



Research Article

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School-Based Assessment Practice of Junior High School Teachers in Bawku Municipality in the Upper East Region of Ghana

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Abstract

The study investigated teachers' Classroom assessment practice in the Bawku Municipality in the Upper East Region of Ghana. The design the study adopted was descriptive. A Census survey was used and a total of 313 Junior High School teachers in the Bawku Municipality were involved. A questionnaire was used for the data collection. The statistical tools used for the analysis of the data were independent t-tests and ANOVA. The findings revealed no difference in the nature of SBA practices with regard to gender in the Bawku municipality. The findings also indicated that years of teaching did not influence the nature of SBA practices. The results also revealed that teachers' academic qualification does not influence the nature of SBA practices. The study, therefore, recommended that Junior High School head teachers and supervisors of the schools in Bawku municipality should encourage teachers to continue to learn more about current development on SBA to be well informed with current guidelines regarding SBA. Finally, Bawku Municipality Education Directorate should continue to organize in-service training on SBA practices so teachers to further have more opportunities to design and explore the various component of Class Assessment Tasks (CATS).

Keywords: School-Based Assessment, Formative Assessment, Summative Assessment, Class Assessment Tasks

1. Introduction

Education plays a pivotal role in which human; social and economic developments of a nation can revolve. Thus, universal national development can be achieved through a vital mechanism of education. The sustainable economy of Ghana is largely depending on meaningful educational standard-based, relevant curriculum planning and teaching methodology (Oduro, 2015). The aforementioned can be accomplished if there is a quality assessment process in the educational system.

Educational assessment is a method for acquiring data to make decisions on students, curriculum, and programs (Amedahe & Asamoah-Gyimah, 2016). According to them, the easiest way teachers assess their students is by test. They were, however, quick to add that students can also be assessed by other technics such as observation, interviews, sociometric anecdotal, and rating scales.

Assessment for this study is assessment for learning (formative) and assessment of learning (summative). The former is done during the course of instruction of teaching and learning. Nitko (2001) explained that formative assessment requires the collection of information on students periodically through observation, classroom exercises, homework, and class tests. He added that formative assessment provides feedback about the progress being made by the teachers and the students. However, summative assessment judges the wealth of teaching and learning at the end of the course (Nitko, 2001). Nitko further explained that summative assessment tries to ascertain the degree to which the overall learning objectives have been achieved.

In Ghana, the Common Entrance Examination, Middle School Leaving Certificate, General Certificate of Education Ordinary, and Advanced Levels were one-shot examinations with a period of three-hour in some of the subjects. These assessments, at that time, did not assess the ability to put into practice the acquired knowledge and skills (Akuffo-Badoo, 2006). Student progress was determined by a one-shot terminal examination written under controlled conditions after several years of schooling. These exams created high levels of stress among students as it was to determine their future occupation paths; that means a bright student who for some reason could not do well within the speculated time of the examination was considered to fail that paper. (Akuffo-Badoo, 2006). The teacher's assessment of students during their stay in school was not considered.

The final examinations had an influence on teaching and learning in the classroom. A teacher's work output was determined by the students' external results and this made teachers to the test. (Ajayi, 2011). Akplu as cited in Akuffo-Badoo (2006) believed that this assessment system has engrossed the whole instruction process and has misdirected teachers' efforts to provide education for life. He added that students were trained to write Common Entrance Examinations, Ordinary level examinations, and Advanced level examinations. Given the aforementioned reasons, there were clarions calls for a change in the style of the assessment (Quansah, 2005).

The problems that came with the terminal assessment brought about the introduction of Continuous Assessment (CA) in Ghana. Sophia (2013) is of the view that Continuous assessment is an organized form that takes place during the stay of students in the school. Sophia further argued that determining students' final grade requires taking into consideration the performance of a student over the entire period of study on an educational course in a variety of ways and situations. This agreed with Nugba (2012) that Continuous assessment takes place in an orderly form during a course or program and relevant information is collected and these add up to determine the student's final grade.

In addition, Nitko (2004) posited that CA is a continuing procedure of gathering and making meaning of students learning for decisions making about teaching and learning. Nitko pointed out some advantages of continuous assessment: First, it encourages regular interaction among teachers and students enables teachers to know the strengths and weaknesses of students and provides remediation. Second, students receive feedback about their performance and this enables them to concentrate on mastering the learned concept.

In practicing continuous assessment, information on the student's achievements is obtained at reasonably short intervals using various techniques. This system is done daily, weekly, fortnightly, and monthly depending upon the specific program, the availability of time, and resources. The acceptance of the concept and its practice in Ghana came as a result of educational reforms, particularly the implementation of the Junior Secondary School (JHS) program in the 1987/88 academic year. In primary school up to Junior Secondary School, the assessment was planned to be continuous. In the early years of the implementation of the CA concept, the Ministry of Education expected the teachers to:

1. Give enough assignments to students.
2. Administer three class test which was supposed to be marked out of 40.
3. Give projects/homework to students.

These three items were to be scored out of 100 and strike down to 30% as an internal score for each student and add it to the end-of-term examination.

The introduction of Continuous Assessment (CA) into our schools also had associated challenges with its implementation. For instance, Quansah (2005) asserted that the CA system was frequently conducting tests and unfair allocation of marks. Amedahe as cited in Nugba (2012) is of the view that teachers who received measurement instructions at the tertiary level and those who did not receive measurement instructions do not abide by the basic principles of test construction and mark allocation. The aforementioned concerns have something to do with the credibility of the CA and subsequently, as part of efforts to make assessment more comprehensive and credible, the School Based Assessment (SBA) was introduced into the curriculum of primary to Senior High Schools to enhance the continuous assessment (Curriculum Research and Development Division, CRDD, 2007). The implementation requires the use

of the f individual test, group exercises, and project work. The purpose of this is to train a complete person in the three domains: the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learner.

School-Based Assessment (SBA) is a system of gathering information on students' performance as they stay in school. Alufohai and Akinlosotu (2016) posited that SBA is a method of evaluating the progress and achievement of learners in educational institutions to obtain the true picture of the ability of each learner and help each learner to develop his / her abilities to the fullest extent possible. Kingsley, Omorogiuwa, Evelyn, and Aibangbee (2017) asserted that the SBA is a holistic assessment system conducted in schools to assess the students' cognitive, affective and psychomotor of students learning. They further explained that SBA is also a monitoring device for teachers that assist them to obtain feedback information to improve teaching and learning. Okonkwo (2002) explained that SBA is an assessment method in which the achievement of learners in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains are determined using scores obtained from different instruments and techniques such as projects, individual tests, and group assignments from the moment they become learners until they complete their schooling.

According to CRDD (2011), SBA intends to provide an internal assessment system that would help schools to achieve:

1. School-based assessment should be standardized in all schools in the country.
2. To have a reduced assessment task.
3. Provide guidelines for teachers to construct the various component of the tasks.
4. Establish standards of achievement in each subject in a school.
5. To have a moderation system that will ensure the accuracy and reliability of marks.

Although the SBA system was to acquire the true picture of student performance (CRDD, 2011), the researcher's observation of colleague teachers indicates that teachers who were supposed to be the key players in the implementation process, perhaps, do not seem to have much idea of the SBA processes. Md-Ali, Veloo & Krishnasamy (2015) found that some teachers do not have knowledge of the SBA components and that they do not know whether is only formative assessment or summative assessment, or, both. Their studies show that teachers did not receive adequate preparation in SBA. In Ghana, for instance, Awoniyi (2016) found that Senior High School teachers do not have a basic understanding of the SBA guidelines. The aforementioned studies suggested a study on the use of school-based assessment guidelines, construction, and administration of test items, scoring, and use of test scores to enhance teaching. These aforementioned assertions seem to suggest that teachers lack knowledge of school-based assessment practices in their classrooms.

Furthermore, Majids (2011) study in Benue State shows that teachers find it difficult to implement SBA in their classrooms. Also, Azleena (2007) indicated that teachers come across problems in filling the SBA according to the schedule. Meanwhile,

for any new system to achieve its intended purpose in schools, teachers must be prepared adequately for the changes. (Alufohai & Akinlosotu, 2016)

There is inconclusive evidence in the literature with regard to gender in terms of practicing SBA. Veloo, Md-Ali, and Krishnasam (2016) argued that there is no gender difference in practicing SBA. However, Daniel, Sauri, Benjamin, and Charles (2019) argued that there is a significant difference in formative assessment practice among gender.

There are many empirical studies (Adediwuro, 2012; Talib, Naim, Ali & Hassans, 2014; Mkpae & Obowu-Adutchay, 2017; Omorogiuwa & Aibagbee, 2017) that confirm that teachers' knowledge and practices of the SBA is insufficient thereby making them have a negative attitude toward the SBA procedures. Other researchers also reported an insignificant number of teachers in Junior High Schools (JHS) exhibit a positive attitude towards SBA practices (Adeneye & Veronica, 2013; Veloo, Hariharan & Md-Ali, 2015). These aforementioned studies, however, fall short of providing empirical reasons to back these varied attitudes that teachers have toward SBA practices.

There are other studies (Atsu, 2011; Awoniyi, 2016) that have reported insufficient knowledge of SBA practices in Ghana. It was these gaps in the literature that called for this study which sought to investigate the practices of SBA among Junior High School teachers in the Bawku Municipality.

2. Hypotheses

1. H_0 : There is no statistical difference in the nature of SBA practices in terms of gender.
 H_1 : There is a statistical difference in the nature of SBA practices in terms of gender.
2. H_0 : There is no statistical difference in the nature of SBA practices with regard to years of teaching.
 H_1 : There is a statistical difference in the nature of SBA practices with regard to years of teaching.
3. H_0 : There is no statistical difference in the nature of SBA practices in relation to teachers' academic qualifications.
 H_1 : There is a statistical difference in the nature of SBA practices in relation to the teachers' academic qualifications.

3. Methodology

The research design for this study was a descriptive survey which is within the quantitative research approach. Amedahe and Asamoah-Gyimah, (2018) indicated that the descriptive design allows the gathering of data to test hypotheses regarding the current status of the respondents under study. All 377 Junior High School teachers in the

public junior high school who were at the post in Bawku Municipality in the Upper East Region of Ghana were used for the study. Ary as cited in Sophia (2013) explained that a census survey covers the entire population of interest. Gay (1992) also agreed that in a census survey effort is made to get data from each member of the population.

The study adapted Ahenkora's (2019) School-Based Assessment questionnaire for teachers which was originally developed to investigate the perception of SBA in KEEA in the Central Region of Ghana. The adapted questionnaire had 54 items with Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.862. The adapted questionnaire was modified in other to be relevant for the study.

The final modified questionnaire was made up of 16 items which comprised part one the background of the respondents and part two the nature of teachers' practices of SBA. The questionnaire was pilot tested at Binduri district in the Upper East Region of Ghana to certify that the instrument was usable. Binduri District was used because Bawku Municipality and Binduri have some characteristics in terms of language, and commercial activities and they were one Municipality before Binduri was carved from Bawku Municipality. The pilot test allowed the researcher to polish up the data collection instruments and identify ambiguities, difficult items, and areas that needed improvement in the design. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the entire questionnaire had 0.78.

4. Data Analysis Techniques and their Justification

The background information of the respondents which was items (1, 2, and 3) was analyzed using frequency and percentage. Hypothesis one tested whether a significant difference exists between male and female teachers in terms of the nature of SBA practices. The responses to these items were analyzed using an independent sample t-test. Hypothesis two tested whether a difference exists in the groups of teaching experience (5 years and below, 5-10 years, and 10 years and above) with regard to the teachers' practices of SBA. One-way ANOVA was used to test this hypothesis. Hypothesis three tested whether a difference exists between teachers who have different academic qualifications in their SBA practice. The responses for these items were analyzed using one-way ANOVA.

5. Results

5.1 Gender distribution

Table 1. Gender Distribution

| Gender | Frequency | Percentages |
|--------|-----------|-------------|
| Female | 94 | 30.0 |
| Male | 219 | 70.0 |
| Total | 313 | 100.0 |

Source: Field survey (2022)

The result from the data in Table 1 shows that 219 (70.0%) of the respondents were males whereas 94 (30.0%) were females. The findings appeared to have more male teachers in Bawku Municipality than female teachers. This suggests that female children in Bawku Municipality do not take education seriously or it could be that most of the female educated ones do not like the teaching profession.

5.2 Teachers' Years of Teaching experience.

Table 2. Teachers' Years of Teaching

| Number of years in teaching | Frequency | Percentages |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Below 5 years | 176 | 56.2 |
| 5-10 | 93 | 29.7 |
| Above 10 years | 44 | 14.1 |
| Total | 313 | 100.0 |

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 2 shows that 176 which represents 56.2% of those respondents taught for less than five (5) years, 93(29.7%) of the respondents taught for 5 to 10 years, and 44 participants representing 14.1% had taught for more than 10 years. The results show that most of the participants in the study taught below 5 years.

5.3 Academic Qualification

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents by Academics Qualification

| Academics qualification | Frequency | Percentages |
|-------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| WASSCE | 19 | 6.1 |
| Cert. A | 3 | 1.0 |

| Academics qualification | Frequency | Percentages |
|-------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Diploma | 189 | 60.4 |
| First Degree | 102 | 32.6 |
| Total | 313 | 100.0 |

Source: Field survey, (2022)

The results from the data in table 3 show majority of 189 (60.4%) of the teachers in Bawku municipality holds a diploma and, 102 teachers representing 32.6% of respondent holds a first degree. 19 teachers representing 6.1 % in Bawku Municipality hold WASSCE and 3 teachers representing 1 holds Certificate "A". The results, therefore, indicated that the majority of the teachers hold diplomas in education in Bawku Municipality. The higher number of diploma teachers could be attributed to the limited recruitment done by the Ministry of Education in 2017 where most teachers who hold diploma certificates were posted to Bawku Municipality.

Research hypothesis one was to find out differences that exist among male and female teachers with regard to the nature of SBA practices. To carry out this, an independent sample t-test was used. The independent variable was gender (male and female) and the dependent variable was the responses to the nature of teachers' practices.

Table 5. Independent Samples t-Test Comparing Gender

| Gender | M | SD | SEM | T | Df | P-value |
|--------|-------|------|-----|-----|-----|---------|
| Male | 40.00 | 7.52 | .50 | .80 | 311 | 0.411 |
| Female | 39.32 | 7.58 | .78 | | | |

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 5 shows that there were not many differences in the mean scores of the independent variables. From the descriptive results, males ($M = 40.00$, $SD = 7.52$) were found to be practicing SBA more than females ($M = 39.32$, $SD = 7.58$). However, the results of the independent sample t-test show a p-value of 0.411 representing that there were no significant differences between male ($M = 40.00$, $SD = 7.52$) and female ($M = 39.32$, $SD = 7.58$); $t(311) = 0.80$, $p = 0.411$, (2-tailed). Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This implied that there were no statistically significant differences between male and female teachers with regard to the nature of SBA practices. Thus, male and female teachers had the same training from the various institution they completed which might have been attributed to the nature of their SBA practices being the same.

Research hypothesis two was tested to find out whether there was a difference in the nature of SBA practices with regard to the number of years of teaching. The independent variable was the number of years of teaching and the dependent variable

which was the nature of SBA practices. The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was carried out to show whether there were any statistically significant differences between the means of years of teaching and the nature of SBA practices among Junior high schools in Bawku. The independent variable (years of teaching) was three levels; 5 years and below, 5-10 years, and 10 years and above were measured categorically. The dependent variable was teachers' level of SBA practices and it was measured continuously.

Table 6. Result of One-way ANOVA

| | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|------|-------|
| Between Groups | 94.34 | 2 | 47.17 | 0.82 | 0.438 |
| Within Groups | 17646.18 | 310 | 56.92 | | |
| Total | 17740.530 | 312 | | | |

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 6, shows no difference in the number of years of teaching on the nature of SBA practice, $F(2, 310) = 0.829, p = 0.438$, (2-tailed). This implies that the nature of SBA practices with regard to teachers' years of teaching is the same irrespective of the number of years of practice. This, therefore, refutes the adage that practice brings perfection.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics of Years of Teaching

| Years of teaching | N | M | SD |
|-------------------|-----|-------|------|
| Below 5 years | 176 | 39.87 | 7.85 |
| From 5-10 | 93 | 39.27 | 7.46 |
| Above 10 | 44 | 41.05 | 6.36 |
| Total | 313 | 39.86 | 7.54 |

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 7 shows the means were almost the same that is teachers who taught above 10 years ($M = 41.05, SD = 6.36$), below 5 years ($M = 39.87, SD = 7.85$) and from 5-10 years ($M = 39.27, SD = 7.46$). However, the difference was just by chance. therefore, there is no statistically significant difference in the nature of SBA practices in relation to teachers' years of teaching.

5.4 Hypothesis Three

H_0 : There is no statistical difference in the nature of SBA practices in relation to teachers'

academic qualifications.

H₁: There is a statistical difference in the nature of SBA practices in relation to teachers' academic qualifications.

At an alpha level of .05, hypothesis three was tested to find out whether there was a difference in the nature of SBA practices concerning teachers' academic qualifications. The data was made up of an independent variable (academic qualification) and a dependent variable (teachers' practices of SBA which was continuous). The teachers were made to respond to their level of SBA practice on thirteen items (items 4 to 16) using always, very often, sometimes, and never. It was scored as (always = 4, Very often = 3, sometimes = 2, and never = 1) The one-way ANOVA was conducted to find out whether there were statistical differences between the means of academic qualification on SBA practices among junior high school teachers in Bawku municipality. The independent variable was: WASSCE, Certificate 'A', Diploma, First Degree, and Masters.

Table 8. Result of One-way ANOVA

| | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|------|-------|
| Between Groups | 117.19 | 3 | 39.06 | 0.68 | 0.562 |
| Within Groups | 17623.33 | 309 | 57.03 | | |
| Total | 17740.53 | 312 | | | |

Source: Field data (2022)

Table 8 shows that there was no statistical difference in the nature of school-based assessment practices regarding teachers' academic qualification, $F(3, 30) = 0.68$, $p = 0.56$, (2-tailed). This implies that the nature of SBA practice in Bawku Municipality is the same across all levels of teachers' qualifications. This is surprising because the level of training of a WASSCE holder cannot be the same as a first-degree holder and therefore one would have thought that the level of SBA practices about teachers' qualifications would have differed, however, the results are contrary. Table 9 presents the statistics of teachers' Academic qualifications.

Table 9. Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Academic Qualification

| Years of teaching | N | M | SD |
|-------------------|-----|-------|------|
| WASSCE | 19 | 40.21 | 8.72 |
| Cert A | 3 | 42.33 | 8.14 |
| Diploma | 189 | 39.39 | 7.67 |
| First Degree | 102 | 40.59 | 7.07 |
| Totals | 313 | 39.86 | 7.54 |

Source: Field data (2022)

Table 9 suggested that the means were almost the same that teachers who have Certificate 'A' ($M = 42.33$, $SD = 8.14$) do better in SBA practice followed by First Degree ($M = 40.59$, $SD = 7.07$). The descriptive statistics further indicated that those who have WASSCE practiced SBA ($M = 40.21$, $SD = 8.72$) and the teachers who have Diploma practiced least in SBA ($M = 39.39$, $SD = 7.67$), however, the difference was just by chance. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no statistical difference in the nature of SBA practices in relation to teachers' academic qualifications was not rejected.

6. Discussion

Practices of School-Based Assessment are critical in our Ghanaian educational system, and how teachers carry out this is a great concern to stakeholders in education. Based on this, how male and female teachers practice SBA was subjected to statistical proof. The results revealed no differences between male and female teachers in terms of the nature of SBA practices. The results could be attributed to the fact that there was the same training for male and female teachers on the SBA. This confirms that of Veloo, Md-Ali, and Krishnasam (2016) that with regards to the knowledge and challenges towards the implementations of SBA, there were no significant gender differences. They, however, added that male teachers were more prepared to carry out SBA activities as compared to their female counterparts. The finding of the current study is inconsistent with Daniel, Sauri, Benjamin, and Charles (2019) that there was a significant difference in formative assessment knowledge and practices among male and female teachers in the Upper West Region of Ghana.

The finding further shows that there was no difference among the three groups of teachers with regard to the nature of teachers' practices of SBA. In practice, JHS teachers in Bawku Municipality are similar if not the same for the different year groups. It seems that the saying experience is the best teacher did not fit in this as those who had experience over the years in practicing assessment did not show in this case. Contrary, Talib, Naim, Ali, and Hassan (2014) stated that teachers who taught for many years practice SBA in their classrooms better than less experienced teachers. Sophia (2013) agreed with Talib, Naim, and Hassan that the number of years of teaching has a greater impact on teachers' assessments practices with regard to planning, construction, scoring, and feedback

The finding also shows that there were no significant differences among the four categories of teachers in Bawku Municipality with regard to SBA practices. The finding agrees with Loretta and Ellah (2014) who found no significant differences in the opinions of teachers of different qualifications on the practice of SBA techniques in science classes in Senior High Schools in Benue State. However, the findings of the current study contradict Setlhomo (2012) that primary school teachers particularly those with only certificates needed more skills training in assessments application, statistical application,

and criterion-referenced testing.

7. Conclusions

It is observed that teachers in Bawku Municipality follow the laid down procedures outlined in the SBA manual irrespective of their gender. The study further concluded that there were no differences in gender with regard to the nature of SBA practices. Also, the study concluded that the nature of SBA practices was not influenced by the number of years in teaching. Consequently, the number of years in teaching did have little impact on the SBA practice. The study concluded further that teachers' academic qualification does not influence teachers' nature of SBA practices.

8. Recommendations

1. Junior High School headteachers and supervisors of the schools in Bawku should encourage teachers to continue to learn more about the current development in SBA. This would aid the teachers to be well informed with current guidelines regarding SBA.
2. Bawku Municipality Education Directorate should organize in-service training for teachers on the best practices of SBA so that they would continue to have more opportunities to design the various component of the SBA.
3. Schools' management should enhance the supervision of teachers to ensure continuous strict adherence to the principles and procedures of school-based assessment.
4. Since the academic qualification did not have any differences in teachers' nature of SBA practices, it was recommended that School Improvement Support Officers and Headteachers should continue the inspection of the teachers' lessons and work documents regularly to maintain their practices of the SBA.

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