment can also be termed as the *Assessment as learning*. This perspective emphasizes the role of assessment in developing students' metacognitive and self-regulatory skills, such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating their own learning. Assessment as learning involves the use of assessment information to promote students' awareness and responsibility for their own learning, and to provide feedback that helps students reflect on and adjust their learning goals and processes (Earl, 2012).

It can additionally be termed the *Assessment of learning*. This perspective emphasizes the role of assessment in measuring and reporting student learning, rather than supporting and enhancing it. Assessment of learning involves the use of assessment information to summarize and communicate the level of achievement or performance of students at the end of a unit, course, or program, and to provide feedback that helps students recognize their strengths and weaknesses (Popham, 2014). These definitions and conceptualizations of formative assessment reflect different views and assumptions about the nature and purpose of assessment, the role and responsibility of teachers and students, and the relationship and interaction between assessment and learning. They also imply different approaches and strategies for designing and implementing formative assessment in various educational contexts.

A significant challenge in defining and conceptualizing formative assessment is the lack of consensus and clarity among researchers, scholars, and practitioners. Different terms and labels are often used interchangeably or inconsistently to refer to formative assessment, e.g. classroom assessment, continuous assessment, dynamic assessment, or assessment for learning. Different models and frameworks are also proposed to describe and explain the formative assessment process, for example the assessment for learning model (Black & William, 2018), the feedback model (Hattie & Timperley, 2007), the assessment literacy model (Popham, 2014), or the feedback loop model (Sadler, 1989). These models and frameworks share some common elements, such as the importance of feedback, the involvement of students, and the alignment of assessment with learning goals, but they also differ in some aspects, such as the focus, scope, and complexity of the formative assessment process, the underlying assumptions and mechanisms of formative assessment, and the empirical evidence and support for the formative assessment models.

Another challenge of defining and conceptualizing formative assessment is the diversity and variability of the educational contexts and practices. Formative assessment is not a fixed or prescribed method or technique, but rather a flexible and adaptable process that depends on the specific situation and needs of the teachers and students. Formative assessment can take various forms and formats, such as questioning, observation, feedback, self-assessment, peer assessment, rubrics, portfolios, etc. Formative assessment can also be influenced by various factors and conditions, such as the curriculum, the content, the objectives, the methods, the resources, the time, the culture, the climate, the norms, etc. of the learning and teaching environment. Therefore, formative assessment requires teachers and students to have a clear understanding of the purpose, principles, and strategies of formative assessment, as well as the skills and knowledge to apply them in various contexts and subjects (Popham, 2014).

Formative assessment is found to have a number of benefits and impacts on teaching and learning, these including:

- a. Improving student achievement: Formative assessment can improve student achievement by providing timely and specific feedback that helps students identify and close the gap between their current and desired performance, and by providing support and guidance that helps students improve their learning strategies and outcomes (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).
- b. Enhancing student motivation: Formative assessment can enhance student motivation by providing clear and achievable learning goals and criteria, by providing positive and constructive feedback that recognizes students' efforts and progress, and by providing opportunities and choices that promote students' autonomy and interest in learning (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

- c. Developing student self-regulation: it can develop student self-regulation by providing information and feedback that helps students plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning, and by providing opportunities and scaffolds that help students reflect on and adjust their learning goals and processes (Zimmerman, 2002).
- d. Informing instructional decisions: Formative assessment can inform instructional decisions by providing information and feedback that helps teachers understand the strengths and needs of their students, and by providing evidence and data that helps teachers adjust their teaching strategies and practices to meet the diverse learning needs of their students (Black & Wiliam, 2018).
- e. Enhancing instructional quality: it can enhance instructional quality by providing information and feedback that helps teachers align their teaching objectives, content, methods, and assessment with the curriculum standards and expectations, and by providing opportunities and resources that help teachers engage in professional learning and collaboration to improve their teaching skills and knowledge (Stiggins, 2005).

A significant goal of education is to improve student achievement, which can be defined as the extent to which students demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and competencies that are expected and valued by the educational system and society (OECD, 2012). Student achievement can be measured by various indicators, such as test scores, grades, or portfolios, which reflect the learning outcomes and standards of the curriculum and the assessment system. Formative assessment can improve student achievement by providing feedback that helps students identify and close the gap between their current and desired performance. Feedback is a key component of formative assessment, as it

provides information to students and teachers about the current state of learning and the gap between the desired and the actual performance (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Feedback can have different sources, such as teachers, peers, self, or technology (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Feedback can also have different modes, such as verbal, written, visual, or auditory (Shute, 2008). Feedback can also have different levels, such as task, process, self-regulation, or self (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Feedback can have positive or negative effects on student achievement, depending on various factors, such as the quality, timing, frequency, clarity, specificity, and relevance of the feedback, as well as the student's prior knowledge, motivation, self-efficacy, and emotions (Shute, 2008). Feedback can also be influenced by the teacher's beliefs, attitudes, skills, and practices, as well as the classroom culture, climate, and norms (Carless, 2015).

According to Hattie and Timperley (2007), feedback can improve student achievement by addressing three questions: Where am I going? (feed up), How am I going? (feedback), and Where to next? (feed forward). These questions correspond to the different levels of feedback: task, process, self-regulation, and self. Task feedback provides information about the correctness, quality, or completeness of the task or performance. Process feedback provides information about the strategies, methods, or processes used to complete the task or performance. Self-regulation feedback provides information about the monitoring, evaluation, and adjustment of the learning goals and processes. Self-feedback provides information about the personal attributes, feelings, or attitudes related to the task or performance. Hattie and Timperley (2007) suggest that feedback is most effective when it focuses on the task and the process, rather than the self. Feedback that focuses on the task and the process can help students improve their understanding, skills, and strategies, and can enhance their motivation and self-efficacy.

Feedback that focuses on the self can have negative effects on student achievement, especially when it is evaluative, comparative, or judgmental, as it can lower students' self-esteem, confidence, and interest in learning.

Feedback can also improve student achievement by providing support and guidance that helps students improve their learning strategies and outcomes. Feedback can provide support by scaffolding, modelling, or prompting the students to use appropriate and effective strategies or resources for learning. Feedback can provide guidance by directing, instructing, or advising the students to use specific actions or steps to improve their performance or learning. Feedback can also provide encouragement, praise, or recognition that motivates and reinforces the students to continue or persist in their learning (Shute, 2008). Feedback can additionally improve student achievement by involving students in the feedback process, and by promoting a feedback culture in the classroom. Feedback can involve students by engaging them in self-assessment, peer assessment, or co-assessment, where they generate, share, or receive feedback from themselves, their peers, or their teachers. Feedback can promote a feedback culture by creating a safe, supportive, and collaborative learning environment, where feedback is valued, expected, and welcomed by the students and the teachers. Feedback can also promote a feedback culture by developing feedback literacy, which is the ability to seek, understand, and use feedback effectively for learning (Carless & Boud, 2018). There is ample evidence that formative assessment can improve student achievement, especially when feedback is timely, specific, and actionable, and when students are involved and supported in the feedback process. For example, a meta-analysis by Hattie (2008) found that formative assessment had an average effect size of 0.7 on student achievement, which is equivalent to a two-grade leap in GCSE performance. Another meta-analysis by Kingston and Nash (2011) found that formative assessment had an average effect

size of 0.4 on student achievement, which is equivalent to a one-grade leap in GCSE performance. These studies suggest that formative assessment can have a significant and positive impact on student achievement across different subjects, levels, and contexts.

Another goal of education is to enhance student motivation, which can be defined as the extent to which students are interested, engaged, and committed to their learning (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Student motivation can be influenced by various factors, such as the learning goals, tasks, feedback, environment, and outcomes, which affect the students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as well as their self-determination, autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Formative assessment can enhance student motivation by providing clear and achievable learning goals and criteria, by providing positive and constructive feedback that recognizes students' efforts and progress, and by providing opportunities and choices that promote students' autonomy and interest in learning (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Formative assessment can enhance student motivation by providing clear and achievable learning goals and criteria, which help students understand the purpose, direction, and expectations of their learning. Learning goals are the statements that describe what students are expected to learn or achieve by the end of a unit, lesson, or activity. Learning criteria are the standards or indicators that describe how students can demonstrate their learning or achievement. Learning goals and criteria can be set by the teacher, the student, or both, and they can be communicated verbally, visually, or in writing (Brookhart, 2017).

Learning goals and criteria can enhance student motivation by helping students focus on the learning process, rather than the performance outcome, and by helping students

adopt a mastery orientation, rather than a performance orientation. A learning process focus is when students pay attention to the strategies, methods, or processes they use to learn or perform, rather than the results or outcomes they achieve. A mastery orientation is when students aim to improve their understanding, skills, or competencies, rather than to prove their ability or to compare themselves with others. A learning process focus and a mastery orientation can enhance student motivation by increasing their intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and persistence in learning (Dweck, 2006).

Learning goals and criteria can also enhance student motivation by helping students monitor and evaluate their own learning, and by helping students receive and use feedback effectively. Learning goals and criteria provide a reference point or a benchmark for students to compare their current and desired performance, and to identify the gap between them. Learning goals and criteria also provide a guide or a framework for students to generate, share, or receive feedback that is relevant, specific, and actionable. Learning goals and criteria also provide a basis or a measure for students to evaluate their learning progress and achievement, and to celebrate their success or to plan for improvement. Learning goals and criteria can enhance student motivation by increasing their metacognition, self-regulation, and self-assessment in learning (Brookhart, 2017). Formative assessment can also enhance student motivation by providing positive and constructive feedback that recognizes students' efforts and progress, rather than their ability or performance. Feedback is a key component of formative assessment, as it provides information and communication to students and teachers about the current state of learning and the gap between the desired and the actual performance (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Feedback can have different sources, such as teachers

The earliest forms of assessment in education were oral and written examinations, which were influenced by the classical and medieval traditions of learning and knowledge. Oral examinations were based on the oral recitation and memorization of texts, such as the scriptures, the classics, or the laws. Oral examinations were used to test the students' knowledge, understanding, and eloquence, and to evaluate their moral and religious character. Oral examinations were often conducted in public, where the students had to answer the questions of the teachers or the examiners, who were usually the authorities or the experts of the field. Oral examinations were mainly used for summative and evaluative purposes, such as graduation, certification, or selection (Gipps, 1994). Written examinations were based on the written composition and analysis of texts, such as the essays, the theses, or the dissertations. Written examinations were used to test the students' skills, abilities, and creativity, and to evaluate their academic and intellectual merit. Written examinations were often conducted in private, where the students had to write their responses to the topics or the problems assigned by the teachers or the examiners, who were usually the peers or the colleagues of the field. Written examinations were mainly used for formative and diagnostic purposes, such as feedback, improvement, or guidance (Gipps, 1994).

Oral and written examinations were not standardized, meaning that they did not have a fixed or uniform format, content, or criteria. They were subjective, meaning that they relied on the judgment and discretion of the teachers or the examiners, who had different expectations and preferences. They were also qualitative, meaning that they did not use numerical scores or grades, but rather descriptive comments or evaluations. Oral and written examinations were mainly used in higher education, such as universities or colleges, where the students were few and the teachers were many, and where the learning was individualized and specialized (Gipps, 1994). The emergence

of standardized testing in education was influenced by the social and political changes in the modern era, such as the industrialization, urbanization, and democratization of the society. Standardized testing was based on the scientific and positivist paradigms of learning and knowledge, which emphasized the measurement, quantification, and objectification of the phenomena. Standardized testing was used to test the factual knowledge and skills of the students, using standardized tests or exams that had a fixed or uniform format, content, and criteria. Standardized testing was mainly used for summative and accountability purposes, such as ranking, comparison, or selection (Popham, 2014).

Standardized testing was developed and implemented in response to the challenges and needs of the educational system, such as the massification, diversification, and differentiation of the education. Standardized testing was designed to provide a common and consistent measure of the students' achievement or performance, regardless of their background, location, or condition. Standardized testing was also intended to provide a reliable and valid indicator of the quality and effectiveness of the education, in terms of the curriculum, the instruction, and the outcomes. Standardized testing was mainly used in primary and secondary education, where the students were many and the teachers were few, and where the learning was standardized and generalized (Popham, 2014). Standardized testing was based on the classical test theory (CTT), which was the dominant psychometric model for scoring and analyzing the tests. CTT assumed that the test scores were composed of two components: the true score and the error score. The true score was the hypothetical score that the student would obtain if the test was perfectly reliable and valid. The error score was the random score that resulted from the measurement error or the variation in the testing conditions. CTT aimed to estimate the true score and to minimize the error score, by using various

statistical techniques, such as reliability coefficients, validity coefficients, or standard errors of measurement. CTT also used various types of norms, such as percentile ranks, standard scores, or grade equivalents, to interpret and compare the test scores (Pellegrino, Chudowsky & Glaser, 2001).

The advancement of computer-based and adaptive testing in education was influenced by the technological and methodological innovations in the field of assessment. Computer-based testing was based on the use of computers and the internet to deliver and administer the tests, rather than the paper and pencil. Computer-based testing offered various advantages and opportunities for the assessment, such as the increased efficiency, flexibility, and accessibility of the testing process, the enhanced variety, quality, and interactivity of the testing content, and the improved security, accuracy, and timeliness of the testing results. Computer-based testing also posed various challenges and issues for the assessment, such as the increased cost, complexity, and dependency of the testing system, the reduced validity, reliability, and comparability of the testing scores, and the increased ethical, legal, and social implications of the testing data (Parshall, Spray, Kalohn & Davey, 2002).

Computer-based testing was based on the item response theory (IRT), which was the alternative psychometric model for scoring and analysing the tests. IRT assumed that the test scores were composed of three components: the ability, the difficulty, and the discrimination. The ability was the latent trait or the construct that the test measured, such as the intelligence, the aptitude, or the achievement. The difficulty was the parameter that indicated how hard or easy the test item was, based on the probability of answering it correctly. The discrimination was the parameter that indicated how well or poorly the test item discriminated between the high and low ability students, based

on the slope of the item characteristic curve. IRT aimed to estimate the ability and the item parameters, and to maximize the information and the precision of the test scores, by using various mathematical models, such as the Rasch model, the one-parameter logistic model, the two-parameter logistic model, or the three-parameter logistic model. IRT also used various types of scales, such as the logit scale, the theta scale, or the z-score scale, to interpret and compare the test scores (Pellegrino, Chudowsky & Glaser, 2001).

Adaptive testing was a special type of computer-based testing, which used the computer and the IRT to tailor and adjust the test to the individual student, rather than to the group of students. Adaptive testing offered various advantages and opportunities for the assessment, such as the increased efficiency, effectiveness, and fairness of the testing process, the enhanced validity, reliability, and precision of the testing scores, and the improved motivation, engagement, and satisfaction of the testing experience. Adaptive testing also posed various challenges and issues for the assessment, such as the increased complexity, difficulty, and uncertainty of the testing design, the reduced comparability, generalizability, and interpretability of the testing results, and the increased ethical, legal, and social implications of the testing data (Weiss & Kingsbury, 1984).

Adaptive testing was based on the adaptive algorithm, which was the procedure or the rule that determined how the test items were selected and presented to the student, based on the student's responses and the item parameters. Adaptive testing used various types of adaptive algorithms, such as the maximum information, the maximum likelihood, the Bayesian, or the shadow test algorithms. Adaptive testing also used various types of adaptive tests, such as the linear-on-the-fly, the multistage, the branching, or the

computerized adaptive testlets tests. Adaptive testing also used various types of adaptive features, such as the adaptive difficulty, the adaptive length, the adaptive content, or the adaptive feedback (Weiss & Kingsbury, 1984).

2.2.1 The concepts and tenets of assessment practices

Assessment practices are guided by various concepts and tenets that inform and shape their design, implementation, and evaluation. Some of the main concepts and tenets of assessment practices are Alignment, Validity, Reliability, Feedback, and Student involvement. These concepts and tenets of assessment practices are based on various theories and principles of learning and assessment.

Alignment

Alignment is the concept that refers to the degree of consistency or compatibility among the different components of assessment, such as the learning objectives, content, methods, and criteria. Alignment ensures that the assessment is relevant, meaningful, and fair for the students and the teachers, and that it reflects the intended learning outcomes and standards (Popham, 2014). Alignment is based on the theory of constructive alignment, which was proposed by Biggs (1996) as a framework for designing and implementing curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Constructive alignment is based on the principles of constructivism, which views learning as an active and social process of constructing meaning and knowledge from experience and interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). Constructive alignment also draws on the principles of alignment, which views assessment as a tool for communicating and reinforcing the learning expectations and standards (Biggs, 1996).

According to Biggs (1996), constructive alignment involves three steps: defining the intended learning outcomes, designing the teaching and learning activities, and

designing the assessment tasks. The intended learning outcomes are the statements that describe what the students are expected to learn or achieve by the end of a unit, lesson, or activity. The teaching and learning activities are the methods and strategies that are used to facilitate and support the students' learning process. The assessment tasks are the methods and tools that are used to measure and evaluate the students' learning outcomes. The key idea of constructive alignment is that the intended learning outcomes, the teaching and learning activities, and the assessment tasks should be aligned, meaning that they should be consistent, compatible, and coherent with each other, and that they should reflect the same level and type of learning (Biggs, 1996).

Alignment can have various benefits and impacts on learning and assessment, like;

- a. **Enhancing validity:** Alignment can enhance the validity of the assessment, as it ensures that the assessment measures what it claims to measure, and that the assessment results can be used to make appropriate and accurate inferences and decisions about the students' learning and achievement (Popham, 2014).
- b. **Enhancing reliability:** Alignment can enhance the reliability of the assessment, as it ensures that the assessment produces consistent and stable results, and that the assessment results are free from errors or biases that may arise from the mismatch or inconsistency among the assessment components (Popham, 2014).
- c. **Enhancing fairness:** Alignment can enhance the fairness of the assessment, as it ensures that the assessment is relevant, meaningful, and equitable for the students and the teachers, and that the assessment does not disadvantage or discriminate any students or groups of students based on their background, characteristics, or preferences (Popham, 2014).
- d. **Enhancing transparency:** Alignment can enhance the transparency of the assessment, as it ensures that the assessment is clear, explicit, and

understandable for the students and the teachers, and that the assessment communicates and reinforces the learning expectations and standards that the students and the teachers need to know and follow (Popham, 2014).

- e. Enhancing feedback: Alignment can enhance the feedback of the assessment, as it ensures that the feedback is relevant, specific, and actionable for the students and the teachers, and that the feedback helps the students and the teachers identify and close the gap between the current and the desired performance, and improve their learning strategies and outcomes (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

There are various methods and tools for achieving and evaluating alignment in assessment, such as the curriculum alignment matrix, the assessment alignment matrix, the alignment index, or the alignment rubric. These methods and tools help the teachers and the assessors to check and ensure the alignment among the different components of assessment, such as the learning objectives, content, methods, and criteria, and to identify and address any gaps or mismatches that may exist or occur (Popham, 2014).

Validity

Validity is the concept that refers to the degree to which the assessment measures what it claims to measure, and the extent to which the assessment results can be used to make appropriate and accurate inferences and decisions. Validity ensures that the assessment is trustworthy, credible, and useful for the students and the teachers, and that it supports the intended learning goals and purposes (Pellegrino, Chudowsky & Glaser, 2001). Validity is based on the theory of validity, which is the dominant psychometric theory for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of assessment. Validity theory is based on the principles of measurement, which views assessment as a process of quantifying and

representing the phenomena of interest, such as the knowledge, skills, or competencies of the students. Validity theory also draws on the principles of inference, which views assessment as a process of making and supporting claims or arguments about the phenomena of interest, based on the evidence or data collected from the assessment (Pellegrino, Chudowsky & Glaser, 2001).

According to Pellegrino, Chudowsky and Glaser (2001), validity theory involves three elements: the interpretation, the evidence, and the use. The interpretation is the claim or argument that is made about the students' learning or achievement, based on the assessment results. The evidence is the data or information that is collected and analyzed from the assessment, to support or refute the interpretation. The use is the decision or action that is taken based on the interpretation and the evidence, to enhance or evaluate the students' learning or achievement. The key idea of validity theory is that the interpretation, the evidence, and the use should be coherent, consistent, and convincing with each other, and that they should reflect the same purpose and context of the assessment (Pellegrino, Chudowsky & Glaser, 2001). Validity can have various benefits and impacts on learning and assessment, these includes;

- a. Enhancing alignment: Validity can enhance the alignment of the assessment, as it ensures that the assessment measures what it claims to measure, and that the assessment reflects the intended learning outcomes and standards (Popham, 2014).
- b. Enhancing reliability: Validity can enhance the reliability of the assessment, as it ensures that the assessment results can be used to make appropriate and accurate inferences and decisions, and that the assessment results are free from errors or biases that may arise from the invalidity or inconsistency of the assessment (Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2001).

- c. Enhancing fairness: Validity can enhance the fairness of the assessment, as it ensures that the assessment is trustworthy, credible, and useful for the students and the teachers, and that the assessment does not disadvantage or discriminate any students or groups of students based on the invalidity or irrelevance of the assessment (Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2001).
- d. Enhancing transparency: Validity can enhance the transparency of the assessment, as it ensures that the assessment is clear, explicit, and understandable for the students and the teachers, and that the assessment communicates and supports the claims or arguments that are made about the students' learning or achievement (Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2001).
- e. Enhancing feedback: Validity can enhance the feedback of the assessment, as it ensures that the feedback is relevant, specific, and actionable for the students and the teachers, and that the feedback helps the students and the teachers make and support the claims or arguments about the students' learning or achievement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

There are various types and sources of validity in assessment, such as the content validity. Content validity is the extent to which the assessment covers the relevant and representative content of the domain or the construct that is being measured. Content validity is usually established by using expert judgment, curriculum analysis, or content analysis, to ensure that the assessment items or tasks are aligned with the learning objectives, content, and standards of the curriculum or the discipline (Popham, 2014).

Criterion validity is the extent to which the assessment results correlate with or predict other measures or outcomes that are related to the domain or the construct that is being measured. Criterion validity is usually established by using statistical techniques, such

as correlation, regression, or factor analysis, to examine the relationship between the assessment scores and the criterion measures or outcomes, such as other tests, grades, or performance indicators. Criterion validity can be classified into two types: concurrent validity and predictive validity. Concurrent validity is when the assessment and the criterion are measured at the same time or in the same context. Predictive validity is when the assessment is measured before the criterion, and the assessment is used to predict the future performance or outcome of the criterion (Pellegrino, Chudowsky & Glaser, 2001).

Construct validity is the extent to which the assessment measures the underlying theoretical or conceptual framework of the domain or the construct that is being measured. Construct validity is usually established by using multiple sources of evidence, such as content analysis, criterion analysis, factor analysis, or cognitive analysis, to examine the validity of the assumptions, hypotheses, or models that underlie the design and interpretation of the assessment. Construct validity is the most comprehensive and complex type of validity, as it encompasses and integrates the other types of validity, such as content validity and criterion validity, and it addresses the validity of the inferences and decisions that are made based on the assessment results (Pellegrino, Chudowsky & Glaser, 2001).

There are also other types and sources of validity in assessment, such as the consequential validity, the ecological validity, or the face validity. Consequential validity is the extent to which the assessment has positive or negative consequences or impacts on the students, the teachers, or the society, in terms of the learning, teaching, or policy outcomes. Ecological validity is the extent to which the assessment reflects the authentic and realistic conditions or contexts of the domain or the construct that is

being measured. Face validity is the extent to which the assessment appears to be valid or credible to the students, the teachers, or the stakeholders, based on their perceptions, opinions, or expectations (Popham, 2014).

Reliability

Reliability is the concept that refers to the degree to which the assessment produces consistent and stable results, and the extent to which the assessment results are free from errors or biases. Reliability ensures that the assessment is dependable, consistent, and accurate for the students and the teachers, and that it provides reliable information and feedback for learning and teaching (Pellegrino, Chudowsky & Glaser, 2001). Reliability is based on the theory of measurement error, which is the difference between the observed score and the true score of the student. The observed score is the score that the student obtains on the assessment, which is affected by various factors, such as the difficulty of the test items, the clarity of the instructions, the mood of the student, or the marking of the teacher. The true score is the hypothetical score that the student would obtain if the assessment was perfectly reliable and valid, and if there was no measurement error. The measurement error is the random or systematic variation that occurs in the assessment process, which reduces the accuracy and precision of the observed score (Popham, 2014).

Reliability can be estimated by using various methods and techniques, such as the test-retest method, the parallel-forms method, the internal-consistency method, or the inter-rater method. The test-retest method involves administering the same test to the same group of students at two different occasions, and calculating the correlation between the two sets of scores. The parallel-forms method involves administering two equivalent forms of the same test to the same group of students at the same occasion,

and calculating the correlation between the two sets of scores. The internal-consistency method involves analyzing the consistency of the responses to the individual items or tasks within the same test, and calculating the coefficient alpha or the split-half reliability. The inter-rater method involves comparing the consistency of the ratings or judgments of two or more raters or markers on the same test, and calculating the percentage agreement or the kappa coefficient (Popham, 2014).

Reliability can be influenced by various factors and conditions, such as the quality, length, and format of the test, the characteristics, skills, and attitudes of the students, the training, experience, and criteria of the raters, or the environment, time, and mode of the testing. Reliability can be improved by using various strategies and practices, such as increasing the number, variety, and difficulty of the test items, ensuring the clarity, validity, and alignment of the test instructions, objectives, and criteria, providing the students with adequate preparation, practice, and feedback, training and monitoring the raters or markers on the use of the rubrics or the standards, or controlling the physical, psychological, and technical aspects of the testing situation (Popham, 2014). Reliability can have various benefits and impacts on learning and assessment, including;

- i. Enhancing validity: Reliability can enhance the validity of the assessment, as it ensures that the assessment results can be used to make appropriate and accurate inferences and decisions, and that the assessment results are free from errors or biases that may arise from the invalidity or inconsistency of the assessment (Pellegrino, Chudowsky & Glaser, 2001).
- ii. Enhancing fairness: Reliability can enhance the fairness of the assessment, as it ensures that the assessment is equitable and consistent for the students and the teachers, and that the assessment does not disadvantage or discriminate any

students or groups of students based on the unreliability or variability of the assessment (Popham, 2014).

- iii. Enhancing transparency: Reliability can enhance the transparency of the assessment, as it ensures that the assessment is clear, explicit, and understandable for the students and the teachers, and that the assessment communicates and supports the reliability and accuracy of the assessment results (Popham, 2014).
- iv. Enhancing feedback: Reliability can enhance the feedback of the assessment, as it ensures that the feedback is relevant, specific, and actionable for the students and the teachers, and that the feedback helps the students and the teachers understand and improve their learning and performance based on the reliable and consistent assessment information (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Feedback

Feedback is the concept that refers to the information and communication that is provided to the students and the teachers about the current state of learning and the gap between the desired and the actual performance. Feedback is a key component of formative assessment, as it helps students and teachers identify and close the learning gap, and improve their learning strategies and outcomes (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Feedback is based on the theory of feedback loops, which is the process of using the feedback information to adjust and regulate the learning and teaching actions and outcomes. Feedback loops involve four stages: goal setting, action taking, feedback receiving, and feedback using. Goal setting is the stage where the students and the teachers establish the learning objectives, standards, and criteria that guide the learning and assessment process. Action taking is the stage where the students and the teachers

engage in the learning and assessment activities that generate the feedback information. Feedback receiving is the stage where the students and the teachers obtain the feedback information from various sources, such as the self, the peers, the teacher, or the technology. Feedback using is the stage where the students and the teachers use the feedback information to monitor, evaluate, and improve their learning and teaching actions and outcomes (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Feedback can have different sources, such as the self, the peers, the teacher, or the technology.

Self-feedback is the feedback that the students generate and receive from themselves, based on their own reflection and evaluation of their learning and performance. Self-feedback can help students develop their metacognitive and self-regulatory skills, such as planning, monitoring, and adjusting their learning goals and strategies. Self-feedback can also help students enhance their motivation and self-efficacy, as they recognize their strengths and weaknesses, and take responsibility for their own learning and improvement (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Peer feedback is the feedback that the students generate and receive from their peers, based on their observation and assessment of each other's learning and performance. Peer feedback can help students develop their social and collaborative skills, such as communication, cooperation, and negotiation. Peer feedback can also help students enhance their understanding and perspective, as they exchange and compare their ideas, opinions, and feedback with their peers (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

Teacher feedback is the feedback that the students receive from their teachers, based on their expertise and judgment of the students' learning and performance. Teacher feedback can help students develop their knowledge and skills, as they receive guidance and support from their teachers. Teacher feedback can also help students enhance their

confidence and interest, as they receive praise and recognition from their teachers (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Technology feedback is the feedback that the students receive from the technology, such as the computer, the internet, or the software, based on the programmed or automated analysis of the students' learning and performance. Technology feedback can help students develop their digital and information literacy, as they access and use various sources and forms of feedback from the technology. Technology feedback can also help students enhance their efficiency and flexibility, as they receive immediate and personalized feedback from the technology (Shute, 2008).

Feedback can have different modes, such as verbal, written, visual, or auditory. Verbal feedback is the feedback that is delivered orally, such as through speech, conversation, or dialogue. Written feedback is the feedback that is delivered in writing, such as through text, comments, or annotations. Visual feedback is the feedback that is delivered visually, such as through images, graphs, or symbols. Auditory feedback is the feedback that is delivered through sound, such as through music, tone, or voice (Shute, 2008). Feedback can have different levels, such as task, process, self-regulation, or self. Task feedback provides information about the correctness, quality, or completeness of the task or performance. Process feedback provides information about the strategies, methods, or processes used to complete the task or performance. Self-regulation feedback provides information about the monitoring, evaluation, and adjustment of the learning goals and processes. Self-feedback provides information about the personal attributes, feelings, or attitudes related to the task or performance (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Feedback can also have positive or negative effects on learning and assessment, depending on various factors, such as the quality, timing, frequency, clarity, specificity,

and relevance of the feedback, as well as the student's prior knowledge, motivation, self-efficacy, and emotions (Shute, 2008). Feedback can also be influenced by the teacher's beliefs, attitudes, skills, and practices, as well as the classroom culture, climate, and norms (Carless, 2015). Feedback can have various benefits and impacts on learning and assessment, some of these benefits are;

- a. **Improving student achievement:** Feedback can improve student achievement by providing timely and specific feedback that helps students identify and close the gap between their current and desired performance, and by providing support and guidance that helps students improve their learning strategies and outcomes (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).
- b. **Enhancing student motivation:** Feedback can enhance student motivation by providing clear and achievable learning goals and criteria, by providing positive and constructive feedback that recognizes students' efforts and progress, and by providing opportunities and choices that promote students' autonomy and interest in learning (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).
- c. **Developing student self-regulation:** Feedback can develop student self-regulation by providing information and feedback that helps students plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning, and by providing opportunities and scaffolds that help students reflect on and adjust their learning goals and processes (Zimmerman, 2002).
- d. **Informing instructional decisions:** Feedback can inform instructional decisions by providing information and feedback that helps teachers understand the strengths and needs of their students, and by providing evidence and data that helps teachers adjust their teaching strategies and practices to meet the diverse learning needs of their students (Black & Wiliam, 2018).

- e. Enhancing instructional quality: Feedback can enhance instructional quality by providing information and feedback that helps teachers align their teaching objectives, content, methods, and assessment with the curriculum standards and expectations, and by providing opportunities and resources that help teachers engage in professional learning and collaboration to improve their teaching skills and knowledge (Stiggins, 2005).

There are various methods and tools for providing and using feedback in assessment, eg the feedback sandwich, the feedback matrix, the feedback cycle, or the feedback literacy. These methods and tools help the students and the teachers to generate, share, or receive feedback that is effective and meaningful for learning and teaching, and to use feedback that is relevant, specific, and actionable for improvement and enhancement (Carless & Boud, 2018).

Student involvement

Student involvement is the concept that refers to the degree to which the students are engaged and involved in the assessment process, and the extent to which they have a voice and a choice in their own learning and assessment. Student involvement is an essential element of formative assessment, as it promotes students' motivation, self-regulation, and metacognition, and enhances their learning and achievement (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Student involvement is based on the theory of student-centered learning, which is the approach to learning and teaching that places the students at the centre of the educational process, and that empowers the students to take an active and responsible role in their own learning and assessment. Student-centered learning is based on the principles of constructivism, which views learning as an active and social process of constructing meaning and knowledge from experience and

interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). Student-centered learning also draws on the principles of self-determination, which views learning as a process of fulfilling the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

According to Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006), student involvement involves three aspects: student engagement, student empowerment, and student ownership. Student engagement is the extent to which the students are interested, attentive, and committed to their learning and assessment. Student empowerment is the extent to which the students have control, choice, and influence over their learning and assessment. Student ownership is the extent to which the students have responsibility, accountability, and pride for their learning and assessment. The key idea of student involvement is that the students are not passive or dependent recipients of the assessment, but rather active or independent participants of the assessment, and that they share the assessment goals, criteria, and feedback with the teachers and the peers (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

Student involvement can be achieved and enhanced by using various methods and strategies, such as self-assessment, peer assessment, co-assessment, or student-led assessment. Self-assessment is the method where the students generate and receive feedback from themselves, based on their own reflection and evaluation of their learning and performance. Peer assessment is the method where the students generate and receive feedback from their peers, based on their observation and assessment of each other's learning and performance. Co-assessment is the method where the students and the teachers generate and share feedback with each other, based on their mutual understanding and agreement of the learning and assessment. Student-led assessment is the method where the students design and implement their own assessment, based on their own learning objectives, content, methods, and criteria (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick,

2006). Student involvement can have various benefits and impacts on learning and assessment, like;

- i. Improving student achievement: Student involvement can improve student achievement by providing timely and specific feedback that helps students identify and close the gap between their current and desired performance, and by providing support and guidance that helps students improve their learning strategies and outcomes (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).
- ii. Enhancing student motivation: Student involvement can enhance student motivation by providing clear and achievable learning goals and criteria, by providing positive and constructive feedback that recognizes students' efforts and progress, and by providing opportunities and choices that promote students' autonomy and interest in learning (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).
- iii. Developing student self-regulation: Student involvement can develop student self-regulation by providing information and feedback that helps students plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning, and by providing opportunities and scaffolds that help students reflect on and adjust their learning goals and processes (Zimmerman, 2002).
- iv. Informing instructional decisions: Student involvement can inform instructional decisions by providing information and feedback that helps teachers understand the strengths and needs of their students, and by providing evidence and data that helps teachers adjust their teaching strategies and practices to meet the diverse learning needs of their students (Black & Wiliam, 2018).
- v. Enhancing instructional quality: Student involvement can enhance instructional quality by providing information and feedback that helps teachers align their teaching objectives, content, methods, and assessment with the curriculum

standards and expectations, and by providing opportunities and resources that help teachers engage in professional learning and collaboration to improve their teaching skills and knowledge (Stiggins, 2005).

There are various methods and tools for achieving and enhancing student involvement in assessment, such as the student-generated questions, the student-generated rubrics, the student-generated portfolios, or the student-generated conferences. These methods and tools help the students and the teachers to engage and collaborate in the assessment process, and to share the assessment goals, criteria, and feedback with each other (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Student-generated questions are the questions that the students create and answer themselves, based on their own learning objectives, content, and interests. Student-generated questions can help students develop their inquiry and critical thinking skills, as they generate, classify, and prioritize their own questions. Student-generated questions can also help students enhance their understanding and retention, as they answer, explain, and justify their own questions (Chin & Osborne, 2008).

Student-generated rubrics are the rubrics that the students create and use themselves, based on their own learning objectives, content, and standards. Student-generated rubrics can help students develop their evaluative and metacognitive skills, as they define, describe, and apply their own criteria and levels of performance. Student-generated rubrics can also help students enhance their motivation and self-efficacy, as they set, monitor, and achieve their own learning goals and standards (Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009). Student-generated portfolios are the portfolios that the students create and present themselves, based on their own learning objectives, content, and products. Student-generated portfolios can help students develop their creative and

reflective skills, as they select, organize, and showcase their own work and achievements. Student-generated portfolios can also help students enhance their confidence and pride, as they demonstrate, share, and celebrate their own learning and growth (Barrett, 2011). Student-generated conferences are the conferences that the students lead and facilitate themselves, based on their own learning objectives, content, and feedback. Student-generated conferences can help students develop their communication and collaboration skills, as they prepare, conduct, and follow up their own conferences with their teachers, peers, or parents. Student-generated conferences can also help students enhance their responsibility and accountability, as they report, discuss, and act on their own learning and feedback (Benson & Barnett, 2005).

2.3 Formative Assessment Practices in Social Studies Education

There are many formative assessment strategies that can be used in Social Studies classrooms, depending on the purpose, content, and context of the instruction. Some of the common strategies are Questioning, Peer assessment, and Exit tickets.

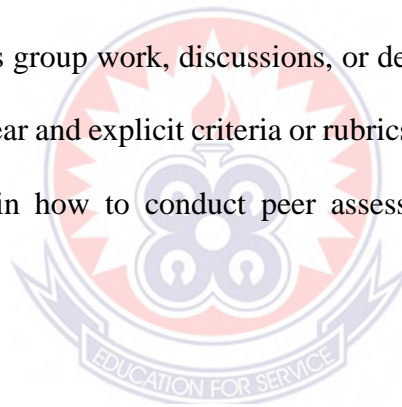
Questioning

Questioning is one of the most widely used formative assessment strategies in Social Studies classrooms. It involves asking students questions that elicit their prior knowledge, understanding, opinions, and reasoning about Social Studies topics and issues. Questioning can be used to activate students' background knowledge, check for comprehension, probe for deeper understanding, stimulate discussion, and promote reflection. Questioning can also be used to scaffold students' learning and guide them to the desired learning outcomes. Effective questioning requires teachers to use a variety of question types, such as factual, interpretive, evaluative, and analytical

questions, and to provide adequate wait time and feedback to students' responses (Tovani, 2011).

Peer assessment

Peer assessment is another formative assessment strategy that involves students evaluating the work or performance of their peers based on certain criteria or standards. Peer assessment can help students develop skills in assessing and providing feedback to others, as well as in self-assessing and improving their own work. Peer assessment can also promote a culture of learning that encourages students to collaborate, communicate, and learn from each other. Peer assessment can be used in Social Studies classrooms to assess students' products, such as essays, projects, or presentations, or their processes, such as group work, discussions, or debates. Peer assessment requires teachers to establish clear and explicit criteria or rubrics for the assessment, and to train and support students in how to conduct peer assessment effectively and ethically (Topping, 2009).



Exit tickets

Exit tickets are short and quick formative assessment tasks that students complete at the end of a lesson or a class session. They are used to collect information about what students have learned, what they still need to learn, and what they think about the lesson. Exit tickets can help teachers monitor students' progress, identify gaps or misconceptions, and plan for the next steps of instruction. Exit tickets can also help students reflect on their learning and think critically about Social Studies topics and issues. Exit tickets can take various forms, such as prompts, questions, surveys, or self-assessments, and can be done on paper, index cards, or digital tools (Fisher & Frey, 2015).

2.3.1 Questioning strategies in Social Studies Education

Questioning is a key formative assessment technique that can be used throughout the inquiry process in Social Studies education. Questioning can help teachers and students generate, explore, and answer compelling and supporting questions that drive the inquiry. Questioning can also help teachers and students evaluate and use evidence, and communicate and take action based on the inquiry. According to the IDM, there are three types of questions that are essential for inquiry in Social Studies: compelling questions, supporting questions, and additional questions (Grant et al., 2017).

- a. Compelling questions are open-ended, engaging, and arguable questions that spark students' curiosity and interest in Social Studies topics and issues. They are the main questions that guide the inquiry and require students to construct arguments based on evidence and reasoning. For example, a compelling question for an inquiry on the Black Death is: "Can disease change the world?" (Grant et al., 2017, p. 79).
- b. Supporting questions are more specific and content-based questions that help students answer the compelling question. They are the sub-questions that guide the inquiry and require students to acquire and analyze information from various sources. For example, some supporting questions for the inquiry on the Black Death are: "What was the Black Death?" and "How did the Black Death affect people in the 14th century?" (Grant et al., 2017, p. 79).
- c. Additional questions are questions that students generate and pursue during the inquiry. They are the questions that extend the inquiry and require students to explore further aspects or perspectives of the topic or issue. For example, some additional questions for the inquiry on the Black Death are: "How did the Black

Death affect other regions of the world?” and “How does disease affect the world today?” (Grant et al., 2017, p. 79).

Questioning strategies can be used in different stages of the inquiry process in Social Studies education, such as;

- a. Staging the question: This is the stage where teachers introduce the compelling question to students and elicit their prior knowledge, interest, and curiosity about the topic or issue. Teachers can use questioning strategies such as brainstorming, KWL charts, anticipation guides, or concept maps to activate students' background knowledge and generate initial ideas or hypotheses about the compelling question (Grant et al., 2017).
- b. Supporting the question: This is the stage where teachers and students explore the supporting questions and gather and analyse information from various sources. Teachers can use questioning strategies such as guided reading, graphic organizers, source analysis, or document-based questions to help students acquire and interpret information from texts, maps, images, videos, or other sources. Teachers can also use questioning strategies such as think-pair-share, fishbowl, or Socratic seminar to help students discuss and compare their findings and perspectives with their peers (Grant et al., 2017).
- c. Evaluating the question: This is the stage where teachers and students evaluate the evidence and construct arguments to answer the compelling question. Teachers can use questioning strategies such as claim-evidence-reasoning, argument outline, or argument writing to help students organize and communicate their arguments based on evidence and reasoning. Teachers can also use questioning strategies such as peer feedback, rubrics, or self-assessment

to help students revise and improve their arguments based on the criteria or standards (Grant et al., 2017).

- d. Taking informed action: This is the stage where teachers and students apply their learning to take action on the topic or issue. Teachers can use questioning strategies such as problem-solving, decision-making, or action planning to help students identify and address a problem or issue related to the compelling question. Teachers can also use questioning strategies such as reflection, portfolio, or presentation to help students share and evaluate their actions and learning outcomes (Grant et al., 2017).

2.3.2 Peer assessment in Social Studies Education

Peer assessment is another formative assessment technique that can be used in Social Studies education to enhance students' learning and collaboration. Peer assessment can help students develop skills in assessing and providing feedback to others, as well as in self-assessing and improving their own work. Peer assessment can also promote a culture of learning that encourages students to collaborate, communicate, and learn from each other. Peer assessment can be used in different contexts and purposes in Social Studies education, like;

- a. Assessing products: Peer assessment can be used to assess students' products, such as essays, projects, or presentations, that demonstrate their learning and understanding of Social Studies topics and issues. For example, in the inquiry on the Black Death, students can peer assess each other's argumentative essays that answer the compelling question, using a rubric or a checklist that specifies the criteria or standards for the assessment. Peer assessment can help students improve the quality of their products, as well as receive and give constructive feedback to their peers (Topping, 2009).

- b. Assessing processes: Peer assessment can be used to assess students' processes, such as group work, discussions, or debates, that involve their participation and collaboration in Social Studies activities. For example, in the inquiry on the Black Death, students can peer assess each other's participation and contribution in the Socratic seminar that explores the supporting questions, using a rating scale or a feedback form that specifies the criteria or standards for the assessment. Peer assessment can help students improve their skills and behaviours, as well as monitor and support their peers' learning (Topping, 2009).
- c. Assessing learning: Peer assessment can be used to assess students' learning, such as knowledge, understanding, or skills, that relate to the Social Studies objectives and outcomes. For example, in the inquiry on the Black Death, students can peer assess each other's knowledge and understanding of the topic and issue, using a quiz or a test that includes multiple-choice, short-answer, or essay questions. Peer assessment can help students review and consolidate their learning, as well as identify and address their gaps or misconceptions (Topping, 2009).

Peer assessment requires teachers to establish clear and explicit criteria or standards for the assessment, and to train and support students in how to conduct peer assessment effectively and ethically (Topping, 2009). Teachers need to explain the purpose and benefits of peer assessment, and to model and demonstrate how to assess and provide feedback to others. Teachers also need to monitor and moderate the peer assessment process, and to provide feedback and guidance to students as needed. Teachers need to ensure that peer assessment is fair, valid, reliable, and respectful, and that it does not cause any harm or conflict among students. Teachers also need to encourage students

to use the peer feedback to improve their own work, and to reflect on their learning and assessment skills (Topping, 2009).

2.3.3 Framing formative assessment practices within the broader setting of Social Studies Education and its objectives

Formative assessment practices, such as questioning and peer assessment, are not isolated or independent activities, but rather integral parts of the Social Studies education and its objectives. Formative assessment practices need to be aligned with and informed by the curriculum, standards, and goals of Social Studies education, as well as the needs and interests of the students and the society. Formative assessment practices need to support and enhance the inquiry-based, problem-solving, and civic-oriented nature of Social Studies education, and to promote the development of students' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values related to Social Studies topics and issues. According to the C3 framework, the main objectives of Social Studies education are to prepare students for college, career, and civic life, by developing their capacities in four dimensions: (1) developing questions and planning inquiries, (2) applying disciplinary concepts and tools, (3) evaluating sources and using evidence, and (4) communicating conclusions and taking informed action (NCSS, 2013). Formative assessment practices can help students achieve these objectives by providing them with opportunities to;

- i. **Develop questions and plan inquiries:** Formative assessment practices can help students generate, explore, and answer compelling and supporting questions that drive the inquiry and require them to construct arguments based on evidence and reasoning. Formative assessment practices can also help students plan and design their inquiries, and to identify and select appropriate sources, methods, and tools for their inquiries.

- ii. Apply disciplinary concepts and tools: Formative assessment practices can help students acquire and apply the concepts and tools of the Social Studies disciplines, such as history, geography, economics, and civics. Formative assessment practices can also help students integrate and synthesize the concepts and tools across the disciplines, and to understand the connections and interrelationships among them.
- iii. Evaluate sources and use evidence: Formative assessment practices can help students gather and analyze information from various sources, such as texts, maps, images, videos, or other sources. Formative assessment practices can also help students evaluate the credibility, reliability, and validity of the sources, and to use the information as evidence to support their arguments and conclusions.
- iv. Communicate conclusions and take informed action: Formative assessment practices can help students organize and communicate their conclusions and arguments based on evidence and reasoning, using various modes and formats, such as essays, projects, or presentations. Formative assessment practices can also help students apply their learning to take action on the topic or issue, and to reflect on and evaluate their actions and learning outcomes.

2.4 Teacher Practices and Perspectives

Teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions regarding formative assessment are the cognitive and affective constructs that reflect their understanding, values, and feelings about formative assessment. Teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions can be shaped by various sources, such as their personal experiences, professional training, school culture, and educational policies (Pajares, 1992). Several studies have explored Social Studies teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions regarding formative assessment, using different methods and instruments, such as surveys, interviews, observations, or

document analysis. For example, Adam et al. (2016) used the Formative Assessment Classroom Observation and Lesson Planning Tool (FACOLPT) to collect data from six senior high school Social Studies teachers in Ghana. They found that the teachers had misconceptions and negative attitudes towards formative assessment, and they mainly used traditional assessment techniques, such as quizzes, tests, and assignments. They also found that the teachers did not provide adequate feedback to their students, and they did not involve them in the assessment process.

Similarly, Bordoh (2023) conducted a case study of formative assessment practices in Social Studies instructions at Holy Child College of Education in Ghana. He found that the teacher-trainees had limited knowledge and skills in formative assessment, and they mainly used traditional assessment techniques, such as quizzes, tests, and assignments. He also found that the teacher-trainees did not provide adequate feedback to their students, and they did not involve them in the assessment process. These studies indicate that there is a gap between the theory and practice of formative assessment in Social Studies education, and that teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions are not in congruence with the contemporary established practices. However, these studies are limited in scope and context, and they do not provide a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the factors that influence teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions regarding formative assessment.

Moreover, teachers' adoption and implementation of formative assessment techniques are the behavioural outcomes that reflect their decisions and actions regarding formative assessment. Teachers' adoption and implementation of formative assessment techniques can be influenced by various factors, such as their beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions, as well as their knowledge, skills, motivation, and confidence. Moreover,

teachers' adoption and implementation of formative assessment techniques can also be influenced by external factors, such as the curriculum, standards, policies, resources, support, and culture of the school and the educational system (Borg, 2015).

Several studies have examined the factors that influence teachers' adoption and implementation of formative assessment techniques, using different methods and instruments, such as surveys, interviews, observations, or experiments. For example, Yan et al. (2021) conducted a systematic review of 52 studies on factors influencing teachers' intentions and implementations regarding formative assessment. They identified four main categories of factors: personal, contextual, resource-related, and external factors. They found that personal factors, such as teachers' beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, knowledge, skills, motivation, and confidence, had the most significant and consistent influence on teachers' intentions and implementations regarding formative assessment. They also found that contextual factors, such as the curriculum, standards, policies, and culture of the school and the educational system, had a moderate and mixed influence on teachers' intentions and implementations regarding formative assessment. They also found that resource-related factors, such as the availability and quality of materials, tools, and time, had a minor and variable influence on teachers' intentions and implementations regarding formative assessment. They also found that external factors, such as the support and feedback from colleagues, leaders, and experts, had a positive and facilitative influence on teachers' intentions and implementations regarding formative assessment (Bordoh, 2023).

Similarly, Enu (2021) conducted a qualitative case study of the factors that affect mathematics teacher educators' formative assessment practices in Ghana. He used semi-structured interviews and lesson observations to collect data from six educators

teaching mathematics in three teacher colleges of education. He found that the major factors that limit teacher educators' formative assessment practices were: large class size, time, lack of transparency in assessment, and internal and external summative assessment issues. These studies indicate that there are multiple and complex factors that influence teachers' adoption and implementation of formative assessment techniques, and that these factors can have different and dynamic effects on teachers' behaviours. However, these studies are not specific to Social Studies education, and they do not provide a comparative and comprehensive analysis of the factors that influence teachers' adoption and implementation of formative assessment techniques in different regions of Ghana.

2.4.1 Understanding the interplay between teacher beliefs, instructional practices, and assessment approaches

Teacher beliefs, instructional practices, and assessment approaches are the interrelated components that constitute the teacher cognition system. Teacher beliefs are the cognitive and affective constructs that reflect teachers' understanding, values, and feelings about teaching and learning. Instructional practices are the behavioural outcomes that reflect teachers' decisions and actions regarding teaching and learning. Assessment approaches are the methods and techniques that teachers use to collect and use evidence of student learning to inform and adjust instruction and feedback. Teacher beliefs, instructional practices, and assessment approaches can influence and be influenced by each other, forming a dynamic and reciprocal relationship (Borg, 2015).

Several studies have explored the interplay between teacher beliefs, instructional practices, and assessment approaches, using different methods and instruments, such as surveys, interviews, observations, or document analysis. For example, Brown (2004)

conducted a mixed-methods study of the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices in reading assessment. He used a questionnaire, a classroom observation protocol, and a semi-structured interview to collect data from 30 elementary school teachers in the United States. He found that there was a moderate correlation between teachers' beliefs and practices in reading assessment, and that teachers' beliefs were more consistent with their reported practices than with their observed practices. He also found that teachers' beliefs and practices were influenced by various factors, such as their personal experiences, professional development, school context, and student characteristics.

Similarly, Yan and Brown (2017) conducted a mixed-methods study of the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices in writing assessment. They used a questionnaire, a classroom observation protocol, and a semi-structured interview to collect data from 30 secondary school teachers in Hong Kong. They found that there was a weak correlation between teachers' beliefs and practices in writing assessment, and that teachers' beliefs were more consistent with their reported practices than with their observed practices. They also found that teachers' beliefs and practices were influenced by various factors, such as their knowledge, skills, motivation, confidence, curriculum, standards, policies, resources, support, and culture. These studies indicate that there is a complex and dynamic interplay between teacher beliefs, instructional practices, and assessment approaches, and that this interplay is mediated by various factors. However, these studies are not specific to Social Studies education, and they do not provide a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the interplay between teacher beliefs, instructional practices, and assessment approaches in Social Studies education.

2.5 Challenges and Constraints in Implementing Effective Formative Assessment Techniques

There are many challenges that teachers face in implementing effective formative assessment techniques in Social Studies classrooms, regardless of the context and purpose of the instruction. Some of the common challenges are;

- a. **Lack of knowledge and skills:** Many teachers lack the knowledge and skills in formative assessment, such as how to design, implement, and use various formative assessment techniques, how to provide effective feedback, and how to involve students in the assessment process (Adam et al., 2016; Awuah, 2022). This may be due to the lack of adequate pre-service and in-service training, or the lack of exposure to contemporary and research-based practices in formative assessment (Awuah, 2022; Yan et al., 2021).
- b. **Misconceptions and negative attitudes:** Many teachers have misconceptions and negative attitudes towards formative assessment, such as viewing it as an extra burden, a distraction, or a threat to their authority and autonomy (Adam et al., 2016; Awuah, 2022; Yan et al., 2021). This may be due to the lack of understanding of the concept and benefits of formative assessment, or the lack of alignment between their beliefs and practices in teaching and learning (Adam et al., 2016; Yan et al., 2021).
- c. **Pressure from accountability and high-stakes testing:** Many teachers face pressure from accountability and high-stakes testing systems, which may create a focus on summative assessment and test scores, rather than on formative assessment and student learning (Adam et al., 2016; Awuah, 2022; Yan et al., 2021). This may be due to the lack of balance and coherence between the curriculum, standards, policies, and assessment systems, or the lack of trust and

support from the stakeholders and the public (Adam et al., 2016; Awuah, 2022; Yan et al., 2021).

- d. Large class size and limited time: Many teachers have to deal with large class sizes and limited instructional time, which may limit their opportunities and capacities to implement formative assessment techniques, such as questioning, peer assessment, or feedback (Yan et al., 2021). This may be due to the lack of resources, infrastructure, and planning, or the lack of flexibility and differentiation in the curriculum and instruction (Awuah, 2022).

In addition to the common challenges that are faced by teachers in implementing effective formative assessment techniques in Social Studies classrooms, there are also some challenges that are specific to the context of Ghana. Some of these challenges are;

- a. Lack of transparency and consistency in assessment: Many teachers lack transparency and consistency in their assessment practices, such as how they design, implement, and use formative assessment techniques, how they provide feedback, and how they involve students in the assessment process (Adam et al., 2016; Awuah, 2022). This may be due to the lack of clear and explicit criteria or standards for the assessment, or the lack of monitoring and moderation of the assessment process (Awuah, 2022).
- b. Lack of instructional materials and tools: Many teachers lack instructional materials and tools that can support their formative assessment practices, such as texts, maps, images, videos, or other sources, or digital tools, such as computers, internet, or software (Adam et al., 2016). This may be due to the lack of availability and quality of the materials and tools, or the lack of access and affordability of the materials and tools (Adam et al., 2016; Awuah, 2022).

- c. Lack of alignment and integration of formative assessment with the curriculum and instruction: Many teachers lack alignment and integration of formative assessment with the curriculum and instruction, such as how they link formative assessment techniques with the learning objectives, content, and activities, or how they use formative assessment evidence to inform and adjust their instruction and feedback (Adam et al., 2016; Awuah, 2022). This may be due to the lack of coherence and relevance of the curriculum and instruction, or the lack of flexibility and differentiation of the curriculum and instruction (Adam et al., 2016; Awuah, 2022).

2.5.1 Implications of these challenges and constraints on the quality of formative assessment practices

The challenges and constraints that teachers face in implementing effective formative assessment techniques in Social Studies classrooms can have negative implications on the quality of formative assessment practices. The quality of formative assessment practices can be measured by the extent to which they meet the criteria or standards of formative assessment, such as validity, reliability, fairness, usefulness, and impact (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010; Wiliam, 2011). The challenges and constraints that teachers face can affect the quality of formative assessment practices in the following ways:

Validity: The validity of formative assessment practices refers to the extent to which they measure what they intend to measure, and provide accurate and meaningful information about student learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010; Wiliam, 2011). The challenges and constraints that teachers face can affect the validity of formative assessment practices in the following ways:

- a. If teachers lack knowledge and skills in formative assessment, they may not be able to design, implement, and use various formative assessment techniques that are aligned with the learning objectives, content, and activities of Social Studies education. They may also not be able to provide effective feedback that is based on evidence and reasoning, and that moves learners forward. This may result in formative assessment practices that are irrelevant, inaccurate, or misleading, and that do not reflect or enhance student learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010; Wiliam, 2011).
- b. If teachers have misconceptions and negative attitudes towards formative assessment, they may not be willing or able to implement or use various formative assessment techniques that are appropriate and effective for Social Studies education. They may also not be willing or able to involve students in the assessment process, and to value and use their input and feedback. This may result in formative assessment practices that are superficial, biased, or inconsistent, and that do not respect or engage student learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010; Wiliam, 2011).
- c. If teachers face pressure from accountability and high-stakes testing, they may focus more on summative assessment and test scores, rather than on formative assessment and student learning. They may also use formative assessment techniques that are more aligned with the test format and content, rather than with the inquiry-based, problem-solving, and civic-oriented nature of Social Studies education. This may result in formative assessment practices that are narrow, rigid, or distorted, and that do not support or enhance student learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010; Wiliam, 2011).

- d. If teachers have to deal with large class sizes and limited instructional time, they may not have enough opportunities and capacities to implement or use various formative assessment techniques that are frequent and consistent, and that provide timely and constructive feedback. They may also not have enough opportunities and capacities to differentiate and personalize their formative assessment practices, and to address the diverse needs and interests of their students. This may result in formative assessment practices that are insufficient, delayed, or generic, and that do not meet or respond to student learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010; Wiliam, 2011).

Reliability: The reliability of formative assessment practices refers to the extent to which they produce consistent and dependable results, and provide comparable and fair information about student learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010; Wiliam, 2011). The challenges and constraints that teachers face can affect the reliability of formative assessment practices in the following ways;

- a. If teachers lack transparency and consistency in their assessment practices, they may not be able to design, implement, and use various formative assessment techniques that are clear and explicit, and that follow the same criteria or standards for the assessment. They may also not be able to monitor and moderate the assessment process, and to ensure that the assessment is conducted and used in the same way for all students. This may result in formative assessment practices that are vague, ambiguous, or variable, and that do not provide comparable and fair information about student learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010; Wiliam, 2011).
- b. If teachers lack instructional materials and tools that can support their formative assessment practices, they may not be able to design, implement, and use

various formative assessment techniques that are appropriate and effective for Social Studies education. They may also not be able to use various sources, methods, and tools to collect and use evidence of student learning, and to provide feedback to students. This may result in formative assessment practices that are inadequate, inappropriate, or ineffective, and that do not provide consistent and dependable results about student learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010; Wiliam, 2011).

- c. If teachers lack alignment and integration of formative assessment with the curriculum and instruction, they may not be able to design, implement, and use various formative assessment techniques that are coherent and relevant, and that support and enhance the curriculum and instruction of Social Studies education. They may also not be able to use formative assessment evidence to inform and adjust their instruction and feedback, and to improve their teaching and learning. This may result in formative assessment practices that are disconnected, irrelevant, or contradictory, and that do not produce consistent and dependable results about student learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010; Wiliam, 2011).

Fairness: The fairness of formative assessment practices refers to the extent to which they respect and value the diversity and individuality of students, and provide equitable and inclusive information about student learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010; Wiliam, 2011). The challenges and constraints that teachers face can affect the fairness of formative assessment practices in the following ways;

- a. If teachers have misconceptions and negative attitudes towards formative assessment, they may not be willing or able to respect and value the diversity and individuality of students, and to provide equitable and inclusive information

about student learning. They may also not be willing or able to involve students in the assessment process, and to value and use their input and feedback. This may result in formative assessment practices that are disrespectful, biased, or exclusive, and that do not respect or value student learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010; Wiliam, 2011).

- b. If teachers face pressure from accountability and high-stakes testing, they may focus more on summative assessment and test scores, rather than on formative assessment and student learning. They may also use formative assessment techniques that are more aligned with the test format and content, rather than with the inquiry-based, problem-solving, and civic-oriented nature of Social Studies education. This may result in formative assessment practices that are narrow, rigid, or distorted, and that do not respect and value the diversity and individuality of students, and provide equitable and inclusive information about student learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010; Wiliam, 2011).
- c. If teachers have to deal with large class sizes and limited instructional time, they may not have enough opportunities and capacities to differentiate and personalize their formative assessment practices, and to address the diverse needs and interests of their students. They may also not have enough opportunities and capacities to provide timely and constructive feedback to each student, and to support their learning and progress. This may result in formative assessment practices that are insufficient, delayed, or generic, and that do not respect and value the diversity and individuality of students, and provide equitable and inclusive information about student learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010; Wiliam, 2011).

Usefulness: The usefulness of formative assessment practices refers to the extent to which they provide relevant and actionable information about student learning, and support and enhance teaching and learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010; Wiliam, 2011). The challenges and constraints that teachers face can affect the usefulness of formative assessment practices in the following ways;

- a. If teachers lack knowledge and skills in formative assessment, they may not be able to design, implement, and use various formative assessment techniques that provide relevant and actionable information about student learning, and support and enhance teaching and learning. They may also not be able to provide effective feedback that is based on evidence and reasoning, and that moves learners forward. This may result in formative assessment practices that are irrelevant, inaccurate, or misleading, and that do not support or enhance teaching and learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010; Wiliam, 2011).
- b. If teachers have misconceptions and negative attitudes towards formative assessment, they may not be willing or able to use formative assessment techniques that provide relevant and actionable information about student learning, and support and enhance teaching and learning. They may also not be willing or able to use formative assessment evidence to inform and adjust their instruction and feedback, and to improve their teaching and learning. This may result in formative assessment practices that are superficial, biased, or inconsistent, and that do not support or enhance teaching and learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010; Wiliam, 2011).
- c. If teachers face pressure from accountability and high-stakes testing, they may focus more on summative assessment and test scores, rather than on formative assessment and student learning. They may also use formative assessment

techniques that are more aligned with the test format and content, rather than with the inquiry-based, problem-solving, and civic-oriented nature of Social Studies education. This may result in formative assessment practices that are narrow, rigid, or distorted, and that do not provide relevant and actionable information about student learning, and support and enhance teaching and learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010; Wiliam, 2011).

- d. If teachers have to deal with large class sizes and limited instructional time, they may not have enough opportunities and capacities to use formative assessment techniques that provide relevant and actionable information about student learning, and support and enhance teaching and learning. They may also not have enough opportunities and capacities to use formative assessment evidence to inform and adjust their instruction and feedback, and to support their students' learning and progress. This may result in formative assessment practices that are insufficient, delayed, or generic, and that do not provide relevant and actionable information about student learning, and support and enhance teaching and learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010; Wiliam, 2011).

Impact: The impact of formative assessment practices refers to the extent to which they affect student learning, motivation, and achievement, and overall educational quality (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010; Wiliam, 2011). The challenges and constraints that teachers face can affect the impact of formative assessment practices in the following ways;

- a. If teachers lack knowledge and skills in formative assessment, they may not be able to design, implement, and use various formative assessment techniques that affect student learning, motivation, and achievement, and

overall educational quality. They may also not be able to provide effective feedback that is based on evidence and reasoning, and that moves learners forward. This may result in formative assessment practices that have little or no impact on student learning, motivation, and achievement, and overall educational quality (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010; Wiliam, 2011).

- b. If teachers have misconceptions and negative attitudes towards formative assessment, they may not be willing or able to use formative assessment techniques that affect student learning, motivation, and achievement, and overall educational quality. They may also not be willing or able to use formative assessment evidence to inform and adjust their instruction and feedback, and to improve their teaching and learning. This may result in formative assessment practices that have little or no impact on student learning, motivation, and achievement, and overall educational quality (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010; Wiliam, 2011).
- c. If teachers face pressure from accountability and high-stakes testing, they may focus more on summative assessment and test scores, rather than on formative assessment and student learning. They may also use formative assessment techniques that are more aligned with the test format and content, rather than with the inquiry-based, problem-solving, and civic-oriented nature of Social Studies education. This may result in formative assessment practices that have negative or detrimental impact on student learning, motivation, and achievement, and overall educational quality (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010; Wiliam, 2011).
- d. If teachers have to deal with large class sizes and limited instructional time, they may not have enough opportunities and capacities to use formative

assessment techniques that affect student learning, motivation, and achievement, and overall educational quality. They may also not have enough opportunities and capacities to use formative assessment evidence to inform and adjust their instruction and feedback, and to support their students' learning and progress. This may result in formative assessment practices that have minimal or marginal impact on student learning, motivation, and achievement, and overall educational quality (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010; Wiliam, 2011).

2.6 Policy Implications

Several studies have examined the impact of formative assessment on student learning outcomes, using various methods, instruments, and indicators. A meta-analysis by Kingston and Nash (2011) synthesized 40 studies that compared the effects of formative assessment with those of no formative assessment or other types of assessment on student achievement in different subjects and grade levels. They found that formative assessment had a positive and significant effect on student achievement, with an average effect size of 0.20. They also found that the effect size varied by subject, grade level, type of formative assessment, and type of outcome measure. Specifically, they found that formative assessment had larger effects on mathematics and science achievement than on reading and writing achievement, larger effects on elementary and middle school students than on high school and college students, larger effects when formative assessment was directed by teachers or peers than by students themselves, and larger effects on standardized tests than on classroom tests.

Another meta-analysis by Hattie and Timperley (2007) synthesized 12 meta-analyses that examined the effects of feedback, a key component of formative assessment, on student learning outcomes in different subjects and grade levels. They found that feedback had a positive and significant effect on student learning outcomes, with an average effect size of 0.79. They also found that the effect size varied by the type, level, timing, and quality of feedback, as well as by the characteristics of the learners and the tasks. Specifically, they found that feedback was more effective when it was specific, focused, timely, and actionable, when it addressed the task, the process, and the self-regulation of learning, when it was given during or after the task, and when it was consistent and supportive. They also found that feedback was more effective for low-achieving students, for complex and challenging tasks, and for tasks that involved cognitive and metacognitive skills.

These meta-analyses indicate that formative assessment and feedback can have a significant and positive impact on student learning outcomes, especially in mathematics and science, and for elementary and middle school students. However, they also indicate that the impact of formative assessment and feedback depends on various factors, such as the subject, grade level, type, level, timing, and quality of formative assessment and feedback, and the characteristics of the learners and the tasks. Therefore, it is important to consider these factors when designing, implementing, and using formative assessment and feedback in social studies education. Formative assessment can also influence educational quality in the context of social studies education, by affecting the curriculum, instruction, assessment, and environment of social studies education. Social studies education aims to develop students' critical thinking, civic competence, and global awareness, by engaging them in inquiry-based, problem-solving, and civic-oriented learning activities (NCSS, 2013). Formative

assessment can support and enhance learning activities by providing relevant and actionable information about student learning, thereby supporting and enhancing teaching and learning. Some ways that formative assessment can influence educational quality in Social Studies education include:

- **Curriculum:** Formative assessment helps align and integrate the social studies curriculum by ensuring that learning objectives, content, and activities are coherent and relevant, supporting and enhancing student learning outcomes. It also helps differentiate and personalize the curriculum by addressing diverse student needs and interests and providing appropriate and effective learning opportunities (Black & Wiliam, 1998).
- **Instruction:** Formative assessment informs and adjusts instruction by providing timely and constructive feedback to teachers and students, enabling them to use evidence to improve their teaching and learning. It supports instruction by engaging students in inquiry-based, problem-solving, and civic-oriented learning activities, providing scaffolding, guidance, and support (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).
- **Assessment:** Formative assessment balances and complements social studies assessment by providing frequent and consistent information about student learning through various methods and techniques. It improves and refines assessment by ensuring validity, reliability, fairness, usefulness, and impact, involving students in the assessment process (Shepard, 2000).
- **Environment:** Formative assessment helps create and sustain a conducive learning environment by promoting a culture of learning, collaboration, and feedback, and establishing positive relationships among teachers and students. It enhances the learning environment by providing authentic and meaningful

learning experiences and connecting students with local and global issues and communities (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

These factors indicate that formative assessment can influence educational quality in Social Studies education by affecting the curriculum, instruction, assessment, and environment. However, the influence of formative assessment depends on various factors, such as its design, implementation, and use, as well as the characteristics of teachers, students, and contexts. Therefore, it is important to consider these factors when applying formative assessment in Social Studies education.

Formative assessment can also affect the effectiveness of Social studies education by impacting factors that influence student learning outcomes, such as student engagement, motivation, and academic achievement. These factors are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, affecting student learning outcomes such as knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors (Fredricks et al., 2004; Pintrich, 2003; Schunk et al., 2008).

Formative assessment can affect these factors in the following ways;

- Student engagement: Formative assessment enhances student engagement by increasing interest, involvement, and participation in Social studies education, and providing opportunities for students to express their ideas, opinions, and perspectives. It sustains engagement by challenging students with inquiry-based, problem-solving, and civic-oriented learning activities, and providing feedback, support, and recognition (Fredricks et al., 2004).
- Student motivation: Formative assessment enhances motivation by improving student self-efficacy, self-regulation, and goal orientation in Social Studies education, and providing feedback, guidance, and encouragement. It sustains

motivation by promoting a growth mindset, mastery orientation, and intrinsic motivation, and providing autonomy, choice, and relevance (Pintrich, 2003).

- Student academic achievement: Formative assessment enhances academic achievement by improving student knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors in Social Studies education, providing feedback, correction, and improvement. It sustains achievement by enhancing learning outcomes such as critical thinking, civic competence, and global awareness, and providing assessment, recognition, and reward (Schunk et al., 2008).

These points illustrate that formative assessment can significantly impact the effectiveness of social studies education by influencing factors like student engagement, motivation, and academic achievement.

2.7 Summary of Literature and Identified Gaps

The literature review assessed theoretical and empirical perspectives on formative assessment, particularly within the realm of Social Studies education. The evaluation was grounded in Feedback Theory, which posits that prompt, detailed, and constructive feedback can enhance student learning and refine teaching methodologies. Hattie, Timperley, Black, and Wiliam assert that formative assessment is a continuous process wherein educators gather evidence of student learning and provide feedback that facilitates improvement. These studies demonstrate that formative assessment techniques, such as questioning, peer review, classroom debates, and feedback mechanisms, can significantly enhance students' engagement, critical thinking, and academic achievement.

The empirical investigations indicate that while formative evaluation is widely recognised as an effective educational method, its implementation in many classrooms

remains limited. Research in Ghana indicated that educators mostly rely on traditional assessment methods, such as quizzes, examinations, and assignments, while interactive formative assessment strategies are hardly employed. Furthermore, research indicates that many educators lack sufficient knowledge regarding the planning and implementation of formative assessments, and therefore fail to provide adequate feedback to students. The findings reveal a discrepancy between the theoretical principles of formative assessment and its practical application in the classroom.

The research has identified specific contextual barriers that impede the effective use of formative assessment in educational institutions. Challenges include large class sizes, insufficient teaching materials, limited opportunities for professional development for teachers, and the pressure of high-stakes assessments that prioritise summative evaluation over formative assessment. These constraints have been shown to influence educators' instructional decisions and impede their ability to effectively integrate formative assessment into their teaching practices.

Despite the increasing volume of research on formative assessment, the majority of studies conducted in Ghana have primarily focused on other topics, such as mathematics, or have examined teacher training for administering examinations rather than the implementation of formative assessment in Social Studies classrooms at the senior high school level. Furthermore, several studies have been conducted within limited institutional contexts, lacking comprehensive insight into how social research educators implement formative assessment strategies across diverse geographical regions in Ghana.

Empirical study directly examining the formative assessment practices employed by Social Studies educators in the Krachi East Municipality of the Oti Region is lacking.

The contextual circumstances, instructional methods, and challenges faced by educators in this municipality are mostly underexplored. This creates a significant gap in the research, particularly on the application of formative assessment practices in Social Studies classrooms within this particular context.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology of the study. The chapter presented and discussed the research paradigm, approach, design, settings, population, sample size, sampling techniques, data collection tools, data collection procedure, trustworthiness, data analysis, and ethical considerations of the study.

3.1 Research Paradigm

The research paradigm of this study is interpretivism, which is based on the assumption that reality is socially constructed, subjective, and multiple, and that it can be understood through the meanings and interpretations of the people who experience it (Creswell, 2014). Interpretivism emphasizes the importance of context, culture, and human agency in understanding social phenomena, and rejects the notion of universal laws or generalizations (Bryman, 2016). Interpretivism also values the ethical, moral, and political aspects of research, and advocates for the empowerment and emancipation of the participants and the society (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The choice of interpretivism as the research paradigm of this study is justified by the nature and purpose of the study, which is to explore the formative assessment practices of Social Studies teachers in Ghana. The study aims to understand the perspectives, experiences, and practices of the teachers, and how they are influenced by the contextual, cultural, and personal factors. The study also aims to provide insights and implications for the improvement of formative assessment practices and Social Studies education in general. Therefore, interpretivism is an appropriate and suitable paradigm

for this study, as it allows the researcher to capture the complexity, diversity, and richness of the phenomenon under investigation, and to respect and value the voices and views of the participants and the stakeholders.

3.2 Research Approach

The research approach of this study is qualitative, which is based on the assumption that social phenomena can be best understood through the exploration and interpretation of the meanings and experiences of the people who are involved in them (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research emphasizes the importance of context, culture, and human agency in understanding social phenomena, and uses various methods and techniques, such as interviews, observations, documents, and artifacts, to collect and analyze rich and detailed data (Bryman, 2016). Qualitative research also values the ethical, moral, and political aspects of research, and advocates for the empowerment and emancipation of the participants and the society (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The qualitative research approach is particularly suitable for this study due to its focus on exploring and interpreting the meanings and experiences of individuals involved in social phenomena (Creswell, 2014). This approach is justified because it allows for an in-depth understanding of the challenges faced by teachers in implementing formative assessments, capturing the complexities and nuances of their experiences. Qualitative research emphasizes the importance of context, culture, and human agency, which are crucial for understanding the specific educational environments and personal experiences of the teachers (Bryman, 2016).

3.3 Research Design

The research design of this study is case study, which is a type of qualitative research design that involves the in-depth and holistic investigation of a single or multiple cases within a real-life context, using multiple sources of evidence, such as interviews, observations, documents, and artifacts (Yin, 2014). A case study can be used for various purposes, such as description, exploration, explanation, or evaluation, depending on the nature and purpose of the study, the research questions, and the data collection and analysis methods (Yin, 2014). A case study can also be classified into different types, such as intrinsic, instrumental, or collective, depending on the focus and scope of the study, the number and nature of the cases, and the data collection and analysis methods (Stake, 1995).

The case study design is highly suitable for this research due to its ability to provide an in-depth and holistic understanding of the challenges faced by teachers in implementing formative assessments within their specific educational contexts. This design allows for a comprehensive exploration of individual or multiple cases, capturing the complexities and nuances of each situation through various data sources such as interviews, observations, documents, and artifacts (Yin, 2014). The type of case study used in this study is collective, which involves the investigation of multiple cases within a bounded system, such as a program, an organization, a community, or a phenomenon, using a common research question, a common data collection method, and a common data analysis method (Stake, 1995). A collective case study can be used for various purposes, such as description, exploration, explanation, or evaluation, depending on the nature and purpose of the study, the research question, and the data collection and analysis methods (Stake, 1995). A collective case study can also provide a deeper and broader understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, by comparing and

contrasting the similarities and differences among the cases, and by identifying the patterns and themes that emerge from the data (Stake, 1995). The bounded system used in this study is the Social Studies education program in Ghana. The cases that were investigated in this study are the Social Studies teachers formative assessment practices in the various SHS in the krachi east municipality of Ghana.. Moreover, the case study design supports the use of multiple sources of evidence, which enhances the credibility and validity of the findings. Through comprehensive and accurate picture of the teachers' experiences and practices (Yin, 2014).

3.4 Research Settings

The research setting of this study is the Krachi East Municipality in the Oti Region of Ghana. Established in 2019, the Oti Region is one of Ghana's six newly created regions, formed from the former Volta Region following a referendum that saw 98.64% approval (Cover Ghana). Spanning approximately 11,000 square kilometers, the region has a population of about 605,000, with 72.3% residing in rural areas (Ghana Health Service; Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). It is characterized by significant ethnic and linguistic diversity, with about 15 ethnic groups and 12 languages (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). Krachi East Municipality, the focus of this study, is one of the eight districts in the Oti Region, with Dambai as its capital. The municipality covers roughly 2,500 square kilometers and has a population of about 110,000, predominantly rural (72.3%) (Krachi East Municipal Assembly; Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). It is bordered by Nkwanta South and North Districts to the north, Kadjebi District to the east, Krachi West District and the Volta Lake to the west, and Jasikan District to the south. The municipality also features considerable ethnic and linguistic diversity, with approximately 10 ethnic groups and 9 languages spoken (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). The Krachi East Municipality has a diverse educational landscape, particularly

at the Senior High School (SHS) level. There are two SHS and one SHTS combined, along with one college of education. The total enrolment in SHS/SHTS is approximately 3,112 students, supported by 122 teachers, resulting in a student-to-teacher ratio of about 15:1. Among these teachers, 24 are trained professionals, while 141 are untrained, highlighting a significant challenge in educational quality and teacher qualification within the district (Krachi East Municipal Assembly, 2021). Educational infrastructure in Krachi East faces several challenges, including inadequate facilities and low enrolment rates, particularly among females. These issues reflect broader socio-economic problems affecting access to education in rural areas. Although the municipality has made efforts to improve educational services, disparities remain, especially for marginalized groups (Krachi East Municipal Assembly, 2021; Ghana Statistical Service, 2010).

3.5 Population

The population of interest in this study included all professional Social Studies teachers who taught the Social Studies subject at Senior High Schools (SHS) in the Krachi East Municipality of the Oti Region of Ghana. These teachers were the main participants and the primary sources of data, as they were directly involved in implementing formative assessment techniques in their classrooms and faced various challenges and constraints in doing so.

3.6 Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample and sampling techniques for this study were convenience sampling and purposive sampling. According to Rahi (2017), convenience sampling describes the data collection process from a research population that is effortlessly reachable to the researcher. Convenience sampling is a common sampling method in qualitative

research, as it requires little effort since the researcher is not involved in the complication of utilizing a randomized sampling technique (Alvi, 2016). Using convenience sampling is bound to the researcher's choice, considering access to the research context, participants, and methodological framework (Koerber & MacMichael, 2008).

The researcher employed this technique because he lives in the same Municipality, and homogeneously all Senior High Schools run the same national Social Studies curriculum. Therefore, selecting schools within the Krachi East Municipality was consistent with the scope and boundaries of the study. This ensured contextual uniformity while allowing the researcher to gain in-depth access to participants.

The participants of this study were professional Social Studies teachers who had taught Social Studies for 5–10 years in Ghana and were willing and available to participate in the study. Teaching Social Studies for about 5–10 years was considered sufficient for teachers to have gained practical experience in implementing formative assessment strategies and to provide informed reflections on their practices.

The other sampling method used for the study was purposive sampling, which is a type of non-probability sampling method that involves the deliberate and intentional selection of participants based on specific criteria and characteristics relevant to the study (Saunders et al., 2018). Purposive sampling is common in qualitative research because it allows the researcher to access rich and relevant data and to achieve depth in understanding the phenomenon under investigation (Saunders et al., 2018). It is also flexible and adaptable, allowing the researcher to refine the selection process depending on the suitability and availability of participants.

For this study, a total of nine (9) Social Studies teachers were selected from three Senior High/Technical Schools: Asukawkaw Senior High School, Oti Senior High/Technical School, and Yabram Community Day School in the Krachi East Municipality of the Oti Region of Ghana. Three participants were chosen from each school based on their readiness, availability, and preparedness to participate in the study. The sample size of nine participants was considered appropriate for this qualitative study because the primary aim was to obtain detailed and in-depth information rather than to achieve statistical representation. The number allowed the researcher to engage extensively with each participant through interviews and classroom observations, thereby generating rich, contextual data.

Furthermore, the sample size was sufficient to reach data saturation, where no new major themes were emerging from the data. In qualitative research, generalizability is not statistical but analytical or transferable in nature. Therefore, while the findings may not be generalized to all Senior High Schools in Ghana in a statistical sense, the homogeneity of the curriculum and institutional structures within Ghana's Senior High School system enhances the potential transferability of the findings to similar educational settings. The depth of information obtained from experienced teachers strengthens the credibility and applicability of the results within comparable contexts.

The participants were selected using the following steps:

- The researcher obtained a list of Social Studies teachers, including their contact details, from the head of department.
- The researcher contacted the Social Studies teachers and invited them to participate in the study by explaining the purpose, objectives, procedures, and

benefits of the research, while assuring confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation.

- The researcher selected the teachers who agreed to participate and met the sampling criteria, and then scheduled interviews and observations based on their availability and convenience.

Triangulation involved using multiple sources, methods, or perspectives to collect and analyze data, and to verify and validate findings, thereby enhancing the credibility and transferability of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, triangulation was achieved through the use of two data collection methods (interviews and observations) and two data collection tools (semi-structured interview guide and observation checklist). This approach provided rich and diverse data, allowed for comparison and contrast among the data, and facilitated the identification of emerging patterns and themes.

3.7 Data Collection Tool

The data collection tools of this study were semi-structured interviews and observation checklists, which are two common and effective tools for collecting qualitative data, especially in case study research (Yin, 2014). Semi-structured interviews are a type of interviews that involve the use of a set of predetermined and open-ended questions, which allow the researcher to explore the perspectives, experiences, and practices of the participants, and to probe and follow up on the responses of the participants, according to the flow and the direction of the conversation (Saunders et al., 2018). Observation checklists are a type of observations that involve the use of a list of predetermined and specific items, which allow the researcher to observe and record the

behaviours, actions, and interactions of the participants, and to compare and contrast the observed data with the reported data (Saunders et al., 2018).

The choice of semi-structured interviews and observation checklists as data collection tools for this study was driven by their effectiveness in gathering comprehensive and nuanced qualitative data, especially in case study research (Yin, 2014).

3.7.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews involved using a set of predetermined but open-ended questions, which allowed the researcher to explore the participants' perspectives, experiences, and practices in depth. This format provides the flexibility to probe and follow up on responses based on the flow and direction of the conversation, thereby capturing rich, detailed information relevant to the research questions (Saunders et al., 2018). The adaptability of semi-structured interviews was particularly valuable in understanding the complexities of formative assessment practices and the challenges faced by Social Studies teachers. The semi-structured interviews of this study consisted of three main sections: the introduction, the main questions, and the conclusion. The introduction section included the greeting, the introduction of the researcher and the study, the explanation of the purpose, the objectives, the procedures, and the benefits of the study, the assurance of the confidentiality, the anonymity, and the voluntary nature of the study, the request for the consent and the permission to record the interview, and the warm-up question. The main questions section included the questions that were related to the research question and the objectives of the study, which were divided into four themes: the background information of the participants, the formative assessment practices of the participants, the challenges and constraints that the participants faced in implementing effective formative assessment techniques

in their classrooms, and the suggestions and recommendations that the participants had for the improvement of formative assessment practices and Social Studies education in general. The conclusion section included the summary of the main points, the verification of the responses, the invitation for additional comments and questions, the expression of gratitude and appreciation, and the farewell.

3.7.2 Observation checklists

Observation checklists are used to systematically observe and record specific behaviours, actions, and interactions of participants. This tool allows the researcher to document and evaluate the actual implementation of formative assessment techniques in the classroom setting. By using a list of predetermined items, the researcher can ensure consistency in observations and compare the observed behaviours with the data obtained from interviews, providing a more comprehensive view of the participants' practices (Saunders et al., 2018). This method enhances the validity and reliability of the findings by cross-verifying reported data with observed evidence. The observation checklists of this study consisted of two main sections: the general information and the specific items. The general information section included the information that were related to the context and the setting of the observation, such as the date, the time, the location, the name of the observer, the name of the observee, the subject, the topic, and the duration of the observation.

Together, these tools offered a comprehensive approach to data collection, enabling a thorough examination of both reported and observed aspects of formative assessment in Social Studies education.

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection procedure of this study involved several detailed steps;

- The researcher obtained ethical clearance and permission from the relevant authorities and institutions, including the university, the department, the district education office, and the schools, to conduct the study.
- The researcher contacted potential participants, Social Studies teachers teaching in the Krachi East Municipality, and invited them to participate in the study. The purpose, objectives, procedures, and benefits of the study were explained, and the confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary nature of participation were assured.
- Participants who agreed to participate and met the sampling criteria were selected. The researcher then scheduled interviews and observations with these participants based on their availability and convenience.
- Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide, with the consent of the participants. The interviews took place in quiet and comfortable settings such as offices, staff rooms, libraries, and lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes each. The researcher recorded the interviews with participant consent and took notes to capture key points and non-verbal cues.
- Observations were carried out using observation checklists, with the consent of the participants. These observations occurred in the classrooms where the participants taught and lasted about 30 to 45 minutes each. The researcher also took notes to capture details and examples of the formative assessment practices.
- The researcher transcribed the interviews and observations, checking the accuracy and completeness of the transcripts by comparing them with

recordings and notes. The transcripts were anonymized by replacing participants' names and identifiers with pseudonyms.

- Data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify themes and patterns emerging from the data, relating them to the research questions and objectives of the study.
- Findings were validated by triangulating data from interviews and observations and conducting member checks with participants to ensure accuracy and credibility.

The data collection procedure was also informed by pilot testing and preliminary studies. Pilot testing involved conducting two interviews and two observations with Social Studies teachers in the same region but different settings from the main study. Preliminary studies included reviewing literature and existing research on formative assessment practices of Social Studies teachers in Ghana and similar contexts. These steps helped improve the validity and reliability of the data collection tools and enhanced the feasibility and suitability of the data collection process.

3.9 Ensuring Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, trustworthiness refers to the degree to which the findings authentically represent the participants' experiences and are regarded as credible, transferable, reliable, and confirmable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Establishing credibility is essential in qualitative research since it enhances the rigour and integrity of the research process, ensuring that interpretations faithfully reflect the participants' experiences. This study utilised multiple strategies to assure credibility, including triangulation, member validation, peer debriefing, rich description, audit trail, and reflexivity.

Triangulation was employed to enhance the credibility of the results. Triangulation involves utilising many data sources or methods to verify the consistency and accuracy of information obtained during study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This research collected data through semi-structured interviews with Social Studies educators and observations of teaching methodologies. Utilising these two approaches, the researcher compared instructors' reported practices for formative assessment with the actual occurrences in the classroom. This comparison, by identifying patterns and consistencies among various information sources, validated the data and enhanced the credibility of the conclusions.

Member screening was conducted to enhance the reliability and precision of the data. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), member checking involves providing participants in the study with the data or interpretations for their review and verification. In this study, interview transcripts and response summaries were distributed to selected participants following the transcription of the interviews. Participants were requested to review the transcripts to ensure their comments were appropriately documented. Participants provided clarifications or corrections as necessary, and these modifications were incorporated into the final analysis. This technique ensured that the results accurately reflected the participants' true opinions.

Peer debriefing served as an additional method to enhance the study's credibility and confirmability. Peer debriefing involves engaging knowledgeable colleagues or supervisors to assess and critique aspects of the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Throughout the study, the researcher consulted with the research supervisor and colleagues proficient in qualitative research to assess the research instruments, data collection procedures, coding strategies, and emergent themes. Their contributions

enhanced the data analysis procedure and diminished the likelihood of researcher bias in result interpretation.

The research employed thick description to enhance transferability. Thick description involves providing detailed accounts of the research setting, participants, and methods, allowing readers to evaluate the relevance of the findings to different situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study provided comprehensive descriptions of the schools, Social Studies educators, and the classes in which formative assessment practices were observed. This contextual information allows readers to make informed evaluations about the applicability of the findings to similar educational settings.

An audit trail ensured the reliability and verifiability of the results. An audit trail entails maintaining comprehensive documentation of the research process to enable others to replicate the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher meticulously documented each phase of the research process in this study. The records comprised audio recordings of interviews, transcripts, field notes, coding methodologies, and topic development. These records clarified the study method and ensured that the results were grounded in the acquired data.

Ultimately, reflexivity was employed to mitigate the influence of researcher bias on the findings. Reflexivity involves the continuous examination by the researcher of their assumptions, beliefs, and experiences, as well as the possible influence of these on the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). During the study, the researcher maintained reflective notes to examine personal perspectives and ensure that interpretations were based on the participants' responses rather than personal expectations. This reflective

process facilitated the maintenance of impartiality and improved the study's confirmability.

3.10 Data Analysis

The data analysis method of this study is thematic analysis, which is a type of qualitative data analysis method that involves the identification, analysis, and reporting of the themes and the patterns that emerge from the data, and that are related to the research question and the objectives of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a common and effective data analysis method in qualitative research, as it allows the researcher to organize and interpret the data, and to provide a comprehensive and coherent description and explanation of the phenomenon under investigation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is also flexible and adaptable, as it allows the researcher to use different approaches and techniques, depending on the nature and purpose of the study, the research question, and the data collection and analysis methods (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The choice of thematic analysis as the data analysis method of this study was justified by the nature and purpose of the study, which required the identification, analysis, and reporting of the themes and the patterns that emerged from the data, and that were related to the formative assessment practices of the Social Studies teachers, and the challenges and constraints that they faced in implementing effective formative assessment techniques in their classrooms, and the suggestions and recommendations that they have for the improvement of formative assessment practices and Social Studies education in general. The choice of thematic analysis was also justified by the research design and the approach of the study, which involved the use of case study and

qualitative methods, which are compatible and consistent with the use of thematic analysis.

The thematic analysis of the study followed the six phases proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarization, coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and theme report. The thematic analysis also used a deductive and inductive approach, meaning the themes and patterns were derived from both the literature and the data, guided by both theory and the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). NVivo software, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis tool, was used to facilitate the organization, management, and analysis of the data, and the presentation and visualization of the findings (QSR International).. The six phases of the thematic analysis of this study were as follows;

- Familiarization: In this phase, the researcher became familiar and immersed with the data to prepare it for analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher read and re-read the transcripts and notes from the interviews and observations, listened and re-listened to the recordings, identified and highlighted key points and interesting features of the data, and wrote down initial thoughts and impressions.
- Coding: During the coding phase, the researcher assigned labels or codes to data segments that captured the essence and meaning relevant to the research question and objectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Using NVivo software, the researcher created and applied codes to the data, organized and grouped the codes into categories, reviewed and refined the codes and categories, and generated and exported code reports and summaries.

- Theme development: In this phase, the researcher developed themes and patterns from the codes and categories that represented significant aspects of the data, addressing the research question and objectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006). NVivo software was used to develop themes, create and apply themes to the data, organize and group themes into sub-themes, review and refine themes and sub-themes, and generate and export theme reports and summaries.
- Theme review: The researcher reviewed the themes and sub-themes, checking their validity, reliability, relevance, coherence, consistency, completeness, alignment, and correspondence with the data and literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Using NVivo software, the researcher compared and contrasted themes and sub-themes, examined and evaluated evidence supporting the themes and sub-themes, identified and addressed gaps and overlaps, and revised and modified themes and sub-themes as needed.
- Theme definition: During this phase, the researcher defined and named the themes and sub-themes, describing and explaining their meaning, significance, relation, and contribution to the research question and objectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006). NVivo software was used to assign and apply names to themes and sub-themes, write and edit descriptions and explanations, relate and compare themes and sub-themes to the data and literature, and highlight and summarize key points and findings.
- Theme report: In the final phase, the researcher reported and presented the themes and sub-themes, discussing and interpreting their implications, limitations, relevance, and contribution to the literature and practice, and providing suggestions and recommendations for future research and action (Braun & Clarke, 2006). NVivo software facilitated the selection and display of

themes and sub-themes, illustration and visualization of themes, provision and citation of supporting evidence and examples, and discussion and interpretation of themes in relation to the research question, objectives, literature, conceptual framework, context, setting, implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research and action..

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are the principles and standards that guide the researcher's conduct and decision-making in the research process, and that ensure the respect and protection of the rights and interests of the participants, the researcher, and the society (Creswell, 2014). Ethical considerations are essential and integral in any research, especially in qualitative research, as qualitative research involves close and direct interaction with the participants, and the collection and analysis of sensitive and personal data, and the interpretation and presentation of complex and contextual data (Creswell, 2014). Ethical considerations are also dynamic and evolving, as they depend on the nature and purpose of the study, the research question and the objectives of the study, the research design and the approach of the study, the data collection and analysis methods, and the context and the setting of the study (Creswell, 2014). The ethical issues that are related to this study are as follows:

a. Voluntariness

Voluntariness is the principle that the participation of the participants in the study is voluntary and free, and that the participants have the right and the freedom to decide whether to participate or not, and to withdraw or not, at any stage of the study, without any pressure or coercion, and without any consequences or penalties (Creswell, 2014). This was crucial as the study involved Social Studies teachers from the Krachi East

Municipality in the Oti Region of Ghana who were willing and available to participate, and who face various influences and expectations from colleagues, supervisors, students, and communities.

b. Informed consent

Informed consent is the principle that the participants are informed and aware of the purpose, the objectives, the procedures, and the benefits of the study, and the risks and the harms of the study, and the rights and the responsibilities of the participants, and the confidentiality and the anonymity of the study, and that the participants have given their consent and their permission to participate in the study, and to be recorded and observed in the study, and to have their data collected and analyzed in the study, and to have their data reported and presented in the study (Creswell, 2014). This was important as the study collected and analyzed personal and sensitive data from participants, such as their perspectives, experiences, and practices of formative assessment in Social Studies education, the constraints they faced, and their suggestions for improving formative assessment practices and Social Studies education.

c. Anonymity

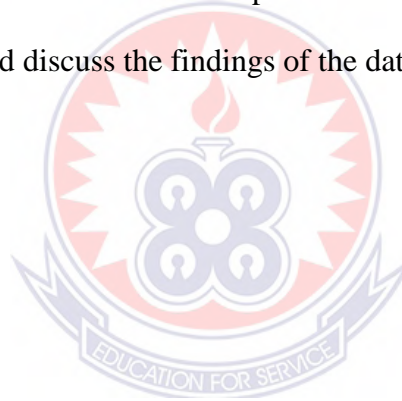
Anonymity is the principle that the identity and the personal information of the participants are not revealed or disclosed to anyone, and that the participants are not identifiable or recognizable from the data and the findings of the study (Creswell, 2014). This was vital as the study involved observing and recording participants in their classrooms and reporting and presenting data and findings, which might expose them to the risk of being identified by colleagues, supervisors, students, and communities, potentially affecting their reputation or relationships.

d. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is the principle that the data and the findings of the study are not shared or disclosed to anyone, except the researcher and the authorized persons, and that the data and the findings of the study are stored and secured in a safe and protected manner (Creswell, 2014). This was critical as the study involved collecting and analysing personal and sensitive data from participants, which might expose them to harm or exploitation if the data and findings were misused or abused. Ensuring confidentiality protected participants' perspectives, experiences, practices of formative assessment, and their challenges and suggestions for improvement in social studies education.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed description of the methodology of this study. The next chapter present and discuss the findings of the data analysis of the study.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter of the study delves into the results and discussions surrounding formative assessment practices among Social Studies teachers in the Krachi East Municipality in the Oti Region of Ghana. This chapter present the findings derived from the data collected and to discuss these findings in the context of existing literature, theories, and the overarching research questions and objectives of the study.

4.1 Demographic Information of Respondents

This section provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of the participants involved in the study, covering teachers from the senior high schools within the Krachi East Municipality. Understanding these demographics is important for contextualizing the formative assessment practices observed and analysed in this study. It offers understanding into the diversity of the sample population, potentially influencing the implementation and effectiveness of formative assessment strategies. Data presented here were collected and categorized, ensuring an understanding of the study's participant base, which includes age, gender, teaching experience, class level, educational background and subjects of study.

Table 1: Participants' demographic information

ID	Age	Gender	Teaching Experience	School	Professional qualification
T1	30	Male	9	Asukawkaw Senior High	B.Ed Social Studies
T2	29	Female	5	Asukawkaw Senior High	B.Ed Social Studies
T3	33	Male	7	Asukawkaw Senior High	B.Ed Social Studies
T4	28	Male	4	Oti Senior High/Tech	B.Ed Social Studies
T5	39	Male	10	Oti Senior High/Tech	B.Ed Social Studies
T6	35	Male	8	Oti Senior High/Tech	B.Ed Social Studies
T7	32	Female	7	Yabram Comm. Day School	B.Ed Social Studies
T8	41	Male	8	Yabram Comm. Day School	B.Ed Social Studies
T9	36	Male	9	Yabram Comm. Day School	B.Ed Social Studies

4.2 Organisation of Themes and Subthemes

The findings of this study are organized into themes and subthemes based on the responses from the study participants, providing a comprehensive view of formative assessment practices within the Krachi East Municipality, Oti Region. This organization allows for a detailed exploration of the strategies employed, the constraints encountered, the implications of these practices on student learning outcomes, and their alignment with educational goals and policies in Ghana. Through this structured approach, the study unveils the complexities of implementing formative assessments and highlights the dynamic interactions between educators' practices, policy frameworks, and the educational ecosystem at large.

Table 2: Organisation of themes and subthemes

Main Theme	Subthemes
1. Formative Assessment Strategies	a. Types of Strategies Employed b. Effectiveness of the Strategies c. Innovation in Strategy Implementation
2. Challenges encountered	a. Common Challenges Across Schools b. Unique School-Specific Challenges c. Strategies for Overcoming Challenges
3. Implications on Student Learning outcomes	a. Impact on Student Learning Outcomes b. Contributions to Students Learning Outcomes c. Identified Areas for Improvement

The Table 2 systematically organizes the research findings into three main themes, reflecting the objectives of the study. The first theme, "Formative Assessment Strategies," explores into the practical aspects of formative assessment in Social Studies education within the Krachi East Municipality. It explores the variety and implementation of these strategies and assesses their effectiveness and any innovative practices that emerge, highlighting the dynamic nature of educational practices that adapt to the unique contexts of different schools.

The second theme, "Challenges," acknowledges the barriers to implementing effective formative assessment practices. This theme provides a detailed understanding of the obstacles faced by educators by breaking down common challenges alongside unique school-specific issues. The inclusion of overcoming strategies signifies the resilience and adaptability of teachers in navigating these constraints, offering insights into potential solutions that could be applied more broadly. "Implications on Student Learning Outcomes," the third and final theme, evaluates the impact of formative assessment practices on the educational setting. This includes an analysis of how these

practices influence student learning outcomes and contribute to the overall learning outcomes. The subtheme of areas for improvement is particularly crucial, as it identifies opportunities for enhancing the effectiveness of formative assessments, thereby promoting an environment of continuous improvement.

In sum, the table offers a structured overview of the interaction between formative assessment practices, challenges, educational outcomes, and policy alignment, highlighting the nature of education reform and the essential role of formative assessment in enhancing teaching and learning within the Ghanaian context.

4.3 Formative Assessment Strategies

The first theme of this study explores into the various formative assessment strategies employed by Social Studies teachers in the Krachi East Municipality of Ghana. This exploration is important for understanding how teachers are implementing various assessment techniques to enhance student learning and engagement in the classroom. The findings under this theme are categorized into three subthemes: the types of strategies employed, the effectiveness of these strategies, and the innovations in strategy implementation.

4.3.1 Types of strategies employed

During the course of the study, the question into the type of formative assessment strategies used by Social Studies teacher in the Krachi East Municipality revealed that teachers employ various strategies, ranging from questioning and discussion techniques to peer and project-based assessments, and self-assessment methods. These strategies are important in facilitating continuous feedback, promoting deep understanding, encouraging collaborative learning, and promoting self-reflection among students. During the course of the interview, some of the teachers emphasized the use of group

discussions and project-based assessments. They believe that these methods encourage active participation and allow students to engage deeply with content by integrating their own experiences and insights. Participant T3 had the following to share;

Most often, I employ group discussions and project-based assessments. I find these methods effective because they encourage students to engage actively with the content. This allows the students share different views, which enhance their understanding of Social Studies. [T3]

This approach suggests that active learning through collaborative and project-based methods can significantly enhance comprehension and retention of Social Studies material. This strategy appears to be particularly effective in making learning relevant to students by connecting theoretical knowledge with real-world applications. It was observed during the course of the study that this teacher [T3] use of group discussions and project-based assessments helped students engage more deeply with the content. Through integrating their own experiences and insights, students were able to relate theoretical knowledge to real-life situations, thus enhancing their overall understanding and retention of Social Studies material. These methods also fostered a collaborative learning environment where students felt more comfortable sharing their ideas and learning from their peers. This collaborative aspect helps improved their critical thinking skills as well as encouraged a sense of community within the classroom. Furthermore, the emphasis on real-life applications of Social Studies concepts made the subject matter more tangible and relevant, increasing students' motivation and interest in the lessons. Through these active learning strategies, the teacher was able to create a dynamic and interactive classroom environment that supported deeper learning and engagement.

Prior studies have consistently highlighted the importance of formative assessments in providing continuous feedback and promoting deeper understanding. Awuah (2022) emphasized that formative assessment is important for raising educational standards, as it allows teachers to identify and address learning gaps promptly. Similarly, Awoniyi, (2016) underscored the role of feedback in influencing student achievement, asserting that effective feedback can significantly impact learning outcomes. The emphasis on group discussions and project-based assessments, as noted by Participant T3, reflects an active learning approach. This approach has been widely advocated in educational research for its ability to promote engagement and deeper comprehension. Prince (2004) discussed the benefits of active learning, noting that it enhances critical thinking and retention of material. By engaging students in collaborative activities, teachers can create a more interactive and student-centered classroom environment. Moreover, the findings align with constructivist theories of education, which posit that learning is an active process where learners construct new knowledge based on their experiences and prior knowledge (Piaget, 1952; Vygotsky, 1978). Through project-based and discussion-driven assessments, students are encouraged to connect theoretical knowledge with real-world applications, making learning more relevant and meaningful. The observed benefits of these formative assessment strategies in the study, such as improved critical thinking, enhanced understanding, and increased student motivation, are consistent with previous research outcomes. For instance, a study by Abubakari (2002) highlighted that self-regulated learning, which can be promoted through self-assessment and reflective practices, leads to better academic performance and a higher degree of learner autonomy.

Additionally, some teachers also emphasized using quizzes and oral questioning to assess their students to grasp the learning material quickly. This method facilitates immediate feedback and adaptation of instruction to meet students' needs. Participant T1 mentioned that;

I use a lot of quizzes and oral questioning in my classes. These strategies help me quickly measure whether my students understood the main lessons and concepts understudy. I particularly value oral questioning during lessons as it allows for immediate feedback and I can adjust my teaching on-the-fly based on the students' responses [T1]

The use of quizzes and oral questioning indicates a direct and interactive approach to formative assessment. Their ability to adjust teaching strategies instantly based on student responses demonstrates the adaptive nature of effective teaching, which is particularly beneficial in subjects requiring critical analysis and debate. Observation during the study showed that Participant teacher [T1], although using quizzes and oral questioning in his classes, often faced challenges in ensuring that all students participated equally. While some students actively engaged and benefited from the immediate feedback, others, particularly those who were more reserved, were less likely to participate. This discrepancy highlighted the need for the teacher to employ additional strategies to encourage participation from all students.

Despite this challenge, the overall impact of quizzes and oral questioning was positive, as it allowed for quick identification of students' misunderstandings and provided opportunities for timely clarification. The immediate nature of this feedback loop was instrumental in keeping the lessons dynamic and responsive to students' needs, fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment. According to Ababio and Dumba, (2013), formative assessments like quizzes and oral questioning enable teachers to quickly gauge students' grasp of the material, identify misconceptions, and adjust instruction accordingly. This approach ensures that learning is personalized and

responsive to students' needs, which can enhance academic achievement. The adaptive nature of oral questioning, as noted by Participant T1, allows for real-time adjustments during lessons. This method is supported by Hattie and Timperley (2007), who emphasized that timely and specific feedback is critical in helping students understand where they are in their learning process and what steps they need to take to improve. Oral questioning provides immediate insights into student comprehension and encourages active participation and critical thinking.

However, the study also highlighted challenges associated with these strategies, particularly in ensuring equal participation among students. Research by Dillon (1988) underlines the potential issues with oral questioning, noting that it can sometimes lead to uneven participation, with more confident students dominating the conversation. This observation was evident in the study, where some students were less likely to engage actively, pointing to the need for additional strategies to ensure inclusivity. Despite these challenges, the overall positive impact of quizzes and oral questioning was evident. These methods facilitated quick identification of misunderstandings and allowed for immediate clarification, creating a dynamic and responsive learning environment. This aligns with the findings of Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006), who stressed the importance of formative assessment in fostering a positive learning environment that supports student motivation and self-regulation.

In effect, the use of quizzes and oral questioning by Social Studies teachers in the Krachi East Municipality is consistent with prior research findings on effective formative assessment practices. While challenges in ensuring equal participation exist, the benefits of immediate feedback and adaptive instruction contribute significantly to a more inclusive and effective learning experience.

Moreover, these teachers also employed reflective assignments and peer assessments, encouraging students to engage in self-reflection and to critique each other's work. This approach nurtures critical thinking and provides diverse perspectives on the content.

Participant T5 remarked;

Well, I use a number of different strategies. But recently I have begun to tilt more towards reflective essay assignments and peer assessments. I ask students to write short essays on topics we discuss in class, then have their peers review and provide feedback. It helps them understand the material from another's viewpoint and also help to develop their critical thinking and evaluative skills [T5]

The emphasis on reflective practice and peer feedback suggests a deep commitment to developing higher-order thinking skills among students. This method promotes a comprehensive understanding of Social Studies topics, as students are required to analyse, evaluate, and articulate their thoughts and criticisms constructively. The observations during the course of the study revealed that Participant T5 use of reflective assignments and peer assessments had a significant impact on students' learning experiences. The students were observed to be more engaged and thoughtful in their approach to assignments, often demonstrating a deeper understanding of the material. The process of writing essays encouraged them to organize their thoughts clearly and present well-supported arguments. The peer assessments further enhanced this by exposing students to different perspectives and constructive criticism, which helped them refine their ideas and improve their work. However, it was also noted that some students initially struggled with giving and receiving feedback. This challenge required the teacher to provide guidance on effective critique methods and to create a classroom environment where constructive criticism was valued and respected. Over time, students became more comfortable with the process, which significantly contributed to their critical thinking and evaluative skills.

Reflective assignments, as highlighted by Participant T5, encourage students to engage deeply with the material, organizing their thoughts and articulating their understanding through writing. This approach is supported by Dewey's (1933) concept of reflective thinking, which emphasizes the importance of active, persistent, and careful consideration of beliefs or supposed forms of knowledge. Reflective assignments require students to critically analyse and synthesize information, thereby enhancing their understanding and retention of Social Studies concepts. Peer assessments complement reflective assignments by introducing students to alternative viewpoints and constructive criticism. Topping (1998) found that peer assessment helps students develop evaluative skills and as well increases their engagement and accountability. However, the study also noted initial challenges in implementing these methods. Some students struggled with giving and receiving feedback, highlighting the need for teacher guidance in developing effective critique skills. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) emphasized the importance of creating a supportive classroom environment where constructive criticism is valued and respected. With proper guidance, students became more comfortable with the peer assessment process, which significantly contributed to their critical thinking and evaluative abilities.

In consequence, the strategies employed by these teachers exemplify the different ways formative assessments can be integrated into teaching practices to enhance educational outcomes. Each method, whether focused on group interaction, immediate feedback, or reflective thinking, contributes uniquely to students' learning experiences, emphasising the dynamic nature of effective teaching in Social Studies. These views highlight the practical applications of formative assessments and likewise stress their impact on educational quality and student engagement in the learning process.

4.3.2 Effectiveness of strategies

The effectiveness of formative assessment strategies is important in determining their impact on student learning outcomes. As such, during the course of the study, the teachers were asked to share their views on how effectively these strategies (questioning and discussion techniques, peer assessment, project-based assessments, and self-assessment) translate into tangible learning outcomes and improvements in education. Some of the teachers mentioned that using group discussions and project-based learning leads to higher levels of student engagement and a more profound understanding of Social Studies. Participant T4 following;

I can say that, group discussions and projects have proven highly effective. I have observed increased student engagement and a deeper understanding of the material. I can see my students are more willing to participate in discussions and take ownership of their learning, which I would say reflects in their improved academic performance and enthusiasm in class. [T4]

These observations suggest that active learning strategies, such as group discussions and projects, make lessons more engaging and also empower students to take control of their learning processes. This engagement likely leads to higher academic achievement and increased enthusiasm for learning, indicating the effectiveness of these methods in enhancing both student participation and educational outcomes. During the course of observation, the students in T4 class were noticeably more active and participatory. They frequently engaged in discussions, shared their perspectives, and collaborated effectively on projects. This active involvement was not limited to a few students but was widespread, suggesting that these formative assessment strategies fostered a more inclusive learning environment. The projects allowed students to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world situations, enhancing their understanding and retention of the material. Furthermore, the enthusiasm observed among the students was

a testament to the motivational impact of these teaching methods. Students appeared more curious and invested in their learning, which likely contributed to their improved academic performance. This dynamic and interactive classroom atmosphere highlighted the substantial benefits of integrating group discussions and project-based learning into Social Studies education.

Research supports these findings, highlighting the benefits of active learning strategies. Prince (2004) noted that active learning methods, including group discussions and projects, significantly enhance student engagement and understanding. By allowing students to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world situations, these strategies facilitate deeper comprehension and retention of material. Furthermore, Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (1998) found that cooperative learning strategies, such as group discussions, promote higher academic achievement and better interpersonal relationships among students. Moreover, the enthusiasm observed among the students highlighted the motivational impact of these teaching methods. Students appeared more curious and interested in their learning, which likely contributed to their improved academic performance. This aligns with Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory, which emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation in educational settings. The dynamic and interactive classroom atmosphere observed in T4's class underlines the substantial benefits of integrating group discussions and project-based learning into Social Studies education.

Moreover, some of the teacher mentioned to utilize quizzes and oral questioning to ensure students are consistently involved and understands the content at a deeper level.

Participant T1 emphasised that;

Quizzes and oral questions keep the students on their toes, but the real measure of effectiveness is their ability to apply what they've learned beyond the classroom. I see significant improvement in their exam

scores and more importantly, their ability to discuss and analyze social issues critically. [T1]

The effectiveness of these strategies is evident in the improved exam scores and enhanced critical thinking skills of the students. This approach underlines the importance of assessments that challenge students to remember facts and to apply their knowledge critically in discussions and real-life situations, demonstrating a successful blend of evaluation and applied learning. During the observation, the teacher [T1] consistently engaged students with quizzes and oral questions, fostering an environment where students were encouraged to think on their feet and articulate their understanding. The teacher's use of immediate feedback helped identify and address any misconceptions quickly, reinforcing learning in real time. The students responded positively to this approach, showing heightened attentiveness and participation during lessons. This interactive method promoted a more dynamic and responsive classroom atmosphere, where students were more likely to engage with the material and each other. The students demonstrated noticeable improvements in their ability to analyse and discuss complex social issues, indicating that the quizzes and oral questioning reinforced their factual knowledge and enhanced their critical thinking and analytical skills. This combination of immediate feedback and active participation proved to be a powerful tool in achieving deeper learning and higher academic performance.

Additionally, some of them mentioned to focus on the development of analytical and evaluative skills through reflective essays and peer reviews. Participant T3 remarked;

Well, the reflective essays and the peer reviews have greatly enhanced the analytical abilities of my students. They've learn to express their thoughts clearly and give constructive criticism. This method has especially been effective in helping students develop a more understanding of historical events and social dynamics. [T3]

This promotes critical thinking and a deeper understanding of complex social and historical contexts. The process of writing reflective essays and undergoing peer review teaches students to articulate their thoughts clearly and engage in constructive critique, a crucial skill for academic and personal growth. This approach demonstrates the effectiveness of formative assessments in developing critical analytical skills and promoting a comprehensive understanding of studied materials. During the observation, it was noted that students in participant T3 class engaged deeply with the reflective essay assignments, demonstrating a high level of thoughtfulness and insight. The peer review process further enriched their learning experience, as students received diverse perspectives on their work and learned to give and receive feedback constructively. This iterative process of writing and revising helped students refine their analytical skills and gain a more sophisticated understanding of the material. The classroom atmosphere of during these activities was collaborative and supportive, fostering a community of learners who valued critical thinking and mutual growth. Students were seen actively discussing their essays and reviews, which improved their understanding of historical and social contexts and as well enhanced their ability to communicate complex ideas effectively. This method proved to be highly effective in promoting a deeper, more critical engagement with the content, highlighting the significant benefits of reflective and peer-assessment strategies in Social Studies education.

In sum, the strategies employed by the teachers highlight the different ways formative assessments can effectively enhance student learning experiences. Whether through collaborative projects, interactive quizzes, or reflective writing, each method has shown significant benefits in improving student engagement, understanding, and critical thinking. These findings emphasize the essential role of thoughtful assessment design

in achieving educational objectives and preparing students for academic and real-world challenges.

4.3.3 Innovation in strategy implementation

Furthermore, the Social Studies teachers were asked about the inventive methods they employ to make formative assessment strategies more effective and aligned with the evolving needs of their students. Some of the teachers highlight the use of peer teaching within group projects to engage students more actively. This method involves students in their learning process promotes leadership skills as they take on the role of educators themselves. A teacher [Participant T7] remarked that;

To make group projects more engaging, once a while, I introduced a peer teaching initiative where students take turns leading discussions on any of the topics we have previously treated, or yet to be treated. This is to builds their confidence and leadership skills, as they guide their classmates through learning activities they've prepared themselves [T7]

This strategy effectively enhances student engagement by allowing students to assume a teaching role, which can lead to a deeper understanding and retention of the content. It also promotes essential soft skills such as public speaking, organization, and leadership. During the observation, it was noted that the peer teaching initiative had a significant positive impact on student involvement and enthusiasm. Students appeared more interested in their learning when they were responsible for teaching their peers. They prepared thoroughly for their presentations, ensuring they understood the material deeply. This preparation and the act of teaching helped reinforce their knowledge and confidence in the subject matter. Furthermore, the classroom environment became more collaborative and supportive, with students actively participating and engaging in discussions led by their peers. The experience of leading discussions and guiding classmates enhanced their understanding of the topics, as well as developed their

leadership and public speaking skills, which are essential for their overall personal development. This approach highlighted the effectiveness of innovative formative assessment methods in promoting a dynamic and interactive learning atmosphere, ultimately contributing to improved educational outcomes and student growth.

On the same issues, other teachers mentioned that they utilize field trips as a dynamic formative assessment tool, providing students with real-world experiences that link directly to their curriculum about governance and civic responsibilities. A teacher [Participant T4] had the following to share;

Aside the obvious methods, I try to organize field trips, mostly to the local courts, parks, and the assemblies to observe civic processes first-hand. Following these trips, I ask the students create presentations on their observations and how they relate to what we've studied. [T4]

This strategy effectively bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application, enhancing student understanding and interest in Social Studies. This approach also encourages active learning and critical thinking as students analyse and present their observations. During the observation, it was evident that the field trips significantly enhanced students' engagement and understanding of civic processes. The students were visibly excited and attentive during the trips, asking insightful questions and taking detailed notes. Upon returning to the classroom, they eagerly worked on their presentations, discussing their observations and drawing connections to the curriculum. This hands-on experience made abstract concepts more concrete and relatable, thereby deepening their comprehension of governance and civic responsibilities. The process of creating presentations further reinforced their learning, as students had to critically analyse their observations and communicate their findings effectively. This activity also promoted collaboration, as students often worked in groups to compile their presentations, discussing and debating various aspects of their

observations. The real-world experience combined with the reflective presentation task promotes a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, demonstrating the powerful impact of field trips as a formative assessment tool. This approach makes learning more engaging and relevant, and also helps in developing important skills in critical thinking, public speaking, and teamwork.

Additionally, some teacher mentioned to employ storytelling as a formative assessment tool, encouraging students to explore historical and contemporary issues from multiple perspectives. Participant T8 had the following to share;

Umm, I recently began using storytelling as a formative assessment tool..... I mainly focused on historical events and contemporary issues. Usually, I print these stories out for my student as case studies for classroom discussion. I then tasked them with researching and telling stories from different perspectives, just to enhance their analytical skills and the understanding of the subject matter from different viewpoints.
[T8]

Storytelling as used by the teacher nurtures a multidimensional understanding of Social Studies topics, promoting both critical thinking and empathy among students. This method allows students to engage deeply with the material, enhancing their ability to analyse and discuss complex issues effectively. In effect, these strategies as implemented by the teachers demonstrate a significant impact on enhancing student engagement, comprehension, and skill development. Each strategy supports academic growth and as well promotes key life skills, such as critical thinking, empathy, leadership, and public speaking. These approaches exemplify how formative assessments can be effectively used to enrich the educational experience, making learning both enjoyable and impactful. During the observation, it was apparent that the use of storytelling significantly in Participant T8 class enhanced student engagement and comprehension. Students were enthusiastic about researching and presenting their stories, often going beyond the basic requirements to include detailed narratives and

diverse perspectives. This approach sought to improved their understanding of the topics and promote empathy as they explored different viewpoints and experiences. The storytelling assignments required students to delve into the historical and social contexts of the issues, encouraging them to think critically about the causes and consequences of events. The discussions that followed these presentations were rich and insightful, with students engaging in thoughtful analysis and debate about the different perspectives presented.

In effect the findings this theme of the study reveal a robust implementation of various formative assessments including group discussions, project-based learning, quizzes, oral questioning, field trips, peer teaching, and storytelling. Each of these strategies was chosen for its ability to engage students actively and deepen their understanding of the curriculum. The use of group discussions and project-based learning, as highlighted by the teachers is supported by the literature as effective strategies for promoting critical thinking and collaboration among students (Thomas, 2000). Studies have shown that project-based learning supports knowledge acquisition and enhances students' skills in problem-solving and communication, crucial for their future educational and career endeavours (Bell, 2010). Similar to this findings, Thomas (2000) emphasizes that students engaged in project-based learning exhibit increased motivation and better retention of course material.

Moreover, the use of quizzes and oral questioning reflects established pedagogical techniques that provide immediate feedback to students and teachers, allowing for real-time adjustments in teaching strategies (Black & Wiliam, 1998). This approach is corroborated by research indicating that timely feedback enhances students' learning processes by identifying misunderstandings and clarifying misconceptions (Hattie &

Timperley, 2007). Such strategies are particularly effective in dynamic subjects like Social Studies where students benefit from discussing complex, multifaceted topics.

Additionally, the hands-on learning experiences through field trips, as organized by some of the teachers and the use of storytelling are significant in providing contextual learning and enhancing engagement. Literature supports that field trips greatly enrich the learning experience, making academic content relevant and stimulating students' interest and motivation (Behrendt & Franklin, 2014). Similarly, storytelling has been recognized as an effective pedagogical tool that promotes memory retention, comprehension, and empathy, particularly in the study of history and Social Studies (McDrury & Alterio, 2003). Also, peer teaching and reflective assignments are innovative strategies that encourage students to take ownership of their learning and reflect on their understanding, aligning with findings from Topping (2005) who noted that peer-led teaching helps consolidate learning and enhance understanding among students. Reflective practices, as noted by Boud, Cohen and Walker (1993), encourage deeper intellectual and emotional engagement with material, promoting higher-order thinking skills. In sum, these findings corroborate a substantial body of existing literature that supports the efficacy of these methods in enhancing student engagement, understanding, and skill development in educational settings.

4.4 Challenges and Constraints

The second theme that emerged from this study explored the constraints faced by Social Studies teachers in the Krachi East Municipality in implementing formative assessments. This theme probes into the practical barriers that Social Studies teachers in the SHS encounter in their daily teaching practices, ranging from infrastructural deficiencies to cultural and systemic challenges. The findings under this theme is

grouped or divided into three distinct yet areas: the common constraints that pervade across the participating schools, the unique or school-specific constraints, and the inventive strategies that teachers have employed to navigate and overcome these challenges.

4.4.1 Common challenges across schools

The questions into the common challenges across schools unveil a shared events of obstacles that the Social Studies teachers in the Krachi East Municipality encounter while implementing formative assessment strategies. These constraints, spanning from resource limitations to oversized classes and inadequate professional development, severely impact the ability of educators to deploy effective and engaging teaching methods. When asked about some of the constraints they face in implementing formative assessments, some of the teachers mentioned the profound impact of resource shortages in schools, which includes a lack of sufficient textbooks and inadequate access to technology. This scarcity hinders the application of technology-based and interactive formative assessments that could significantly enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. Participant T6 remarked that;

Well, here in this school, the primary challenge is the lack of resources. We often don't have enough textbooks for all students, which limits our ability to implement effective formative assessments effectively... And it affects how thoroughly we can apply different assessment strategies that are more interactive and engaging. [T6]

The lack of resources as described by this teacher [Participant T6] highlights a significant barrier to implementing modern educational practices that require technological support. This situation likely leads to a reliance on traditional teaching methods and could be hindering the development of skills that students need in a digital world. During the observation, it was clear that these resource constraints forced the

teacher to adapt their instructional strategies, often limiting the variety and effectiveness of formative assessments. For instance, instead of using textbooks for in-depth group discussions, the teacher had to rely more on the basic chalk and blackboard methods. This often meant that students missed out on the opportunity to engage with the material in a more interactive and comprehensive manner. The teacher [Participant T6] was seen frequently using oral questioning as a primary assessment tool. While this method allowed for immediate feedback and kept students somewhat engaged, it did not leverage the full potential of interactive assessments that could have been possible with better resources.

Additionally, the teacher resorted to written tests to measure student understanding, which, while effective for assessing factual knowledge, did not promote higher-order thinking skills such as critical analysis and synthesis. The lack of sufficient textbooks meant that students had to share the limited resources available, which disrupted the flow of group activities and collaborative learning sessions. For example, group discussions that could have been enriched with access to detailed text references were instead conducted with minimal materials, limiting the depth of analysis and engagement. This adaptation to resource constraints also impacted the use of technology in formative assessments. Without adequate access to digital tools, the teacher was unable to incorporate interactive quizzes, multimedia presentations, or online research assignments that could have significantly enhanced student learning and engagement. The reliance on traditional methods, while necessary given the circumstances, highlighted the gap between current practices and the potential benefits of a more resource-rich educational environment.

More so, other teachers mentioned the challenges posed by large class sizes, which complicate the execution of formative assessments that require personalized attention and feedback, crucial components for effective teaching and learning. Participant [T5]

As you have already witnessed, the size of our classes is daunting. Managing over fifty students in one classroom makes it difficult to conduct formative assessments that require individual attention, like personalized feedback or one-on-one discussions. It's hard to ensure every student is keeping up when you have such large numbers. [T5]

The challenge of large class sizes significantly impacts the quality of teaching and learning. It limits the teacher's ability to provide individualized feedback and attention, which are critical for the effective use of formative assessments in enhancing student understanding and performance. Throughout the study, it was observed how the teachers struggle with the difficulties posed by large class sizes. Participant [T5] in particular, was seen struggling to manage his class, demonstrating the significant challenge of providing personalized attention and conducting effective formative assessments. The inability to address individual student needs in such large settings often resulted in students falling behind, underscoring the pressing need for more manageable class sizes to improve educational outcomes.

All the same, another teacher mentioned the challenges of professional development gaps – affecting the confidence and capability of the teachers to implement different and innovative formative assessment strategies effectively. Participant T2 submitted that;

Well, for me, a significant challenge we face is the inconsistency in training. Many teachers, myself included, often feel unprepared to implement varied and innovative formative assessment strategies because our professional development doesn't always cover these areas comprehensively. This affects our confidence and effectiveness in the classroom. [T2]

The inadequacy in training as described by this teacher underlines a important systemic issue that affects the implementation of effective formative assessments and as well impacts teacher morale and effectiveness. Without proper training, teachers are less likely to utilize innovative strategies that could potentially enhance student learning outcomes and educational experiences. During the observation, it was noted that many of the teachers lacked sufficient professional development opportunities, particularly in the realm of formative assessment strategies. This was evident in their expressions of uncertainty and hesitancy when discussing innovative teaching methods. Many of the teachers, particularly Participant T2 appeared constrained by a perceived inadequacy in training, which hindered their ability to confidently implement different and effective formative assessment techniques. In sum the common challenges identified by the teachers in the Krachi East Municipality illustrate a critical need for addressing structural and resource-related issues within the education system.

4.4.2 Unique school-specific challenges

While common challenges or constraints provide a collective snapshot of the hurdles faced by teachers across the Krachi East Municipality, each school also confronts its unique set of obstacles and challenges that influence the implementation of formative assessment strategies. These school-specific challenges or constraints reflect the different socio-economic, cultural, and infrastructural environments in which these schools operate. The teachers from Asukawkaw Senior High, during the course of the interview, points out a critical challenge that disrupts the educational flow and impacts the effectiveness of continuous assessment strategies. One of them [Participant T3] remarked;

"At Asukawkaw Senior High, we struggle with student attendance, which disrupts the continuity of formative assessment. If students miss sessions where preliminary assessments are done, it becomes challenging to

catch them up and ensure they integrate smoothly into continuous projects or discussions. [T3]

The issue highlighted by teacher emphasises the importance of regular attendance in the effectiveness of formative assessments. Irregular attendance hampers student progress and complicates teachers' efforts to maintain a cohesive educational experience. This challenge necessitates strategies like flexible scheduling, catch-up sessions, or digital platforms that can provide access to missed content. It was accordingly witnessed at Asukawkaw Senior, several students were absent during a session where preliminary assessments were conducted. This absence disrupted the continuity of learning and posed challenges for the teacher in ensuring all students were adequately caught up and integrated into projects and discussions.

However, the teachers from Oti Senior High/Tech, mentioned the issues of the cultural perceptions surrounding education as the main challenge hindering the implementation of formative assesses in the school. A teacher participant [T5] mentioned that;

In Oti Senior High/Tech, we face a specific challenge with the student perception of education. There's a lot of emphasis on passing exams, which pressures teachers to focus more on summative assessments. This perspective makes it difficult to implement formative assessments as a regular part of our teaching practice.

The pressure to focus on summative assessments at the expense of formative ones, as described by teacher [participant T5], illustrates a significant cultural barrier to adopting more comprehensive educational strategies. This challenge calls for community education and engagement initiatives to shift perceptions and demonstrate the value of formative assessments in promoting deeper learning and student development. During the observation, it was noted that while there was no apparent visible emphasis on exam results within the student body influencing teaching priorities towards summative assessments over formative ones, the teacher from Oti Senior

High/Tech still identified student perceptions surrounding education as a significant challenge. The teacher's observation highlighted a subtle but impactful cultural influence where the traditional values of the student place a strong emphasis on exam performance. This perspective may not have been overtly evident during the observation but was nonetheless acknowledged as a barrier to integrating formative assessments as a regular practice within the school's educational framework.

Additionally, the teachers from Yabram Comm. Day School talked about logistical challenges due to the rural location of the school, including frequent power outages and poor internet connectivity. A teacher [Participant T5] from the school remarked that;

Yabram Comm. Day School is located in a more rural area, and we often deal with issues of power outages and poor internet connectivity. This makes it challenging to employ any digital formative assessment tools, that are increasingly important in modern education system [T9]

The infrastructural deficiencies noted by the teacher impede the use of digital tools as well as the overall educational quality. Enhancing infrastructure, perhaps through government intervention or partnerships with technology companies, could significantly improve the educational experiences of students in rural areas. During the course of the study, other logistical challenges observed at Yabram Comm. Day School included inadequate classroom facilities and limited access to teaching materials. The classrooms were often overcrowded, making it difficult for teachers to conduct individualized formative assessments effectively. Additionally, the lack of updated textbooks and teaching aids hindered teachers' ability to different assessment methods and engage students effectively. Moreover, transportation issues were evident, particularly during inclement weather or when roads were impassable, affecting both student attendance and teacher mobility. These challenges compounded the difficulties in maintaining a consistent educational environment conducive to formative assessment

practices. Furthermore, administrative support was noted as inconsistent, with delays in acquiring necessary teaching supplies and resources. This administrative bottleneck contributed to disruptions in lesson planning and implementation, impacting the continuity and quality of formative assessments conducted at the school.

The unique challenges identified by the teachers at Asukawkaw Senior High, Oti Senior High/Tech, and Yabram Comm. Day School reveal the complex issues that teachers face in implementing effective formative assessment practices. These challenges are deeply intertwined with the specific contexts of each school, requiring tailored approaches that consider local resources, cultural expectations, and infrastructural capabilities.

4.4.3 Strategies for overcoming challenges

In the face of the different challenges encountered in the implementation of formative assessment strategies, teachers have cultivated innovative approaches to navigate and mitigate these obstacles. This subtheme explores how educators in the Krachi East Municipality have developed resourceful methods to ensure that formative assessment continues to be critical in their teaching, despite various systemic and infrastructural limitation. Some of the teachers during the interview shared how they has adapted to resource constraints by implementing peer-assessment techniques and organizing group activities that do not require extensive materials. Others mentioned how they creatively use the resources available to them to maximize student engagement and participation, ensuring that the learning process is both interactive and economical. Example of such remark is by participant T2;

I've started using more peer-assessment techniques and group-based activities that don't rely heavily on materials. For example, we do a lot of oral presentations and debates. It's cost-effective and encourages active participation and learning. [T6]

This approach circumvents the challenge of limited resources and more so promotes a collaborative learning environment. This strategy enhances students' communication skills and critical thinking abilities, proving that effective formative assessment does not always require significant financial investment. It also illustrates the potential for peer learning to facilitate deeper understanding and retention of course material. Other teachers outlined their strategy for managing large class sizes by dividing students into smaller groups, allowing for more personalized instruction and feedback. Another participant T5 teacher remarked that;

For me... having to deal with large class sizes means that I organized my students into smaller study groups within the classroom. Each group helps support its members and I rotate among the groups to provide targeted feedback. This way, even in a large class, every student receives some form of individual attention and feedback. [T5]

This method makes managing large classes more feasible and as well enhances the quality of education each student receives. Through facilitating small group interactions, the teacher ensures that students benefit from peer discussions while still receiving direct feedback from her, thereby maintaining the integrity of formative assessment practices in a challenging setting. Moreover, some teacher, during the interview, emphasized the importance of continues professional development to improve the effectiveness of formative assessment in his teaching. Participant T2 further noted that;

Well, I have taken it upon myself to engage in online professional development courses related to formative assessment strategies. I also share these resources with my colleagues, and together, we organize informal training sessions to improve our skills and confidence in implementing these strategies. [T2]

This initiative highlights a self-sustaining approach to professional growth, emphasizing the critical role of continuous learning and collaboration among teachers.

This strategy enhances his teaching practices and builds a community of practice within

his school, which can lead to widespread improvements in teaching effectiveness and student outcomes.

Generally, the strategies employed by the teachers illustrate their innovative responses to the unique challenges they face in their schools. The findings reveal a broad spectrum of barriers that hinder the effective implementation of formative assessments. These obstacles range from infrastructural deficiencies to cultural and systemic challenges, impacting the delivery of educational services. The common challenges identified, resource limitations, large class sizes, and inadequate professional development, are consistent with global educational challenges reported in various studies. For example, the lack of resources, echoes findings from a study by Smith and Noble (2014), which indicated that resource constraints significantly hinder the application of innovative teaching strategies. This scarcity, especially in technology, restricts the ability of educators to engage students effectively and aligns with broader educational trends that emphasize the need for digital literacy in modern learning environments (Johnson et al., 2016). Similarly, the challenge of managing oversized classes is well-documented in the literature. Large class sizes have been shown to impede the delivery of personalized education and limit teachers' ability to perform formative assessments effectively (Baker, 2017). This aligns with the teachers experiences and suggests that strategies to reduce teacher-student ratios could significantly improve educational outcomes.

Nevertheless, the unique challenges faced by schools underline the different socio-economic, cultural, and infrastructural environments in which these institutions operate. The teachers concern about student attendance disrupting formative assessments aligns with studies highlighting the impact of socio-economic factors on school attendance

and academic performance (Fernandez, 2018). This suggests a need for interventions tailored to local contexts, such as community engagement initiatives that emphasize the importance of regular attendance. Similarly, the cultural emphasis on summative assessments over formative ones, as experienced by some of the teacher reflects broader educational challenges where high-stakes testing dominates teaching practices. Literature suggests that shifting these perceptions requires significant educational reform and community outreach to highlight the benefits of formative assessments in promoting deeper learning and critical thinking skills (Nguyen, 2019).

In response to these challenges, the teachers have developed innovative strategies to ensure that formative assessment remains a viable component of their teaching practice. These strategies include adopting peer-assessment techniques, organizing small study groups, and engaging in continuous professional development. Through utilizing peer assessments and group-based activities, teachers have found cost-effective methods to encourage active participation and learning. Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (1991) discuss the benefits of cooperative learning strategies in promoting higher student achievement, interpersonal relationships, and greater psychological health, supporting the strategies used by some of the teachers. Moreover, the use of small study groups' strategy to manage large classes by creating smaller study groups ensures that each student receives individual attention and feedback. Slavin (1995) finds that small groups can be effective in improving student achievement, echoing some of the teachers

Furthermore, the mentioning of the commitment to engaging in online courses and organizing informal training sessions enhances the teaching capabilities within his school. Guskey (2000) emphasizes that continuous professional development is essential for teachers to improve their skills and instructional methods. Overall, the

strategies identified by teachers in the Krachi East Municipality highlight their resilience and adaptability. These teachers confront significant challenges and forge paths forward, demonstrating a profound commitment to enhancing educational practices despite numerous obstacles.

4.5 Implications on Student Learning objectives

The third and final theme that emerged from the study was the profound implications of formative assessment strategies on student learning outcomes and overall educational quality within the Krachi East Municipality in the Oti Region of Ghana. This theme explores how the application of formative assessments across various schools significantly affects both the cognitive and affective development of students, ultimately influencing the broader educational setting. The findings under this theme encapsulate the transformative potential of regular, interactive assessments that are thoughtfully integrated into daily teaching practices, offering insights into their direct and indirect impacts on the educational system.

4.5.1 Impact on student learning objectives

The impact of formative assessment strategies on student learning outcomes stands as an important area of study, highlighting how various assessment methods can significantly influence students' understanding, engagement, and academic achievement. Some of the teachers discussed the effectiveness of using quizzes and group discussions in his teaching practices, during the interview. They mentioned significant improvements the students' understanding and engagement through regular interactive and evaluative exercises. A teacher (Participant T9) shared the following;

Using formative assessment regularly has significantly improved my students understanding of social studies. Their ability to discuss and analyse social issues has become more better, which is evident in their exams score, and improved class participations [T9]

This assertion emphasizes the transformative power of formative assessments in enhancing students' comprehension and critical thinking. Regular assessments ensure that learning is not merely superficial or rote, but deep and reflective, facilitating a better understanding of Social Studies. This approach encourages students to engage actively with the material, promoting skills that go beyond the classroom. As observed during the study, the students in this class (Participant T9) demonstrated enhanced critical thinking and engagement with social studies topics during the observation. They actively participated in group discussions, demonstrating a deeper understanding of social issues and an ability to analyse them critically.

Moreover, other teachers reflected on how integrating interactive assessments has boosted student confidence and engagement. They witnessed first-hand the positive changes in their students' attitudes and performance following the adoption of more engaging assessment methods. Another teacher (Participant T4) remarked that;

Sure, I have noticed a considerable improvement in confidence among my students since integrating more field trips and classroom discussion. Though many of them are the shy type, but you could see the efforts to express their opinions and asking questions, which is a critical part of learning. This active engagement has led to higher scores in their exams. T4

The response highlights how formative assessments can build students' confidence and active participation, key components of effective learning. This increase in confidence translates directly into improved academic performance, suggesting that students who are more engaged with the content are more likely to absorb and retain the information. This observation affirms that interactive assessments can bridge the gap between student understanding and performance metrics. Moreover, some of the teachers stressed on the benefits of peer assessments and reflective essays in promoting deeper learning and responsibility. They appreciate the depth of learning and accountability

that peer assessments and reflective writing instill in students. A teacher (Participant T5) noted that;

I can confidently say that implementing peer assessments has encouraged deeper learning among the students. They take more responsibility for their learning, and it shows in their academic performance. It's particularly rewarding to see lower-performing students start to improve because they receive continuous feedback of their performance. [T5]

These strategies demonstrate the effectiveness of formative assessments in promoting self-regulation and critical evaluation among students. Through engaging in peer reviews and reflective writing, students develop a more nuanced understanding of the content and improve their ability to think critically about their own work and the work of others. This method particularly benefits those who may struggle under traditional assessment techniques, as it provides them with continuous, supportive feedback that is essential for growth and improvement. During the observation, it was evident that the implementation of peer assessments and reflective essays had a positive impact on student learning dynamics. Students actively engaged in peer reviews, offering constructive feedback to their peers and demonstrating a heightened sense of responsibility for their own learning. This participatory approach encouraged deeper reflection and fostered a collaborative learning environment where students actively supported each other's academic growth. This continuous support contributed to noticeable improvements in their academic performance over time. The observation emphasised how these students embraced the opportunity to critically evaluate their own work and that of their peers, enhancing their understanding and application of course concepts. Furthermore, the use of reflective essays was observed to promote self-regulation among students, encouraging them to articulate their thoughts and

learning processes. This practice enhanced their writing skills and also deepened their comprehension of subject matter through introspection and analysis.

Collectively, the insights provided by the teachers illustrate the significant positive impacts of formative assessments on student learning outcomes. These strategies enhance academic performance as well as crucially develop students' analytical skills, confidence, and self-responsibility. The findings suggest that when effectively implemented, formative assessments can profoundly enrich the educational experience, making learning both deeper and more enjoyable for students.

4.5.2 Contributions to students' learning outcomes

When asked about the impact of formative assessment strategies on educational quality, some of the teachers remarked on how formative assessments have transformed the learning environment into a more engaging and participatory space. They noted the broad impact of formative assessments in creating a vibrant classroom setting that encourages active student participation and skill development. Some of the teachers (Participant T1) mentioned;

I think it has enriched the quality of education we provide. It allows for a more dynamic and interactive classroom environment where students are active participants in their learning journey. So, for me, I believe this approach will prepare them academically, and likewise develop essential life skills like problem-solving and teamwork. [T1]

This assertion reveals that formative assessments do more than just assess academic progress; they transform the classroom into a hub of active learning and personal development. Through engaging students actively, these assessments promote essential life skills, preparing them for real-world challenges. The observation, during the course of this study highlighted that the use of formative assessments indeed enriched the classroom environment by fostering a dynamic and interactive learning atmosphere.

The students from all the schools were observed actively participating in discussions and collaborative activities, indicating a higher level of engagement and enthusiasm for learning. This active involvement contributes to academic preparation as well as nurture essential life skills in communication, problem-solving, and teamwork among students.

Furthermore, some of the teachers highlight the dual benefits of formative assessments for both students and teachers. They valued how formative assessments provide important insights into student needs, allowing for tailored instructional strategies. A teacher (Participant T8) remarked that;

I think it contributes to the educational quality and it good for both teachers and student. You know why?... As a teachers I get to learn more about the learning needs of my students, their level of understanding and how they grasp the subject content, and can I adjust my teaching methods accordingly [T8]

This remark points out the adaptive nature of formative assessments, which promote a student-centred learning environment. The feedback mechanism inherent in these assessments enables teachers to modify their approaches based on real-time insights into student understanding, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of their instruction. This adaptivity ensures that the educational process about imparting knowledge, and responding to the educational needs of each student, thereby improving the quality and efficacy of education.

During the observation, it was evident that formative assessments were instrumental in providing valuable feedback to both students and teachers. The teachers were observed utilizing assessment data to tailor their instructional strategies to better meet the different learning needs of their students. This adaptive approach helps to enhance the educational quality and promotes a more student-centred learning environment.

The teachers, on several instances, were seen adjusting their teaching methods based on the insights gained from formative assessments, ensuring that instruction was responsive and effective. This responsiveness was particularly beneficial in addressing individual student needs, promoting deeper understanding and engagement with the curriculum. Through continuously assessing student progress and understanding through various formative assessment techniques, some of the teachers (particularly, Participant T1, T3, T4 and T7) were able to create a supportive learning environment where students felt empowered to actively participate and take ownership of their learning journey. Furthermore, the teachers demonstrated a commitment to using assessment data to refine their instructional approaches, demonstrating a dedication to enhancing educational outcomes for all students.

Additionally, some of teachers emphasized on the role of continuous assessment in maintaining high educational standards. They noted the comprehensive benefits of continuous assessments in ensuring educational excellence and addressing learning gaps early. They remarked that;

Well, it has helped me identify and address gaps in knowledge and skills early of my student. This is particularly important in a subject like social studies where understanding and context are key.

This assertion emphasises the importance of formative assessments in maintaining high educational standards. Through continuously monitoring student progress, educators can intervene early to address any deficiencies, ensuring that all students remain on track with their learning objectives. This proactive approach is particularly important in disciplines like Social Studies, where contextual understanding and critical thinking are essential. Continuous assessment promotes academic excellence and ensures that all students receive the support they need to succeed.

In all, the responses from the teachers illustrate the significant contributions of formative assessments to enhancing educational quality. These assessments create more dynamic and responsive learning environments, facilitate tailored instructional strategies, and ensure continuous academic support, ultimately leading to a more effective and engaging educational experience for students.

4.5.3 Identified areas for improvement

While formative assessments have significantly enriched educational quality and student learning outcomes in the Krachi East Municipality, there are identified areas where improvements can further enhance their effectiveness and consistency across various educational settings. The feedback from teachers pinpoints specific shortcomings as well as also suggests actionable strategies for overcoming these challenges, which is important for the continuous improvement of educational practices. During course of the interview, when asked about the area they identified for improvement, some of the teachers focused on the need for better integration of technology in formative assessments. These teachers recognize the limitations imposed by the prevalent use of traditional methods and identify the integration of technology as a important area for enhancement. The participant T3 remarked at;

Well with regards to the area needing to improve, I think would have to be the integration of technology in formative assessments. Many of us are still reliant on traditional methods, as you witnessed in my class. So I believe that bringing on board computers and smart laptops has already proposed by the government would make assessments more engaging and more accessible. This way the students who missed classed can still benefit from online resources. [T3]

This remark highlights a gap in the adoption of modern educational technologies which, if addressed, could transform the accessibility and engagement levels of formative assessments. The use of digital tools can provide flexible and interactive ways for

students to engage with content, particularly beneficial for those unable to attend regular classes. Integrating technology would also facilitate a broader range of assessment types and potentially improve the tracking and analysis of student performance data.

Additionally, some of the teachers mentioned the need for standardization in formative assessment practices. They points out the variability in formative assessment practices across different classrooms and stresses the importance of a standardized approach. For example participant T6 submitted that;

We need to work on standardizing formative assessment practices across all classes to ensure every student benefits equally. Currently, there's a lot of variability depending on the teacher's familiarity and comfort with these assessments. Establishing a school-wide policy or framework could help normalize these practices and make sure they're uniformly implemented. [T6]

This response emphasises the disparities in how formative assessments are applied, which can lead to unequal learning opportunities. Standardizing practices through a comprehensive policy would ensure consistency and fairness in the educational process, allowing all students to benefit equally from formative assessments. This could enhance educational outcomes by ensuring that all students are assessed with the same rigor and given equal opportunities for feedback and improvement.

Finally, some of the teachers emphasize the importance of professional development in formative assessment strategies. They mentioned the need for structured professional development programs to equip teachers with necessary skills for effective formative assessment. For example participant T2 submitted that;

Well... I guess an area for improvement would be to train teachers to effectively use formative assessment strategies. While some of us are taking personal initiatives, a structured, official training program would ensure all teachers are equipped with the skills and knowledge to

implement these strategies effectively. This would undoubtedly elevate the overall educational quality and student achievement. [T2]

This comment points to the essential role of continuous professional development in maintaining high educational standards. Through providing teachers with regular training on the latest assessment strategies and technologies, educational institutions can enhance the effectiveness of their teaching methodologies, thereby improving both educational quality and student outcomes. Such training programs would also support teachers in staying current with educational innovations and best practices, promoting a more informed and adaptable teaching workforce. The areas identified for improvement by teachers included technology integration, standardization of practices, and professional development, highlight key strategies for enhancing the implementation of formative assessments. Addressing these areas can lead to more engaging, equitable, and effective educational experiences, ultimately supporting the goal of continuous improvement in teaching and learning.

Collectively, these findings are important as they highlight the transformative potential of integrating regular, interactive assessments into teaching practices. They underline the significant positive impact of formative assessments on student learning outcomes. The findings suggest that regular, interactive assessments integrated thoughtfully into daily teaching practices can transform educational experiences, directly and indirectly enhancing the learning environment. The findings from this theme affirm that formative assessments significantly enhance student understanding, engagement, and academic achievement. This aligns with the body of research emphasizing the importance of formative assessments in promoting higher academic performance and deeper comprehension (Black & Wiliam, 1998). The regular use of quizzes and group discussions, as mentioned by the teachers, aids in concept retention and also cultivates

critical thinking skills, a finding supported by Popham (2008) who notes that well-designed formative assessments can lead students to engage more thoroughly with the content.

Furthermore, teachers observed an improvement in student confidence and participation due to interactive assessments. This observation is consistent with the work of Hattie (2012), who found that feedback from formative assessments could significantly boost students' self-efficacy by clarifying learning targets and expectations. The findings also highlight that formative assessments enhance the educational quality by promoting a dynamic, interactive classroom environment where students are active participants. This supports the research by Darling-Hammond (2010), who argues that formative assessments are crucial for creating learning environments that support critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration—skills vital for the 21st century. Teachers also noted that formative assessments provide valuable feedback that informs teaching strategies, aligning with the findings of Stiggins (2005), who states that such assessments help teachers meet learners' needs more effectively, thereby enhancing the adaptivity and responsiveness of instruction.

Despite the positive impacts, there are areas for improvement in the use of formative assessments. Teachers identified the need for better integration of technology, standardization of assessment practices, and enhanced professional development. These findings echo the recommendations of Fullan (2007), who suggests that effective implementation of educational innovations, including formative assessments, requires systemic support such as technology integration, consistent training, and policy frameworks. Moreover, the call for standardization across teaching practices resonates

with the work of Earl (2012), who discusses the importance of consistency in assessment to ensure equity and fairness in educational outcomes.

Overall, the findings from Theme Three reveal that formative assessments have a profound impact on enhancing student learning and overall educational quality. They improve cognitive and affective student outcomes and also contribute to a more engaging and effective educational environment. The study corroborates existing literature on the benefits of formative assessments and highlights areas for further improvement to maximize their effectiveness.

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter detailed out the results and discussion on formative assessment practices among Social Studies teachers in the Krachi East Municipality in the Oti Region of Ghana. It began by profiling the demographics of the participants, including age, gender, and years of teaching experience, across various schools. This information sets the stage for understanding the varied contexts within which these educators operate. The core of the chapter is structured around three main themes: Formative Assessment Strategies, Challenges and Constraints, and Implications on Student Learning and Educational Quality. Each theme is broken down into subthemes that explore the details of formative assessment practices. For instance, under Formative Assessment Strategies, the discussion includes the types of strategies employed, their effectiveness, and innovations in strategy implementation. The study explored into specific strategies like group discussions, project-based assessments, quizzes, and oral questioning. It highlights how these methods facilitate active learning, continuous feedback, and promote student engagement. The effectiveness of these strategies is confirmed through improved student participation, deeper understanding of material, and enhanced

academic performance. Challenges such as resource limitations, large class sizes, and inadequate professional development are addressed under the Challenges and Constraints theme. These issues are shown to significantly impact the implementation of effective formative assessment. The chapter also discusses the broader implications of these practices on student learning and educational quality. Formative assessments are shown to positively influence educational outcomes by enhancing student engagement, understanding, and critical thinking skills.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, conclusion, and recommendations of the study.

5.1 Summary of Findings

Current Formative Assessment Strategies Employed

The study revealed a variety of formative assessment strategies employed by Social Studies teachers in the Krachi East Municipality, demonstrating their commitment to enhancing student learning and engagement. Teachers are utilizing a range of techniques including quizzes, oral questioning, group discussions, and project-based assignments. This variety in assessment methods supports a dynamic and interactive classroom environment, allowing for multiple ways to measure and support student learning effectively. One significant finding was the creative integration of peer assessments and reflective activities, which encourages students to engage critically with the curriculum. Teachers noted that these strategies help in reinforcing the students' understanding of the material and also enhance their critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills. For example, the use of group projects and peer teaching sessions facilitated a more inclusive and participatory classroom dynamic, enabling students to learn from each other and gain confidence in their abilities.

Challenges and Constraints Faced in Implementing These Strategies

Despite the progressive use of various formative assessment strategies, several challenges hinder their effective implementation. A primary concern across the schools was the lack of resources, including insufficient textbooks and limited access to technology, which restricts the ability of teachers to implement diverse and interactive assessment methods effectively. This resource limitation is a significant barrier, leading to a reliance on traditional and less engaging methods of assessment.

Class size was another significant challenge mentioned by the teachers. Large class sizes make it difficult to manage personalized feedback and ensure that all students are adequately supported in their learning journeys. The difficulty in providing individual attention in overcrowded classrooms often results in less effective formative assessment practices. Moreover, professional development emerged as an important area needing attention. Teachers expressed concerns about the lack of comprehensive training on the latest formative assessment techniques. This gap in skills and knowledge can lead to inconsistencies in the application of formative assessment strategies, impacting the overall quality of education provided.

Implications of These Practices on Student Learning Outcomes

The application of formative assessment strategies has profound implications for student learning outcomes and overall educational quality. The findings indicate that when effectively employed, formative assessments can significantly enhance students' understanding of Social Studies, improve their critical thinking abilities, and boost their academic confidence. Teachers reported noticeable improvements in student engagement and participation, attributing these gains to the interactive nature of the assessments used. Formative assessments were also found to contribute positively to

educational quality by promoting a more dynamic and responsive learning environment. Through continuous feedback and adjustments in teaching strategies, teachers are able to address students' specific needs, thereby personalizing the learning experience. This adaptability ensures that educational practices are inclusive and equitable in promoting success for all students.

Moreover, the study highlighted that formative assessments play a fundamental role in preparing students for real-world challenges. Through encouraging analytical thinking and problem-solving, these assessments help develop essential life skills, making students better equipped to navigate their future educational and career paths. In sum, the key findings from this study underscore the vital role of formative assessments in enhancing both student learning outcomes and the quality of education. While challenges exist, the benefits of these assessments are clear, advocating for continued and expanded use of innovative assessment strategies within the educational system.

5.2 Conclusions

The study demonstrates that formative assessment is not merely an instructional technique used by Social Studies teachers in the Krachi East Municipality, but a transformative pedagogical approach capable of reshaping classroom engagement and learning outcomes. While teachers employ strategies such as quizzes, peer assessment, group discussions, and technology integration with notable success, the broader implication is that formative assessment, when properly supported, can serve as a powerful driver of learner-centred education in Ghana's basic schools.

The findings reveal that formative assessment strengthens student engagement, deepens conceptual understanding, and nurtures critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Beyond improving academic performance, these practices cultivate reflective learners

who actively participate in knowledge construction. This positions formative assessment as a key mechanism for achieving competency-based education, which remains central to Ghana's educational reform agenda.

However, the study equally highlights that the sustainability and scalability of formative assessment practices are constrained by systemic barriers, particularly large class sizes, limited instructional resources, and inadequate continuous professional development. These challenges indicate that the issue is not teacher willingness or pedagogical awareness, but structural limitations within the educational system. Without targeted institutional support, the full transformative potential of formative assessment may remain underutilized.

Importantly, the study underscores that alignment with national educational goals requires more than policy endorsement; it demands deliberate investment in teacher capacity building, technological infrastructure, and assessment-focused curriculum reforms. Strengthening these areas would enable formative assessment to function not simply as a classroom strategy, but as a national quality assurance tool that enhances equity, responsiveness, and student-centred learning.

Ultimately, this study affirms that formative assessment holds significant promise for improving educational quality in Ghana. However, its long-term impact depends on systemic commitment to addressing structural constraints and embedding assessment literacy into teacher development frameworks. By repositioning formative assessment as a central pillar of instructional practice rather than a supplementary activity, educational stakeholders can foster a more adaptive, critically engaged, and future-ready student population.

5.3 Implications of the Study

5.3.1 Practical Implications

The findings of this study suggest that formative assessment practices have a direct and measurable influence on the achievement of student learning objectives in Senior High Schools within the Krachi East Municipality. The evidence indicates that when teachers employ structured questioning, timely and specific feedback, peer assessment, and continuous low-stakes assessment tasks, students demonstrate improved conceptual understanding, greater classroom participation, and stronger alignment with intended learning outcomes. This implies that formative assessment functions not merely as a monitoring tool, but as a strategic instructional mechanism that actively shapes students' progress toward curriculum objectives in Social Studies.

However, the study also reveals that the extent to which learning objectives are achieved depends on the quality and consistency of formative feedback. Structural constraints such as large class sizes, limited instructional time, and inadequate professional development reduce the depth and individualization of feedback, thereby limiting its full impact on student achievement. This indicates that the effectiveness of formative assessment in meeting learning objectives is context-dependent and requires institutional support.

Overall, the study underscores that achieving student learning objectives is not solely determined by curriculum content, but by the deliberate integration of feedback-oriented assessment practices within classroom instruction. Strengthening teachers' assessment literacy and providing supportive learning environments are therefore essential for maximizing the impact of formative assessment on student learning outcomes.

5.3.2 Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study provide important implications for Feedback Theory within the context of formative assessment in Social Studies education. First, the results support the core assumption of Feedback Theory that continuous and constructive feedback enhances student engagement, understanding, and academic confidence. The reported improvements in participation, critical thinking, and comprehension affirm the theory's claim that feedback is central to learning improvement.

Second, the study extends Feedback Theory by demonstrating that feedback in classroom practice is not limited to teacher-to-student interactions. The effective use of peer assessment, group discussions, and reflective activities suggests that feedback operates as a collaborative and dialogic process. This broadens the theory's application to include peer-mediated and self-regulated feedback within formative assessment environments.

Third, the findings refine the theory by revealing that contextual factors such as large class sizes, limited resources, and inadequate professional development significantly influence the effectiveness of feedback. While Feedback Theory emphasizes quality and timeliness, this study shows that structural constraints shape how these principles are implemented in practice. Thus, feedback effectiveness must be understood not only as a pedagogical issue but also as a systemic one.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings from this study, several actionable recommendations can be formulated to enhance the implementation and effectiveness of formative assessment strategies in the Krachi East Municipality and potentially in similar educational contexts. These recommendations are directed towards educators and school

administrators, policy-makers, and the academic community, each aimed at addressing specific challenges and leveraging opportunities identified through the research.

5.3.1 Recommendations for educators and school administrators

1. Teachers should incorporate a variety of formative assessment tools to cater for diverse learning styles. Tools such as interactive quizzes, peer assessments, and project-based evaluations can enhance student engagement and understanding.
2. Ghana Education Service should invest in continuous professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their understanding and implementation of formative assessment strategies. Workshops, seminars, and online courses can provide educators with the latest techniques and tools in assessment practices. Create a culture of sharing best practices within schools where teachers can regularly exchange ideas and strategies that have been effective in their classrooms.
3. Schools should invest in and utilize educational technology to facilitate formative assessments. This could include software for quizzes, online discussion forums, and platforms that allow for the digital submission and review of assignments.
4. To manage large classes effectively, teachers can organize students into smaller groups for certain activities, allowing for personalized feedback and closer monitoring of individual progress.
5. Teachers should develop a school culture where feedback is valued and utilized for continuous improvement. This involves training students to give and receive constructive feedback, thus enhancing the learning process.
6. School administrators should ensure adequate allocation of resource, both material and human, to support effective formative assessment practices. This

could involve securing funding for classroom technologies like interactive whiteboards, student response systems, and educational software that facilitate interactive learning and assessment. Develop school libraries and resource centres that provide additional materials for students and teachers, supporting diverse and inclusive assessment strategies.

7. Encourage collaborative planning and sharing of best practices among teachers within and across schools. This collaboration can lead to improved assessment strategies and a more cohesive educational approach.

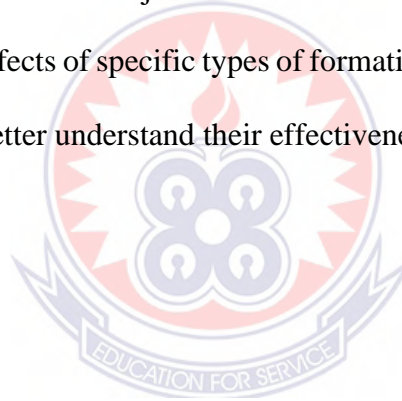
5.3.2 Recommendations for policy-makers

1. The Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ghana Education Service should develop and implement policies that recognize and support the role of formative assessments in improving educational outcomes. These policies should encourage schools to adopt modern assessment strategies and provide guidelines on their effective implementation.
2. The government of Ghana through various agency responsible for education should increase funding to schools, specifically earmarked for resources that support formative assessments, such as technology, training, and additional teaching aids.
3. Ministry of Education should incorporate formative assessment training into teacher certification and ongoing professional development curricula. Ensure that all teachers have access to training that covers the latest in assessment strategies and technologies.
4. The government should provide grants for research and development in educational assessment tools and strategies. This support can promote innovation and the adoption of new technologies in education.

5. Government should launch initiatives that educate communities about the benefits of formative assessments. Community understanding and support can significantly influence the educational culture and enhance the focus on student-centred learning.
6. Establish national standards for formative assessments to ensure consistency and quality across all educational institutions. These standards can guide schools in implementing effective and equitable assessment practices.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should explore the impact of formative assessment strategies on student performance across different subjects and educational levels. Additionally, studies could investigate the effects of specific types of formative assessments in diverse socio-economic settings to better understand their effectiveness and adaptability.



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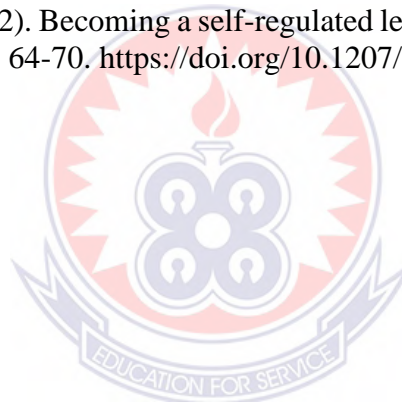
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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Guide for Formative Assessment Strategies

This interview is intended to collect data on the above topic in the Partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.) degree in Social Studies Education by the University of Education, Winneba. You are therefore requested to respond to the items as frankly as possible. The information you give will be used only for the purpose of this study. I pledge to honour confidentiality and anonymity. Thank you for your expected co-operation and support to make this study meaningful and successful.

How are the current formative assessment strategies employed by Social Studies teachers in the Krachi East municipality, Oti Region?

- (a) Which type formative assessment strategies do you employ during your lesson delivering?
- (b) How effective are the strategies you used ?
- (c) What innovative strategies during do you during implementation ?

What are the challenges faced by social studies teachers in implementing effective formative assessment techniques in the Krachi East Municipality, Oti Region?

- (a) What are the challenges hindering Social Studies teachers in implementing formative assessment strategies?
- (b) What are the challenges confronting you as a Social Study teacher in your school which make implementation of formative assessment strategies difficult?
- (c) Which strategies have you adopted to overcome the challenges?

What the implications of formative assessment practices on the students learning objectives in the Krachi East Municipality, Oti Region?

- (a) Have the strategies made any impact on the students learning outcomes?
- (b) Have the strategies made contributions to students learning outcomes ?
- (c) Which areas do you think need improvement?

Appendix B

Observation Checklist

The ultimate of this observation checklist is find out if teachers in the Krachi East municipality practice formative assessment in the classroom.

Tick Yes or No with a brief explanation.

How are the current formation assessment strategies employed by Social Studies teachers in the Krachi East Municipality, Oti Region?

1. Do teachers implement current formative assessment strategies in the course of lesson delivery?

Yes []

No []

2. When effectively used, do the strategies make any positive impact in the course of teaching and learning?

Yes []

No []

3. Do the teachers employed different assessment strategies to make more effective and aligned with evolving needs of the learners?

Yes []

No []

What are the challenges faced by Social Studies teachers in implementing effective formative assessment techniques in the Krachi East Municipality, Oti Region?

4. Are there any challenges that confront Social Studies teachers in implementing formative assessment in the municipality?

Yes []

No [].....

5. Does the school has a peculiar challenge that make the practice of formative assessment difficult?

Yes [].....

No [].....

6. Do teachers employed different strategies to navigate this challenges?

Yes []

No [].....

What are the implications of formative assessment practices on student learning objectives in the Krachi East Municipality, Oti Region?

7. Are there any obvious impact of the strategies on the students learning outcomes?

Yes [].....

No [].....

8. Have the strategies made any significant impact on to students learning outcomes?

Yes[].....

No[].....

9. Are there any areas of the formative assessment strategies you think there is/are the need for improvement?

Yes [].....

No [].....