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**ASSESSMENT AND CURRICULUM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:
EVALUATION OF THE SYSTEMIC IMPACT OF THE SSSCE ON
THE SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES
CURRICULUM IN GHANA**

BY

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ABSTRACT

Assessment is seen as the process of determining the extent to which the changes in behaviour, pertaining to curriculum objectives, are actually taking place in learners. Thus it is argued that as the array of valuable educational objectives expand, so must the instruments necessary for the appropriate assessment of these outcomes (Cizek, 1997).

Social Studies in the Senior Secondary Schools in Ghana has been transformed into a trans-disciplinary, thematic based subject, with special emphasis on affective and skills outcomes. However, the assessment of its learning outcomes, particularly at the external level, leaves much to be desired since only the traditional form of assessment is employed in this direction. It is therefore argued that the use of only the traditional method of assessment in such an innovative curriculum will inhibit its pursuit in the classroom and doom it to a short life (Broadfoot, 1995; Kliebard, 1988).

The aim of this study was therefore to evaluate the systemic impact of the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination on the Social Studies curriculum as a whole, with specific reference to teachers' classroom practices, curriculum content, its implementation and students' attainment. Six research questions (three major and three subsidiaries) were used to form the bases of the research. A mixed-method research design was employed in collecting and analysing data from various sources (including teachers, past SSSCE Papers and the syllabus). The findings are presented and subsequently discussed over three chapters in the thesis.

Some of the major findings include the evidence that:

1. The SSSCE does not adequately cover all the goals and objectives of Social Studies in Ghana;
2. The SSSCE has a constraining impact on teachers' classroom practices; and
3. There is a proportional relationship between the curriculum coverage of the external assessment and that of teachers in their instructional and assessment practices.

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1.0.0 INTRODUCTION

1.0.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter presents the general introduction to the research that resulted in this thesis. It is divided into seven (7) sections, namely: the background of the study, statement of the problem for research, statement of the purpose of the study, the aims and objectives of the study, the significance of the study, definitions of research variables and terms and an overview of the whole thesis.

The section that discusses the background of the study is further divided into five (5) subsections. The first subsection discusses the introduction and nature of the Social Studies curriculum in Ghana. It provides the historical overview of the development of Social Studies in Africa, and Ghana in particular and also describes the curriculum antecedent of the subject before the introduction of the new one in 1998. The second subsection is devoted to the description of the strategies (teaching and assessment) that have been recommended in the syllabus for the implementation of the Social Studies curriculum in senior secondary schools (SSSs) in Ghana. The next subsection deals with the assessment culture in Ghana and is followed by another subsection that describes how the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) is currently assessing learning outcomes in Social Studies at the SSS level in Ghana. The last, but not the least, subsection under the first section of this chapter discusses the constraints, within the system, facing the effective implementation of the new Social Studies curriculum in Ghana's SSSs.

As stated above, the second section of the introduction presents a succinct statement of the problem that was researched or tackled in this particular study and is followed by the section on the purpose of the study. The fourth section of this chapter is where statements of the aims and objectives of the study have been listed. Section five, on the other hand, discusses the significance of the study in three broad areas (i.e. policy, practice and discourse). The operational definitions of research variables and terms are provided in the sixth section of the chapter followed by the last section, which presents an overview of the rest of the thesis.

1.1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1.1 The Introduction and Nature of the Social Studies Curriculum in Ghana

“Over the past several years, Social Studies has become a more visible school subject and the conception of learning Social Studies has evolved from doing and knowing to experiencing and making meaning. The tacit and piecemeal curriculum that has long characterized the Social Studies classroom seems to be gradually giving way to a more coherent and integrated set of objectives, benchmarks, and performance indicators. This approach is goal oriented with an emphasis on learner outcomes: the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and disposition to action that teachers wish to develop in students” (Farris, 2001: 59-60 making reference to Alleman & Brophy, 1999).

The above citation precisely describes the evolution of Social Studies, as a single discipline of study, among the school’s curriculum in Ghana. It has evolved from a collection of specific History and Geography topics, which used to characterise the early Social Studies curriculum, into an issue centred (trans-disciplinary) subject. The main emphases are now on developing/inculcating the relevant knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will enable learners to make reflective decisions and act on them to solve both their personal and societal problems.

Social Studies, as a single school subject, is a relatively new discipline, in Ghana and many other countries, even though it has been around for a considerable number of years. It is new because most of the subjects/disciplines in the school curriculum, often referred to as the traditional disciplines, predate Social Studies by decades and even centuries. It is also new because it has still not developed any body of knowledge of its own (Kissock, 1981) and still relies on concepts and generalisations from existing Social Science and Humanity disciplines. It was introduced in the United States of America (U.S.A) based upon recommendations in the 1916 report of the Social Studies Committee of the Commission on the Reorganisation of Secondary Education (Kissock, 1981; Jarolimek, 1967). According to Jarolimek (op cit), the introduction of Social Studies, as one of the curricula in American schools, was a response to certain social pressures, mounting at the time, on the need to inculcate certain values and sense of nationalism into the youth of America.

In much of Africa, the introduction of Social Studies as part of the school's curriculum was preceded by the formation of the African Social Studies Programme (ASSP) in 1968. The ASSP involved 15 member countries namely; Botswana, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi and Nigeria, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia (Kissock, 1981). The formation of the ASSP was as a result of deliberations, to that effect, at a conference held in Mombasa, Kenya, where the secretariat of this "first truly international Social Studies organisation" (Kissock, 1981: 2) is based.

The introduction of Social Studies in Ghana thereafter was preceded by a follow up Educational Conference to Mombasa in Winneba, Ghana, in 1969 during which it was adopted as part of the school curriculum. It was first introduced in the Primary Schools in 1972, where it was called Social/Environmental Studies. Also in 1976, all teacher-training colleges in Ghana were asked to start the preparation of future Basic School teachers to teach 'integrated' Social Studies instead of the individual and discrete subjects of history and geography. The above continued to be the situation until the Educational Reforms of 1987, when the period of pre-tertiary education was shortened to 12years, consisting of 6years Primary School and 3years Junior Secondary School (JSS) on one hand forming the compulsory 9years Basic education, and the optional 3years SSS.

The Reforms also saw the introduction of certain new disciplines of study into the curriculum of the schools in the country. Social Studies was then introduced and confined to the JSSs and the Teacher-Training institutions, where teachers were to be prepared to teach the subject in the basic schools. The subject in the primary school became known as Environmental Studies. However another discipline, known as Life Skills, was introduced at both the JSS and the SSS levels to enable students to acquire certain important social skills and attitudes necessary for their effective participation in the social and economic life of the country. However, going through the syllabi of Life Skills at both levels, one cannot help but conclude that its introduction was an attempt by Home Economists/Home Scientists (since they were those who pioneered the introduction of the subject and thus had it placed under their

domain and control) to 'hijack' the skills and affective aspects of Social Studies, as it was originally conceived. This, perhaps, might have resulted from the fact that Social Studies at that time has been reduced to the teaching of topics taken, wholly as they were, from the history, geography and sometimes economics curricula in the schools.

In 1998 Social Studies in Ghana underwent another evolution or perhaps a revolution, on this occasion, with its introduction in the SSSs. This was occasioned by a recommendation of the 1994 Educational Review Committee, which asked for the introduction of Social Studies to replace Life Skills at the SSS level. This committee was established with specific terms of reference; to investigate and find solutions to the factors that contributed to the massive failure of the first batch of the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE) candidates, who also happened to be the first batch of students of the 1987 Reforms to graduate from the SSS. A major reason given for this recommendation was that there was no linkage, but rather total discontinuity, between the Life Skills at the JSS and Life Skills at the SSS levels. Whereas there was no avenue for all students, at the SSS level, to continue with the learning of Social Studies, because at this level the subject got replaced by the traditional discrete social science disciplines which are elective and thus optional.

The foregoing gives credence to Kelly's (1999: 111) assertion "that something has not worked leads too readily to the assumption that it cannot work, rather than to a consideration of the possibility that one has got it wrong". The review and thus the change took place without the consideration of the fact that 'massive failures' are usually the case with almost all first time national/standardised assessments (Pratt, 1994). The above recommendation was however accepted and adopted by government and became the basis upon which a panel of experts was constituted in 1996 by the Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) of the Ghana Education Service (GES) to see to the implementation of this particular recommendation. The task of this curriculum panel was to design a Social Studies curriculum for the SSS, which will provide the basis for the continuation of learning,

in the discipline, from the junior secondary school level to the senior secondary school level.

This committee, however, succeeded in transforming Social Studies from the amalgam (Kissock, 1981; Quartey, 1984; Barnes, 1982) of discrete traditional Social Science disciplines, which it used to be, to one that is issues centred (Farris, 2001; Noddings, 2000; Kissock, 1981) and problem solving in nature (Martorrela, 1994; Banks, 1990; CRDD, 1998). This complete change might have, probably, been informed by what Gross, McPhie & Fraenkel (1970: 4) put as “Today almost no one calls for amalgamated offerings entitled Social Studies”. Although, on the surface, it might seem difficult to lay hands on any specific reason that informed the drastic change, in character and scope, of the Social Studies curriculum, an examination of the composition of the panel gives credence to the argument that in any curriculum endeavour “selection of decision makers significantly influences the nature of the programme” (Kissock, 1981: 7). This is because the panel that designed the new SSS syllabus was different, both in composition and orientation, from the panel that designed the JSS Social Studies curriculum in 1987.

It is, particularly, important to note that Social Studies is also a discipline/course of study at the two teacher preparation universities in Ghana. These are the University of Cape Coast (UCC), which was the first to introduce it as a programme of study, and the University of Education, Winneba (UEW), which followed later. The current situation in the Social Studies front, in Ghana, is that whereas the UCC still runs the course as an amalgam of history, geography and economics, the UEW has theirs reflecting the issue centred and problem solving curriculum, as introduced in the SSSs and JSSs, since 1998. The above situation, coupled with the differences between the nature of the Social Studies curriculum in the teacher training colleges (TTCs), on one hand, and the JSSs and SSSs on the other, exposes the undercurrent of curriculum politics, controversies, disagreements and different conceptions that have characterised the implementation of the subject since its introduction in the country.

It should be noted that the differences in the conception of Social Studies are not confined to Ghana alone, but do exist in other countries, where they have generated much debate. The debate about how Social Studies should be conceived or defined is very much held within the context of what is referred to as curriculum politics (Kelly, 1999; Giroux, 2000; Coulby, 2000), where opposing and competing social forces, educators and scholars, among others vie for the primacy of their ideas in and control over the schools' curriculum. The very title 'Social Studies' has raised considerable debate among many stakeholders in the educational enterprise to the extent that in some states of the US, it is rather called History. In all cases, the ideas that hold sway in curriculum planning and design and thus influence the whole curriculum are the conceptions of the discipline by the majority or most influential group in the debate or on the curriculum panel.

It is also significant to note that these debates, in Social Studies, are characterised into two extremes. According to Gross, McPhie & Fraenkel (op cit), there are those who feel that Social Studies content must necessarily come from the parent social science disciplines and believe that its instruction and assessment should follow similar procedures and questions, as applied in the parent disciplines. Other scholars and educators disagree and hold the position that Social Studies content should rather include carefully selected knowledge and skills from relevant disciplinary areas, which will enable learners to effectively handle issues of human survival. The second school of thought believes that the purpose of Social Studies is not to produce miniature social scientists, but moral and intelligent citizens who are capable and willing to use their knowledge to make their world more meaningful and to work for worthy human ideals (Gross, McPhie & Fraenkel, op cit).

In Ghana, the debates and positions held on Social Studies, even though subtle and not readily recognisable in the public domain, can also be placed under the two schools identified above. These schools of thought, for the purpose of the discussions in this chapter and their scholastic bases in Ghana, can be termed as the Cape Coast and the Winneba schools, where differing/opposing views are held about what should be the content of the Social Studies curriculum. The Cape Coast School is

synonymous with the position that topics/contents from the social science disciplines should be amalgamated or fused and taught as Social Studies, and is depicted by the current Social Studies curriculum in the TTCs, the 1987 JSS Social Studies syllabus (CRDD, 1987) and the Social Studies programme at the UCC.

The Winneba School, on the other hand, calls for a fully integrated (at the level of relevant and distillate knowledge) single discipline that will enable learners to deal with problems/issues of importance to man's survival and is depicted by the new Social Studies syllabi for both the SSS and the JSS (CRDD, 1998 and CRDD, 2001 respectively) and the Social Studies programme at UEW. The discussions above clearly indicate the extent to which these debates have swayed the nature and contents of Social Studies, at least in Ghana, back and forth between these two schools. That is, the conception and nature of the Social Studies curriculum is determined by the composition of the panel that is tasked to design it and not by any universally agreed upon conception or definition of Social Studies.

Though, for now, the Winneba School seems to hold sway in Ghana, there is the danger of it being catapulted out of the school curriculum, sooner or later, if care is not taken and proper measures instituted to check the systemically inherent barriers to its successful and effective implementation. While these barriers will be fully discussed in another section of this chapter, it is important to note that the challenges facing the implementation of the Social Studies curriculum world wide are sometimes traced to debates concerning its definition and content. However it is argued that most of the definitions in contention are reflections of development within the American society and thus are bound to hinder the implementation of Social Studies, in many countries, if they are applied without considering their social basis (Kissock, op cit). In essence, Social Studies is being viewed as a creature of the society in which it is being implemented and therefore must be instituted in response to the needs, as defined by the society and have the flexibility to change as these needs also change.

As indicated earlier on, the nature and content of Social Studies in Ghana, which have been predicated on the conception of the subject by panel members tasked to design its curriculum, have undergone some radical changes over time and also look different at different levels and institutions. For instance, the preamble of the 1987 JSS Social Studies syllabus presents the philosophy of the subject as an integrated inter-disciplinary approach to the study of society and the environment (CRDD, 1987). The change of attitudes and values of pupils was also seen as its greatest priority goal. What this means is that the focus of the subject, as conceived by the curriculum designers, is to achieve attitudinal and value change through the study of society and the environment by the integration of the various social science disciplines. From this philosophy were derived eleven (11) aims or general objectives, some of which are:

1. Be able to identify major problems facing developing and developed communities and locate sources of major problems, knowing how they affect national and international issues;
2. Acquire the habit of withholding judgement on internal and external issues until all related facts are known and analysed; and
3. Develop an appreciation for the need for co-operation, tolerance and inter-dependence of people of different nations and cultures.

The content of the subject as presented in the syllabus is organised spirally in the expanding communities form (Taba, 1967) on units from the School Community, Local Community, National Community, West Africa, and Africa to the World Community. Within these Units/Sections are topics like:

1. The School as a Family
2. Local Government Administration
3. The Coming of the Europeans
4. Colonial Rule
5. Various Governments in Ghana after Independence
6. Relief of Ghana
7. Drainage of Ghana
8. The ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States)

9. The OAU (Organisation of African Union)
10. The UNO (United Nations Organisation)
11. Transportation, and
12. Agriculture

One wonders how integrated the topics, listed above, are. At best they may be termed as inter-disciplinary, in the sense that they represent topics or content from the traditional social science disciplines to constitute topics in a single discrete subject. This kind of curriculum resembles the General Science curriculum in Ghana and many other countries, where attempts to integrate science knowledge for instruction at the pre-tertiary level of education, rather amounted to the amalgamation of existing topics from Chemistry, Physics and Biology. The nature of the 1987 JSS Social Studies curriculum in Ghana, firstly, defeats the whole purpose of integration, which is supposed to show links between subject matter and accommodate practical interdisciplinary concerns in examining social issues. Secondly the content provided challenges one's imagination as to how the teaching of these topics could lead to the attainment of the greatest priority goal, changing the attitudes and values of pupils. This is particularly so when Tamakloe (1988) reported that 74% of Social Studies tutors in the TTCs were still teaching the separate disciplines of history and geography, instead of the integrated Social Studies (whatever that meant, judging from the nature of the content).

Some of the reasons attributed to this phenomenon were due to the lack of competent Social Studies tutors and the fact that those tutors trained in the traditional disciplines of history and geography were reluctant to teach Social Studies in spite of the fact that their products were supposed to teach it in the Primary and Junior Secondary Schools (Tamakloe, op cit). The above gives clear indication of the fact that the teaching of the subject, at that period, in all the levels of education that it was introduced was no better, as it was confined to the teaching of facts and unrelated ideas from the social science disciplines, as some of the topics listed above suggest. Thus as intimated in the paragraph above, there was no way that the content of Social

Studies then and how instructions were being carried out in it could lead to the attainment of the aims, much more that of the greatest priority goal.

Juxtaposing the above facts against the thesis that Social Studies is a creature of the society that instituted it and thus must be implemented in response to the needs of that society (Kissock, op cit), it can be said that Social Studies in Ghana, before 1998, was certainly not responding to any need, not even those defined by the curriculum designers themselves, in the country. In response to such poor curriculum designs, where important issues and ideas are swamped by facts, Noddings (2000) suggested that curriculum should be organised around themes of care/ideas, instead of the traditional disciplines.

The new development in Social Studies, in Ghana, which began in 1997 was not as a result of any planned critical review and thus the perceived failure of the old one, but was as a result, as already indicated, of a recommendation by the Educational Reforms Review Committee. This committee came out with the recommendation that Social Studies should be introduced in the SSS as a CORE (compulsory) subject to replace Life Skills which existed then. The different nature that the subject assumed after its review and design was due to the fact that the panel that designed it was very different, both in composition and orientation, from the panel that designed the 1987 JSS Social Studies syllabus. Interestingly these panels were each led, at different periods, by the main protagonists of the two, opposing, schools of thought, so far as Social Studies in Ghana is concerned. The foregoing thus supports the fact that selection of decision makers significantly influences the nature of the programme.

The new Social Studies in Ghana has the following as its rationale:

“Social Studies is citizenship education. The subject deals with societal problems relating to the survival of the individual and society. Society is dynamic and an ever-changing entity and so are societal problems. Knowledge of Social Studies will help students understand the way of life of their society and enable them function effectively in their society. It will also equip them with the relevant knowledge, attitudes, values and skills to help them solve their personal and societal problems” (CRDD, 1998: ii)

The above rationale is then expanded in the form of eleven general aims, some of which are:

1. Understand the effect of societal problems on individuals
2. Develop enquiry and problem-solving skills for solving personal and societal problems
3. Develop critical and analytical skills for assessing societal issues
4. Develop positive attitudes and values towards individual and societal issues, and
5. Develop the ability to adapt to the developing and ever-changing Ghanaian society.

The aim about adaptation is clearly in congruence with Carnoy's (2000) view that Post-industrial countries should move towards universal post-secondary education that enhances students' self-reliance, ability to adjust to rapid change and mobility, even though this aim is rather for students in the secondary school and the fact that Ghana is, obviously, not a post-industrial country.

Up to this point one could say that the new Social Studies is not substantially, at least in conception and focus, different from the old one, though there are differences in the details of the general aims. One other similarity is the choice of eleven general aims. Why this particular number (11)? No one can tell, however we are told that such a large number of statements of curriculum aims/goals are often a reflection of the competing conceptions of members of the curriculum development panel (Pratt, 1994).

In spite of the above, a major innovation and thus departure of the new Social Studies curriculum from the old one is the nature and scope of its content. The content is based on themes arising out of the needs and problems of contemporary Ghanaian society (CRDD, 1998). This clearly meets the criterion that Social Studies must be instituted and implemented in response to needs, which are defined by the society that creates it. It also goes to show that needs assessment of the Ghanaian society was done and that the curriculum content was selected on the basis of a

hierarchy of human needs. The conception here was that there are five basic needs confronting every society and these are:

1. Replacement of Members of the society (Procreation)
2. Deriving a Sense of Purpose for the individual and the group
3. Socialising new members of the society (Education)
4. Maintenance of Law and Order (Government), and
5. Production and Distribution of Goods and Services (Economy).

In the individual's attempt, therefore, to satisfy these needs, s/he is bombarded, almost on daily basis, with certain problems and challenges that clearly threaten his/her survival and that of the society. Hence the need to equip the individual with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will enable him identify and subsequently solve these problems.

Some of the topics/units provided under these themes/centres of need in the SSS curriculum are as follows:

Procreation:

- i. The Institution of Marriage
- ii. Adolescent Reproductive Health
- iii. Population Issues.

Sense of Purpose:

- i. Knowing Myself
- ii. Rights and Responsibilities of the Individual
- iii. Productivity in Ghana.

Education:

- i. Socialisation
- ii. Education and Societal Change
- iii. The Youth and National Development.

Government:

- i. The Constitution and Nation Building
- ii. Leadership and Followership
- iii. Challenges of Democracy in Ghana

Economy:

- i. Resource Development and Utilisation in Ghana
- ii. Our National Economic Life
- iii. Entrepreneurship.

Each of the topics, in the SSS Social Studies syllabus, has a Problem or Issue of Survival defined under it, and teachers are to tailor their instruction towards finding solutions to these problems. The following are some of the problems defined under their respective topics:

ADOLESCENT REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH:

“The adolescent has very little knowledge of his/her reproductive health. Unfortunately neither the parents nor teachers feel committed to impart the needed knowledge. The adolescent is therefore compelled to receive information from peers and other uninformed sources. These lead them into unwelcoming practices, which tend to hamper their development. As adolescents mature and become sexually active, they face these risks with too little factual information, too little guidance about sexual responsibility and too little access to health care. There is consequently rampant wave of the following: Adolescent pregnancies; adolescent paternity; denial of paternity of pregnancies; child abandonment; and irresponsible sexual relationships” (CRDD, 1998: 25).

PRODUCTIVITY IN GHANA:

“It is common knowledge that the output of work in Ghana is low. This implies that the individual’s productivity level is equally low. This trend of affairs in Ghana is traceable to poor attitude to work. Despite this the Ghanaian is constantly making demands for higher wages. It is time the Ghanaian realised the relationship between output of work per man-hour and wages. Increases in wages do not necessarily lead to better quality of life. We must therefore try to improve upon our attitude to work” (CRDD, 1998: 54).

SOCIALISATION:

“Education in Ghana has partially failed to tackle the process of socialisation. The school system for example places more emphasis on knowledge acquisition to the neglect of the development of values and attitudes. This has negative repercussions on the well being of the individual”. (CRDD, 1998: 8)

CHALLENGES OF DEMOCRACY IN GHANA:

“Democracy in Ghana is a young institution. Thus many of the ideas inherent in a democratic system have not yet been fully conceptualised. As a result there are conflicting interpretations. We have not yet been able to establish the right relationship between the government and the minority (opposition), the executive, the individual and the state. Such misconceptions have rendered us incapable of subscribing to the limitations in the rights conferred on us by the constitution”. (CRDD, 1998: 39)

ENTREPRENEURSHIP:

“In Ghana there is the tendency for people to always look up to government for employment. Developments over the years show a deliberate attempt on the part of government to encourage private efforts at establishing business enterprises. In spite of this many people have not taken up the challenge to be self-employed. This may be attributed to the lack of entrepreneurial abilities”. (CRDD, 1998: 65)

Going through the list of topics and problems defined above, it becomes evident that the content of the current Social Studies curriculum in the SSS (CRDD, 1998) is really dealing with issues of great importance to the survival of the Ghanaian society and the individual members therein. It is also clear from the above that the current Social Studies curriculum, in Ghana, has both immediate and futuristic ideals and goals, all geared towards meeting the perceived needs of the individual and development of the nation. Such an innovative curriculum is supported by the view that all curriculum planning should include concerns of the challenges of the future (Parkey & Hass, 2000).

It is again evident that none of the topics of the new curriculum, as can be seen above, is precisely and directly related to any topic in the traditional social science disciplines. They are rather, really, contemporary problems or issues confronting the Ghanaian society. Thus if its implementation should lead to the attainment of the objectives as spelt out in the syllabus, then it is obvious that Social Studies will really be achieving significant educational goals and thus justify its relevance in the country's educational system. Is its implementation, currently, leading to the attainment of its objectives and thus its goals? Another important question is what

are the strategies and methods put in place, both in the syllabus and practically, to see to the successful and effective implementation of the 'new' Social Studies in the SSS in Ghana?

1.1.2 Strategies for the Implementation of the SSS Social Studies Curriculum

For the successful implementation of the current Social Studies curriculum in the SSS in Ghana, a recommendation has been made for it to be allocated three (3) periods of 40minutes duration each per week. That is one double (80minutes) period and a single period (CRDD, 1998). Also many guidelines as to how it should be taught and assessed have been provided for teachers in the syllabus, to guide them in their instructional and assessment planning, decisions and practices. To make things easier for these teachers, profile dimensions in the cognitive and affective domains have been listed and explained so as to help them understand, specifically, what their instructions are to achieve. Also to make instruction in this curriculum effective, uniform and well focused for teachers all over the country each unit/topic has a well defined Problem, as already indicated, under it. The problems for each of the topics are then followed by specific instructional objectives, which are to enable teachers focus on helping learners acquire the relevant knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will enable them to come out with potential solutions to the problems, as defined.

Even though this provision seems to go contrary to the suggestion by some educators and scholars that instructional objectives should be prepared primarily by those who will do the teaching (Ebel & Frisbie, 1991), its presence in the curriculum under discussion seems well intentioned. That is, for some obvious reasons such as; promoting uniformity, eliminating teacher biases and incompetence, and setting guidelines, curricular planners and designers in Ghana always provide specific instructional objectives in the syllabi of all the subjects of study for teachers to use in their instruction. In any case teachers are also encouraged in all these syllabi, Social Studies included, to re-order the instructional objectives provided and develop new ones when the need arises.

Teachers are therefore expected, in their instruction, to lay emphasis on assisting students to develop analytical thinking, practical problem solving techniques and the acquisition of positive attitudes and values (CRDD, 1998). They are to do these by selecting a real problem for each lesson, and letting students analyse, suggest solutions, critique solutions offered, justify solutions and evaluate the worth of possible solutions to the problem posed. Teachers are also tasked to employ the use of enquiry, projects and investigative study to help develop students' problem solving skills. If this is the condition or environment in/through which the objectives of the curriculum are to be achieved then, going by Mager's (1990) thesis that the performance and the conditions of the test item (or assessment tool) should match those of the objectives to be assessed, the same condition or environment should be the focus and thus the main intent of assessment.

Many recommendations have been made in the syllabus of the SSS Social Studies on how teachers should go about assessing outcomes attained by their students. For instance the guidelines for evaluation and continuous assessment by classroom teachers suggest the use of oral questions (interviews), quizzes, projects, class tests (including written assignments on topical issues), homework and end-of-term test (structured in the manner of the SSSCE). The syllabus, specifically, tasked teachers to:

“Try to ask questions and set tasks and assignments that will challenge your students to apply their knowledge to issues and problems as we have already said above, and that will engage them in developing solutions, and developing positive attitudes as a result of having undergone instruction in this subject”. (CRDD, 1998: vii)

It is also stated in the syllabus that the suggested evaluation tasks are not exhaustive; therefore teachers are encouraged to develop other creative evaluation tasks to ensure that their students have mastered the instruction and have formed behaviours implied in the instructional objectives under each topic/unit. This implies that teachers are expected to employ other innovative assessment tools that would enable them to assess effectively all learning outcomes resulting from their instructions of students in the curriculum. To this end, the profile dimensions of the two main domains of

Table 1.1 DISTRIBUTIONS OF EXAMINATION PAPER WEIGHTS AND MARKS. (CRDD, 1998: xii)

Dimensions	Paper 1	Paper 2	Continuous Assessment	Total Mark	% Weight of Dimension
Knowledge and Understanding	40	30	-	70	35
Use of Knowledge	20	50	10	80	40
Attitudes and Values	-	-	50	50	25
Total Marks	60	80	60	200	-
% Contribution Of Papers	30	40	30	-	100

learning in Social Studies (Cognitive and Affective) have been defined, as already stated, and relevant action verbs that may serve as performance indicators have been provided to guide teachers in the construction of their test items and other instruments of assessment.

Emphasis, in the syllabus, is laid on the fact that assessment in the classroom (continuous internal assessment) will essentially focus on Attitudes and Values. Since continuous assessment forms 30% of the computation of the final score for the SSSCE it is envisaged that assessment in the affective domain will form about 25% of the final score in the SSSCE. Teachers were thus to have employed the use of observation, interview and attitudinal scales, among others, in assessing learning outcome of students in the affective domain. Interestingly, no provision was made for the assessment of this domain in the SSSCE assessment conducted by the WAEC. Table 1.1 (page 17A) provides a vivid picture of the structure of assessment in Social Studies, as recommended in the syllabus.

Though no reasons were provided for this arrangement, they are definitely not far fetched. These may range from the assertion that attitudes and values are difficult to assess by paper and pencil tests (Quartey, 1998) to the argument that “many Social Studies objectives are vague and ambiguous, especially those in the affective domain, and do not readily lend themselves to precise measurement” (Gross & Allen, 1970: 481). Other reasons might be that “goals and objectives in Social Studies like capability to use skills, acceptance of desirable attitudes and demonstration of appropriate actions are difficult to assess and do not lend themselves adequately to total judgement based on paper and pencil test” (Kissock, 1981: 92) and the fact that indirect measurement of skills is no substitution for the real thing; especially when the behaviour or performance in question can be observed directly and evaluated in a precise, real and cost effective manner (Ebel & Frisbie, op cit).

WAEC thus, quite naturally, uses the paper and pencil test (both essay and multiple choice items) to assess for knowledge recall and application in Social Studies. However this instrument, used in assessing only a minimal fraction of learning

outcomes in Social Studies, carries a weight of 70% in the final score of the students' assessment in the SSSCE at the expense of other important learning outcomes (skills and affective) of the subject. Thus looking at the percentage weight given to the SSSCE and the fact that it is measuring the trivial of learning (Ebel & Frisbie, 1991) in Social Studies, one will not be far from right in saying that the instrument of assessment employed by WAEC in assessing Social Studies learning is without justification and thoroughly incompatible, and thus irrelevant, to the goals and objectives of the subject.

In spite of the above guidelines for both the teaching and especially the assessment of learning outcomes in the SSS Social Studies, in Ghana, the classroom practices however present a reality that is quite different from the recommendations in the syllabus. Most of the recommended methods of teaching the subject, for instance, have been jettisoned by the teachers due, particularly, to the sheer numbers of students in a class in the country. Though a DFID (1998) report gives the pupil-teacher ratio in public senior secondary schools for the 1995/96 academic session as 17, the reality is that most classrooms in the nation's SSS are occupied by an average of 40 students. Multiply this number by the fact that an SSS class (e.g. SSS 1) will have students occupying about 5 classrooms. Thus if a teacher is to take the subject in a class, s/he will be dealing with about 200 students, on the average. The discrepancy in the figures here are, to some extent, acknowledged by the DFID, when it stated in its report that figures on the total number of teachers collected from the Ministry of Education (MOE) are different from those collected from the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT).

The case of the implementation of the new Social Studies curriculum for the SSSs in Ghana becomes even more critical if one is to examine how learning outcomes in this discipline are being assessed, both by the WAEC and teachers. There are indications that teachers, for some reasons (which have been verified in this research), are discarding the alternative forms of assessment made available to them in the syllabus and going by only the traditional form of assessment, as employed by the WAEC. There is also evidence that the nature of the items in the SSSCE do not

permit teachers, who are being pressurised to devote more of their instructional time to solely prepare their students to do well at the SSSCE, to adequately cover all the goals and objectives of Social Studies in Ghana. In other words, the culture of assessment in the country is such that it is making teachers teach and assess only a small fraction of the Social Studies curriculum in the SSSs in Ghana.

1.1.3 The Culture of Assessment in Ghana

The culture of assessment in Ghana may not be very different from other countries where it is steeped in the traditional realm. Before the 1987 Educational Reforms, assessments carried out in Ghana's educational system (both internal and external) were solely summative. That is a one shot test at the end of either the school term or the programme of study. There used to be only what was termed as Terminal Examinations as a medium of internal assessment in Ghanaian schools. That is a test for each school subject at the end of the academic term. The purpose of these assessments was to find out the extent to which learners have achieved the objectives that were set for them at the beginning of the school term, and also to find out the overall progress of a learner and determine whether or not s/he should progress to the next programme of study or level of education.

In the case of external assessments, there is one international body, the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), mandated to carry out assessments for the purposes of selection, placement and certification in English speaking West African Countries, including Ghana. The assessments carried out by WAEC were the Common Entrance Examinations (CEE), Middle School Leaving Certificate Examinations (MSLCE), General Certificate of Examinations – Ordinary Level (G.C.E.-'O' Level) and the General Certificate of Examinations – Advanced Level (G.C.E.-'A' Level) for the pre-tertiary institutions in these countries. The CEE was for the selection and placement of Primary Six (P6) and Middle school candidates who wanted to go to the secondary school. The MSLCE was a terminal certification examination after ten (10) years of basic school education (that is 6years primary and 4years middle school education). The G.C.E – 'O' Level on the other hand was held for students who have completed five years of secondary school education, both as a final certification

examination and as a means of selection and placement into the two-year 'Sixth Form' education and other profession oriented institutions. In the case of the G.C.E – 'A' Level, finalists of the two-year sixth form education were supposed to sit it as a means of certification and also selection and placement into the universities.

In all the instances above, the focus of assessment was on the cognitive domain and the content areas of the curriculum that were deemed as readily lending themselves to measurement. This thus made the traditional form of assessment or paper and pencil tests (including multiple choice items and essay test items) the only means of assessment in the educational system. That is, the modes of assessment of learning outcomes, employed by teachers, in the schools was a direct replica of the modes of assessment employed by the WAEC in all the examinations they conduct. Thus the only modes of assessment teachers, at all levels of education and in all subjects, employed in assessing the learning outcomes of their students were the multiple choice test items and various types of the constructed response test items. These constructed response test items varied from filling in or completing statements with one word or a phrase to extended essays. In most cases students/pupils in their final years, at any of the levels of education in the country, are made to sit mock assessments, which either use past external examination papers or other papers that mimic the external examination in all forms.

However, the educational reforms of 1987 also brought about changes in the types and forms of assessments to be carried out in schools at the pre-tertiary levels of education in Ghana. In this direction a more formative mode of assessment (Cumulative/Continuous Assessment) was introduced at these levels of education and the nationwide standardised tests brought down to only two types. The first is the Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE), to be taken by those who have undergone nine years of basic and compulsory schooling (six years Primary and three years Junior Secondary education). It serves as both a final/terminal certification examination and a means of selection and placement, of those who are able to qualify, into the Senior Secondary Schools (SSSs). The second type of standardised/nationwide test is the Senior Secondary School Certificate

Examinations (SSSCE), which are taken by those who have undergone three years of education in the SSS. This also serves as a means of final certification and selection and placement, of those who are able to qualify, into tertiary institutions, consisting of the universities, polytechnics and other profession oriented colleges (Teacher Training, Nursing, Agriculture and Forestry among others).

The new assessment policy demands that students' assessment records, gathered throughout their time in school (also known as continuous assessment records) should be made to form part of their final assessment and thus integrated into their final grades at the end of their programme of study. Thus for pupils sitting for the BECE, all their assessment records, compiled over the nine years of the basic education, are aggregated and sent to the WAEC to be added to their scores on the BECE. The proportion of the continuous assessment scores in the final scores and thus grades of the pupils is 40% of the total. In other words, the ratio of internal assessment scores to the external assessment scores, in the final grades of pupils is 2:3. The above ratio, of internal assessment scores to the external assessment scores in final examination grades, used to be the same for candidates of the SSSCE, who have completed three years of senior secondary education in Ghana. This arrangement was however changed for SSS students in 1998 into a ratio of 3:7. That is continuous assessment scores now form only 30% of the final assessment grades while the SSSCE scores form 70%.

In most of the syllabi of subjects for the new educational system in Ghana, new and alternative forms of assessment were recommended to teachers to enable them to gather more comprehensive data on students'/pupils' learning. That is, the assessment data to be gathered were to include learning outcomes in all the domains (cognitive, affective and skills) of the curriculum. Thus techniques, such as observation, interview, project and attitudinal scales were recommended to teachers to employ in assessing the learning outcomes of their students/pupils. Teachers were also encouraged to use letter grades (A, B, C etc.), instead of scores, for outcomes in especially the affective domain. However the emphasis on scores, by the WAEC, placed on teachers the pressure to dutifully present the same to the WAEC as

cumulative records of their students/pupils. That is since the WAEC, by the nature of their examinations, was producing only scores for candidates it also demanded the same from the schools in order to make for easy integration of the two sets of data for the final grades. The WAEC, thus, was only interested in students' scores from the schools and not grades.

The effect of this practice was, teachers were soon concentrating on the form of assessment and emphasising the curriculum domain that can best produce the scores demanded by the WAEC for the final grading of their students. This means teachers are deliberately mimicking WAEC's examinations in order not to fall foul of the demands made on them, by the WAEC and other stakeholders in the educational enterprise in Ghana. The question we may ask is whether teachers, in employing the traditional form of assessment which is able to produce the scores needed by the WAEC, are also able to effectively assess learning outcomes in other domains where they were originally encouraged to use the alternative forms of assessments to assess. This question becomes even more pertinent in the case of Social Studies, in Ghana, where learning outcomes in the affective and skills domain are held to be equally important as those in the cognitive domain, if not the most important. That is, can Social Studies objectives, which focus on the learners' acquisition of skills, positive attitudes and values to solve problems of human's survival, be adequately assessed in this context? The foregoing becomes compounded if we are to accept the notion that teachers, invariably, teach-to-the-test and even more so when one is to analyse the items used, by the WAEC in the SSSCE, to assess learning outcomes in Social Studies.

1.1.4 WAEC's Assessment of Social Studies Learning Outcomes in Ghana

The external assessment (SSSCE) of learning outcomes in Social Studies in Ghana's senior secondary schools began in November, 1999. Before this date teachers of Social Studies in the SSSs had been conducting internal/continuous assessments of their students, in respect of their learning outcomes in the subject, since it was introduced in the SSSs. As previously indicated, the WAEC solely employs the traditional form of assessment in conducting assessments at the SSSCE and Social

Studies assessment is no different. Usually the WAEC depends on subject panels (consisting of representatives from the subject association, subject experts from university departments in the country and some WAEC appointed subject examiners) to ensure the quality of assessment items before they are administered on candidates during the SSSCE. However, one can not be too sure of the composition of the Social Studies panel and how it is ensuring the quality, and thus the validity, of items in the SSSCE.

There are several reasons that lead one to question the composition of the Social Studies panel, as intimated above, and the kind of items they are accepting as valid for the assessment of learning outcomes in Social Studies. Firstly, at the time of the first ever SSSCE in Social Studies, the only teachers involved in the teaching of the subject in the SSSs were either UCC trained Social Studies graduates or graduates of other social science and humanities disciplines. Moreover these teachers were the same people who were involved in the teaching of Life Skills, which Social Studies came to replace, and thus, naturally, transferred the methods and procedures of teaching and assessing the former to the latter. This implies that any representative from this group on the subject panel at the WAEC cannot be said to be adequately representing the interest of Social Studies, in its new form.

Secondly, and related to the above, there is no functioning Social Studies Teachers' Association in Ghana now, from which the WAEC could have had a representation on the panel. Thus whoever is on the current Social Studies panel at the WAEC, in the name of the subject association, could be representing his/her interest rather than that of the association. Another reason is the fact that nobody is on the panel representing the Social Studies Education department of the UEW, which is the only place where teachers are being prepared to teach the subject with the new curriculum in mind. It can therefore be deduced, from the reasons indicated above, that it is almost certain that members of the Social Studies Panel at the WAEC are either from the UCC, UCC trained or specialised in other subjects apart from Social Studies. In this case we cannot say that the panel, in its current composition, is well disposed to ensure that only valid items are employed by the WAEC to assess Social Studies

learning outcomes at the SSSCE. This is because such persons, on the panel, are more likely to be disposed to the methods and procedures of instruction and assessment in the traditional social science disciplines and thus carry them over to the teaching and assessment of Social Studies.

The above discussion is supported by evidence gathered in the study, which proves that the SSSCE items in Social Studies are all in the cognitive domain and that some of these items have no relevance to the subject, in respect of its curriculum goals and objectives. On the whole it was clear that the SSSCE does not adequately cover the SSS Social Studies curriculum in Ghana, especially because it does not include items which can assess students' learning outcomes in the affective and skills domains. Without going into many details, in this chapter, a perfunctory analysis of the said items will indicate that they very much resemble items from the traditional social science disciplines and have very little relation with Social Studies, in that they do not even address the problems that have been defined under the respective topics in the syllabus.

For instance Item 1 of the July 2001 SSSCE Social Studies Paper 2 states, "Discuss the importance of the bride price in customary marriage". This question falls under the 'Procreation' section of the Syllabus. It also comes directly under the unit/topic, 'The Institution of Marriage'. As was intimated earlier on, this topic has a problem defined under it and is supposed to guide teachers as to what goals and objectives to emphasise on in their instruction and assessment. The problem, for this topic, is specifically defined as:

"The process of getting married in Ghana has undergone a lot of changes. Thus, the preparation needed in the selection of a future partner has been misunderstood and this has resulted in wrong pairing with its attendant problems. People do not want to take up the responsibilities attached to marriage and this has weakened the institution of marriage" (CRDD, 1998: 1).

The goal here is to make students appreciate the value of marriage as a social institution and the fact that there is the need for careful preparation towards it. They are also to acquire the knowledge and be attitudinally disposed to the fact that

marriage comes with certain responsibilities and whoever enters into it must accept and fulfil those responsibilities. It is a fact that the main intent of the item, importance of bride price, does not match that of any of the seven instructional objectives provided in the syllabus. Moreover, the importance of bride price cannot be said to fit into the goals intended for this topic and as defined by the problem. Payment of bride price itself is being seriously questioned as it has apparently become outrageous in some parts of the country and seen as becoming an impediment in the way of would be couples. The controversy surrounding the payment of 'bride price' is also premised on the notion that some men are wanting to interpret their paying this price to mean their 'ownership' of their wives and thus subjecting them to all kinds of inhuman treatment. In this case, therefore, it will be disingenuous to say that the payment of bride price is a very important issue, within the context of the problem defined under the topic, which should become a value that must surely be acquired by learners.

In the syllabus the term 'Discuss', which is the performance indicator in the item, is said to belong to higher order thinking skills, involving cognitive skills like analysing, comparing, contrasting and making judgement. If that is the case then the item should, at best, have read, "Discuss the payment of bride price in customary marriage". In this case students will be made to come to their own judgement, as to whether the practice of paying bride price should be continued as it is, modified or thrown out altogether, after analysing the facts surrounding the issue and juxtaposing the conclusions with their personal values and that of the society. The item as it stands now has no validity so far as the goals and objectives of the subject and, particularly, the topic are concerned.

In another instance Item 2 of the July, 2002 SSSCE Social Studies Paper 2 states, "Why do countries conduct periodic population census"? This item is also related to the 'Procreation' section of the SSS Social Studies syllabus and comes directly under the third year topic 'Population Issues'. The problem, as defined under this topic is as follows:

"The importance of taking population dynamics and characteristics into account in national planning was for some time over-looked

until the Ghana Population Policy of 1969 was launched. Both the government and the nation hardly related population to national resources. Thus very little attempt was made to minimise the high rate of population growth. This has had negative effects on the socio-economic development of the individual and the nation” (CRDD, 1998: 49).

It is clear from the above that both instructional and assessment emphases should be on learners ability to relate population growth rate and or structure to resource availability and national development. Instruction and assessment should also lay emphasis on learners’ ability to examine the implications of rapid population growth and a youthful population structure on the socio-economic development of the country, and thus the need to take the population policy of the country seriously in planning for the development of the country. The foregoing clearly suggests the incompatibility of the item, as stated above, to the goals and objectives of the SSS Social Studies curriculum. Actually, the main intent of the item ‘reasons behind periodic population census’ could not be matched with any of the seven (7) instructional objectives, listed, in the syllabus. The item cannot, therefore, be said to be a valid Social Studies item in Ghana. It could, at best, be a Geography question, since the Geography curriculum in Ghana’s SSSs also has Population as a topic and population census is treated as a major objective under this curriculum.

Unfortunately SSS Social Studies teachers in Ghana, for reasons stated above and fully discussed in chapters five and six of this thesis, have also resorted to the use of this same mode of assessment and similar assessment items, as the WAEC, at the expense of the alternative methods of assessment available to them and the adequate coverage of the curriculum goals and objectives. The discussions, so far, suggest that teachers of Social Studies in Ghana’s SSSs are teaching and assessing to the nature and coverage of the SSSCE and thus the WAEC, through the SSSCE, is controlling what students should learn in Social Studies to the detriment of the attainment of the goals and objectives of its curriculum. It is actually a fact that the WAEC always prepares its own examination syllabi, which are different, in scope and details, from the teaching syllabi prepared by the CRDD.

It also implies that as the WAEC is not assessing objectives or learning outcomes in the affective domain of Social Studies, teachers are also neglecting these outcomes in both their instructional and assessment practices. There are some teachers who argue that students are more likely to deceive teachers, as paper and pencil items that seek to clarify/measure the affective domain may not be able to assess what really students have acquired in that respect. They also argue that the cumbersome nature of observing attitudes of students, especially in Ghana where classes have particularly large sizes, can equally produce an untrue data; reflecting students' behaviour if they are aware of being observed for purposes of assessment. In any case who said assessing knowledge and application in the cognitive domain through paper and pencil test is fool proof? The fact that students score high marks in such tests is no indication that they can effectively apply and transfer such knowledge in their daily lives. Such behaviours are rather assumed or inferred from their scores.

It is therefore obvious (in the Ghanaian experience) that teachers of Social Studies do not even want to develop paper and pencil tests, which can effectively be used to assess learning outcomes in the affective domain. This is not an issue of the difficulty or inability to assess affective outcomes using the traditional method of assessment, but because of the stranglehold of the SSSCE on teachers and the curriculum. The above statement is supported by the belief that many affective outcomes can be attained, at least partially, through the application of cognitive processes, since affect and cognition are not independent aspects of the human personality (Ebel & Frisbie, op cit). It has also been, strongly, suggested that it is still possible to assess for affective outcomes through cognitive means, by approximations (Mager, 1990). That is simulating or approximating the condition, of the assessment task, as close as possible to the condition stated in the objectives and assumes that learners can do the real thing if it is not possible or dangerous to achieve the criterion/objective under the same conditions as indicated in the curriculum. From all the indications discussed above we are left in no doubt about the fact that there exists a wide gap between the conception of Social Studies and the strategies for its implementation, in Ghana, and the reality of practices in the classrooms by teachers and its assessment by the

WAEC. This gap has come about as a result of certain avoidable constraints facing the implementation of the Social Studies curriculum in Ghana.

1.1.5 Constraints facing the Implementation of the Social Studies Curriculum in Ghana.

The constraints or challenges facing, and thus impeding, the smooth and effective implementation of the new Social Studies curriculum in Ghana are of two main kinds. The first, of these constraints, has to do with the system within which implementation of the new Social Studies curriculum is being carried out and thus can be said to be a systemic constraint. The other kind of constraint can be directly traced to teachers of the subject in the SSS and is also related, to some extent, to the systemic constraint(s). The first major constraint, posed by the system, is the “what is ‘significant’ debate/politics of content selection” (see Pratt, 1994: 2-3) for the new Social Studies curriculum in Ghana.

This debate, as discussed above, has been going on since the introduction of the subject in Ghana. Unfortunately it has been held only at the level of policy making, involving academics and seasoned educators who consider themselves to be at the cutting edge of knowledge in Social Studies to the total exclusion of many other constituencies or stakeholders of the educational enterprise in the country. Thus groups like teachers, who will be implementing any such curriculum innovation arising out of the debates; parents; employers; civil society groups; educational managers and politicians, are all left out of the process of curriculum debates and change. This exclusion is taking place even though members of the excluded groups consider themselves as legitimate voices in the process of knowledge selection and thus curriculum development (Coulby, 2000).

The situation as described above is one of the significant causes of the creation of the gap, mentioned in the last paragraph of section 1.1.4 above, and thus resulting in the creation of barriers to the smooth implementation and attainment of new curriculum goals and objectives. Accordingly, it has been noted that (see Gross, Giacquinta &

Bernstein, 1971) these barriers do arise, within the context of centre-periphery approach of curriculum design and dissemination, as a result of the following:

1. Teachers' lack of clarity about the innovation, since they were neither involved nor consulted in the design of the curriculum and thus may not be aware of or understand the premises of the innovation;
2. Teachers' lack of the kinds of skills and knowledge needed to conform to the new curriculum model, as they might have not been adequately prepared to handle the demands of the new curriculum;
3. The incompatibility of organisational arrangements with the innovation. Particularly, in the case of Ghana, the arrangement for the assessment of learning outcomes in this new curriculum, as provided in the syllabus, is faulty in the sense that assessment of affective and skills outcomes are made the preserve of internal assessment. This arrangement is being maintained irrespective of the fact that it is the demands of the external assessment that drive teachers' classroom practices and also the fact that internal assessment contributes only 30% to the final grades of students; and
4. The unavailability of required instructional materials, even up until this date.

Another example of the incompatibility of the organisational arrangements within the system with the curriculum innovation is the appointment of teachers from the broad social science and humanities disciplines to teach Social Studies in SSSs in Ghana. This has led to the situation where the number of qualified Social Studies teachers, trained within the context of the new curriculum orientation, is currently inadequate in the SSSs as they are being made to vie for positions with teachers trained in the old dispensation and those who specialised in other subjects. Thus many of the teachers of Social Studies in the SSS, having been trained in the traditional disciplines, tend to resort to the methods and procedures of the traditional disciplines in the teaching and assessment of the new curriculum. The teaching of Social Studies has thus been reduced to the dictation of copious notes and emphasis on facts and concepts that are often unrelated to the goals and objectives of the new curriculum.

In relation to the above is the orientation of items constructors for the SSSCE Social Studies. As explained by officials of the WAEC, these are teachers of many years teaching experience and currently involved in the teaching of Social Studies in the SSSs with most of them also being WAEC appointed examiners. However, if cognisance is taken of the fact that the current Social Studies curriculum was introduced in the country in 1998, then it can be said that any claim of a senior teacher and thus an examiner in this direction, at the time since assessment in the SSSCE started, will not be consistent with evidence on the field, and as discussed above. More so, when teachers who were deliberately trained, within the context of the new curriculum, to teach the subject at the SSS started graduating from the UEW in 1996 and could not have attained the examiner status at that time. Thus with the likelihood that those involved in the construction of assessment items for the SSSCE in Social Studies as well as members of the subject's panel are either UCC trained or did specialise in other disciplines, it then becomes clear why the SSSCE items are in the form they currently are.

For instance a perfunctory examination of WAEC's test items in the SSSCE in Social Studies over the years (see examples on pages 24 -26 above) indicates a bias towards assessment in the way and manner of the traditional disciplines and thus solely in the cognitive domain. Students are never assessed in their ability to make reflective decisions, solve real or simulated problems that confront them and the Ghanaian society, and their disposition to actions based on their attitudes and values, which encapsulate the goals and objectives of the new Social Studies curriculum. In other words the current mode of assessment of Social Studies learning outcomes and the items therein lack validity, since they are largely incongruent with the goals and objectives of the curriculum.

The constraints to the implementation of the new Social Studies, which are directly related to teachers of the subject in the SSSs, are, mostly, due to their lack of understanding of the conception and philosophy or rationale underpinning its institution. This is especially so with teachers who did not specialise in the teaching of this new curriculum. Such teachers are therefore teaching the contents of the

curriculum as unrelated facts and ideas that students need to recall and explain when asked to do so. The reason for the above is that many of these teachers lack the professional expertise and skills that will enable them to employ the best instructional and assessment practices for the effective implementation and attainment of the curriculum goals and objectives. It is therefore obvious that the professional disposition of many Social Studies teachers, especially those who did not specialise in the teaching of the new curriculum, towards the subject is such that they, clearly, exhibit the lack of motivation to effectively implement the curriculum within the constraints of the current system.

Yet another constraint, from the teachers, is their inability or reluctance to shrug off the stranglehold the SSSCE is having on their classroom practices and thus on the new Social Studies curriculum as a whole. This inability or reluctance has compelled them to teach-to-the-test instead of to the goals and objectives of the curriculum. Likewise, teachers' assessment modes and test items in Social Studies in Ghana are selected or designed to match those employed by the WAEC in the SSSCE. Thus the inability of the curriculum designers to modify the existing system to cater for the innovations in the new curriculum, coupled with the fact that many of the teachers, for reasons already discussed, are powerless to shrug off the constraints in the system, portend a serious problem for the implementation and attainment of these innovative curriculum goals.

1.2.1 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Social Studies in Ghana underwent a radical change, since its introduction in Ghana, in 1998, at the time that it was being introduced at the Senior Secondary School level of Ghana's educational system. Not only did the change affect the scope and contents of the curriculum, but also the outcomes or objectives of emphasis in the curriculum. In this respect, the curriculum goals and objectives were broadened and emphasis placed on learners' acquisition of the relevant knowledge, from any discipline; skills; attitudes and values that will enable them solve both their personal and societal problems. Thus many of the important curriculum goals and objectives of Social Studies are now in the skills and affective domains of learning. Unfortunately,

however, the organisational arrangements for the implementation of the new curriculum were never modified, to the extent that the external assessment of learning outcomes in the subject at the SSSCE, by the WAEC, is solely based on the cognitive outcomes of the curriculum. Directly related to the foregoing is the inability or reluctance of SSS Social Studies teachers in Ghana to shrug off the impact and thus the constraints placed on them and their classroom practices, by the demands of the SSSCE.

The situation, described above, portends serious implications for the implementation and attainment of the curriculum goals and objectives of the new Social Studies in Ghana's SSSs. And as Kliebard (1988: 21-22) postulates, "When a curriculum change is introduced without due regard for a modification of the context in which the change is to take place, that innovation is almost surely doomed to a short life".

1.3.1 PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to find out the extent to which the external assessment (i.e. the SSSCE) impacts, systemically, on the SSS Social Studies curriculum in Ghana, in respect of teachers' classroom practices and thus the implementation and attainment of the curriculum goals and objectives.

1.4.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The following aims and objectives were identified as sufficient for the comprehensive achievement of the purpose or goal of the study:

1. Find out the extent to which the SSSCE items in Social Studies are congruent or compatible with the curriculum goals and objectives;
2. Evaluate the impact of the nature and demands of the SSSCE on the classroom practices of Social Studies teachers in Ghana;
3. Establish, through the 'Grounded Theory' approach, a theoretical relationship between the demands of the external assessment and the implementation and attainment of curriculum goals and objectives. That is, to develop a theory that is grounded in data and verifiable by

substantive theories and assumptions, which are also to be verified with new data;

4. Find out whether the SSSCE, adequately, covers the content of the Social Studies curriculum;
5. Establish whether Social Studies teachers in Ghana's SSSs do, actually, teach-to-the-test; and
6. Find out whether other factors exist to either aggravate or mitigate the impact of the SSSCE on teachers' classroom practices.

1.5.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The significance of this study can be placed in three dimensions namely; Policy, Practice and Discourse. Under the policy dimension, it was envisaged that findings from the study will enable educational policy makers to better understand the relationship between the demands of external assessment and the curriculum and thus the impact of the former on the latter. It should then enable them to take a further and comprehensive look into the issue of curriculum change or innovation within the context of existing traditional organisational arrangements. The policy dimension should also lead to consideration being given to the establishment of a productive relationship between the agencies responsible for the design of educational curricula (the CRDD in this case), on one hand, and external assessment (the WAEC), on the other hand.

It was also envisaged that results from the study will enable teachers to realise how the impact of the external assessment on their classroom practices is affecting the attainment of the curriculum goals and objectives. It should therefore empower teachers with the empirical evidence to call for the review or modification of existing organisational arrangements, where they are deemed as inappropriate in their professional estimation. What is eventually envisaged in this context is the complete overhaul of the external assessment practices and teachers' classroom practices to ensure the elimination of any gap between the curriculum goals and objectives and its implementation. This is to ensure that no curriculum, especially new and innovative ones, will be doomed to a short life.

Findings of this research should also go to enrich discourse and the literature in the field of curriculum planning and design, curriculum innovation and external assessment. One major contribution to the field, as identified above, is the development of theory, grounded in data, about the relationship between the demands of external assessment and the implementation and attainment of curriculum goals and objectives. Scholars and practitioners will now have more empirical evidence to support their arguments, positions and notions, especially, in the field of assessment and thus go to enhance the debates in this arena. Some of the results might also lead to the correction of certain notions currently being held by some scholars on the issue of the impact of external assessment on the curriculum and thus the need to reform the assessment regime side by side with the curriculum innovation.

1.6.1 DEFINITION OF RESEARCH VARIABLES AND TERMS

The variables for research and terms that have been identified within the thesis topic, problem statement and the statement of the research purpose are External Assessment, Assessment Demands, Teachers' Classroom Practices, Curriculum Goals and Objectives, Curriculum Implementation, Curriculum Attainment and Systemic Impact. For the avoidance of doubt, the following operational definitions have been adopted for the variables and terms, as identified above:

- A. **External Assessment:** This applies to any kind of assessment, especially summative assessment, which is standardised and conducted by external agencies, apart from the schools, on schools leaving candidates for the purpose of certification, selection and placement. In the case of Ghana, the external assessment referred to here is the SSSCE, which is conducted by the WAEC.
- B. **Assessment Demands:** This refers to the main intents or performance of emphasis in any assessment task. That is, the learning outcome or objective that the assessment task is demanding students to perform or exhibit.
- C. **Teachers' Classroom Practices:** These are defined to include all the methods, strategies, procedures, objectives and activities that teachers decide on, select

and employ for the purpose of instruction and assessment in the classroom so as to meet the curriculum goals and objectives.

- D. Curriculum Goals: These are the major or general aims, adopted by the subject's syllabus, which learners are expected to attain in the long run.
- E. Curriculum Objectives: These, on the other hand, are the specific instructional objectives, provided in the syllabus, which learners are expected to attain after every instructional unit in the curriculum/syllabus.
- F. Curriculum Implementation: This implies all the arrangements put in place to ensure the delivery of curriculum goals and objectives. Thus effective curriculum implementation, in the context of this study, refers to the complete or full delivery of curriculum goals and objectives. That is, the delivery of the curriculum goals and objectives should match, exactly, what the curriculum specifies for delivery to learners.
- G. Curriculum Attainment: This, on the other hand, refers to the attainment of all the curriculum goals and objectives, by learners, after they have undergone all the necessary activities employed by teachers for the purpose of delivering these goals and objectives to the learners. In other words, learners should be able to attain what the curriculum stipulates for them to attain, after all learning activities have been completed in the curriculum.
- H. Systemic Impact: This refers to the impact, particularly, of the external assessment on teachers' classroom practices and consequently on the effective implementation and students' attainment of the curriculum goals and objectives.

1.7.1 THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis consists of seven (7) chapters of which the first chapter (Chapter One), as presented above, dwells on the general introduction to the whole research and thus the thesis. This chapter discusses the background of the study, offers concise statements of the problem for research, the purpose of the study, the research's aims and objectives and significance of the study. It also provides, for the sake of clarity, operational definitions for research variables and other important terms used in the problem statement and the statement on the purpose of the study.

Chapter Two discusses the evidence, assumptions, arguments and notions that came to the fore after the survey of the literature. The literature review chapter is in six (6) main sections. The first section is on the general overview of the chapter and is followed by a section on the conception(s) of assessment, as held in the literature, with two subsections discussing the role of assessment in the educational process and its purposes. The third section is dedicated to the review of the literature on factors that influence assessment decisions and practices. The section is further divided into five (5) subsections; dealing with the various perspectives in the assessment debates and thus the contentious debates of traditional versus alternative assessment; issues of assessment reliability versus validity; external/summative assessment versus internal/formative assessment and the top-down model of accountability versus the partnership model, respectively. The fourth and fifth sections present discussions arising out of the review of literature on the relationship between assessment and curriculum goals and objectives and the impact of external assessment on curriculum implementation respectively. The last section is on the summary of the main issues, as discovered in the literature.

The next chapter (Chapter Three) presents the methodology adopted for the study. There are nine (9) sections under this chapter covering an introduction, the questions identified and adopted for the research and the methodological overview, including the rationale for the chosen methodology, the design for the research and the limitation and delimitation, as anticipated and identified for the study. The other sections describe the sources of data for the study, the sampling techniques adopted for each of the data type, the instruments used to gather and analyse these data and how these instruments were validated and their reliability also ensured. There are also sections describing the procedures adopted, both, for the collection and analyses of the research data.

Chapters Four, Five and Six represent the three main research questions, as stated in Chapter Three, in respective order. Chapter Four, for instance, presents findings and subsequent discussions on the first major research question. That is the extent to which the SSSCE items in Social Studies are compatible with the curriculum goals

and objectives of the subject. It also presents findings, on the first minor research question, on whether the SSSCE items in Social Studies adequately cover all learning outcomes, in respect of the learning domains, in the subject.

Chapter Five of the thesis, on the other hand, presents findings and discussions on the impact of the SSSCE on teachers' classroom practices (i.e. the second major research question, as listed in the methodology chapter). It also discusses the findings from the analysis of data pertaining to the issue of whether Social Studies teachers in the SSSs in Ghana are teaching to the test and also results of the study pertaining to other factors that may aggravate the impact of the SSSCE on teachers, which makes them to teach-to-the-test. These findings are in respect of the second and third minor research questions listed in the methodology chapter.

Chapter Six presents a theory, which was developed as a result of a comprehensive analysis (grounded theory approach) of the interview data, establishing a strong relationship between the demands of external assessments and the implementation, and thus attainment, of curriculum goals and objectives. The theory thus presented is derived out of inductive processes, as it is grounded in both quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative (interview) data.

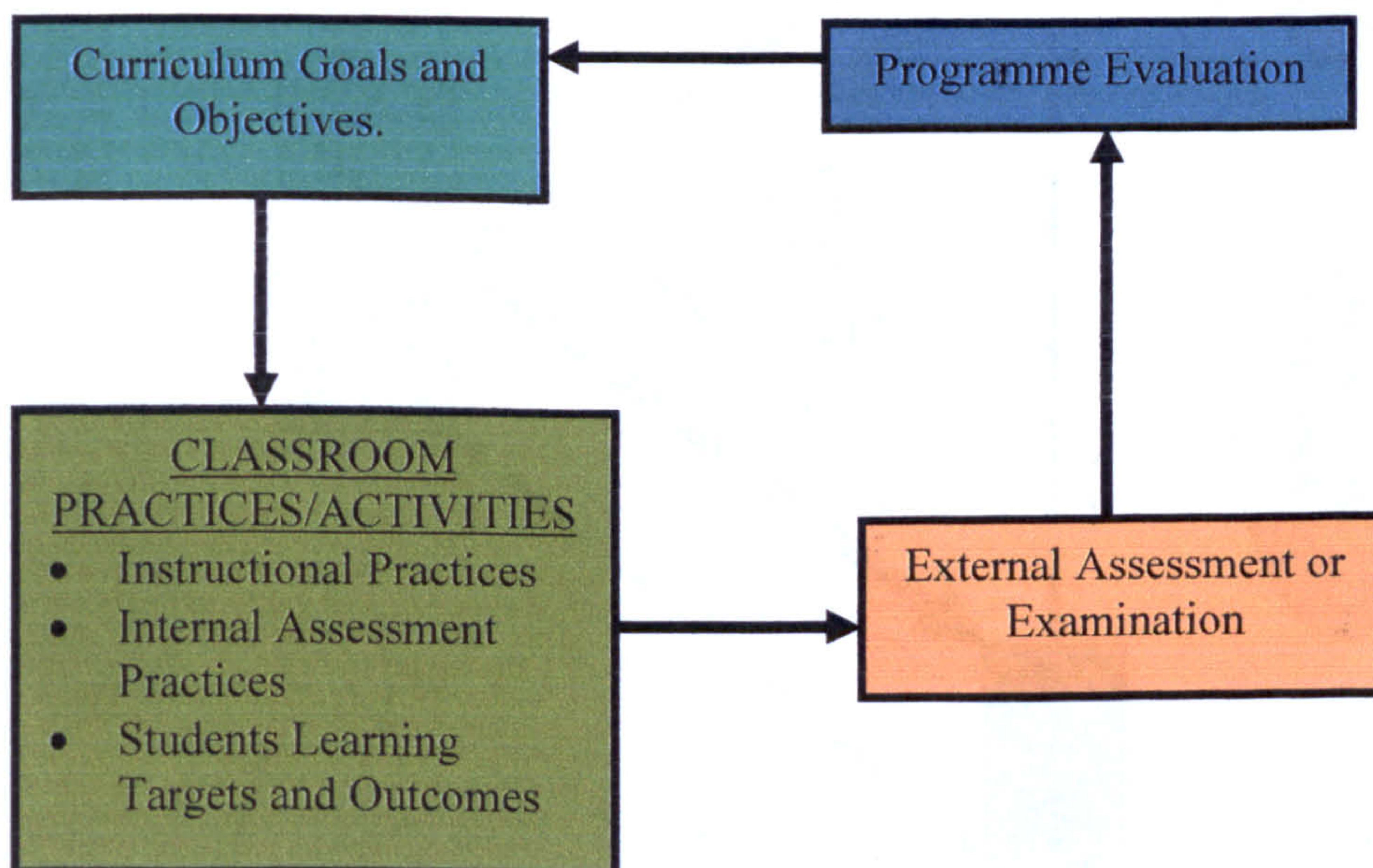
The final chapter discusses the summary of the report/thesis; pertaining to the findings and how they relate to issues raised in the literature and debates in the field of assessment and curriculum goals and objectives and their implications for policy, practice and discourse. It also discusses the conclusions drawn from these findings and makes recommendations for the review and modification of policy and organisational arrangements in the system. Recommendations are also been made in this chapter for consideration by the WAEC and teachers in their assessment and instructional practices. Finally, suggestions for further/future research in the broad area of study (assessment and curriculum goals and objectives), the specific area of assessing Social Studies goals and objectives and methodological concerns in social research are presented in this chapter.

2.0.0 LITERATURE REVIEW– ASSESSMENT AND CURRICULUM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1.0 INTRODUCTION.

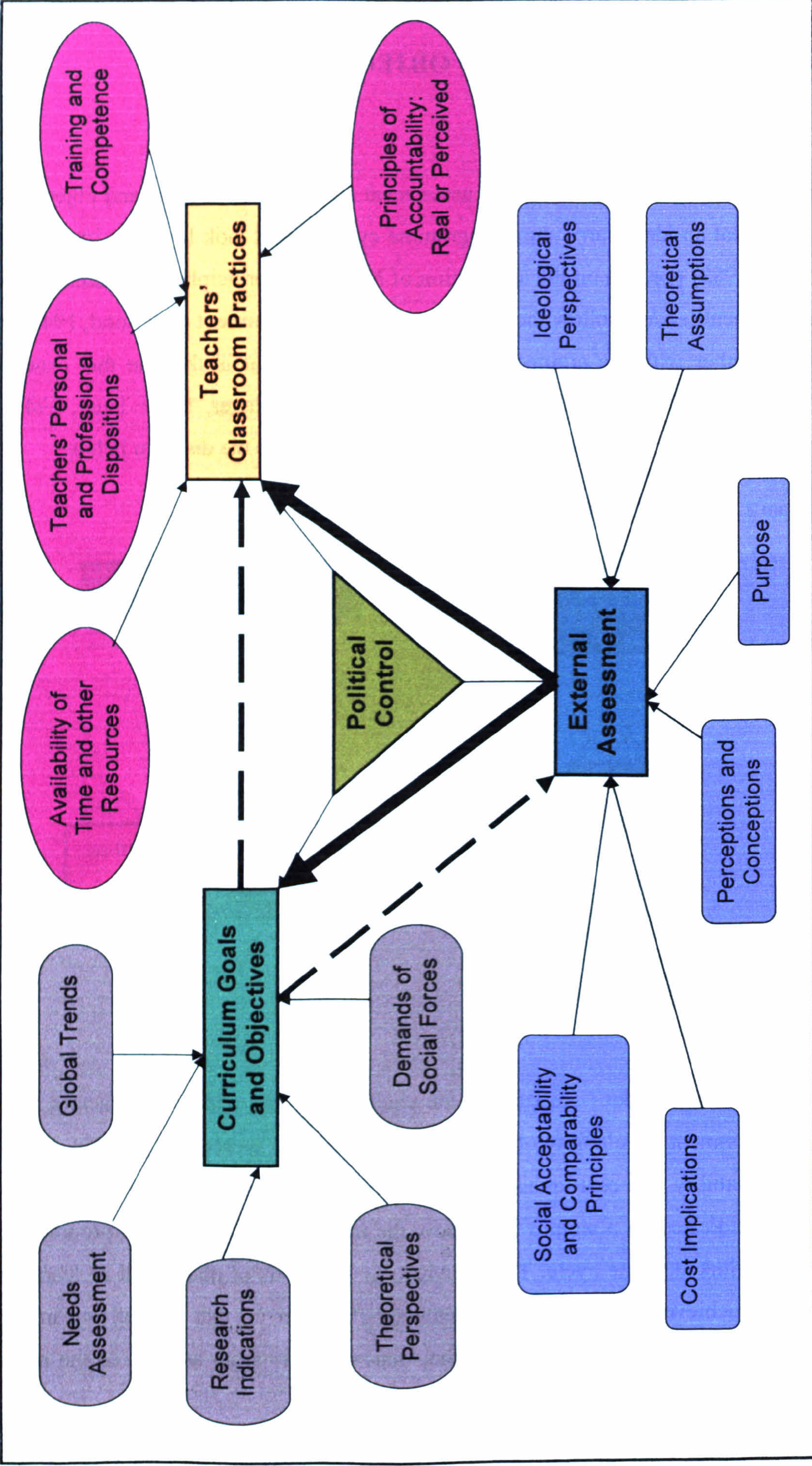
A critical survey of the literature on assessment and curriculum goals and objectives reveals what an ideal curriculum programme cycle should look like. For instance if Mann's (1983) position on the application of Norwood's principle that examinations or assessments should follow the curriculum and not determine it (Norwood, 1943) is taken together with the argument that a valid assessment is the one that exactly corresponds with the curriculum goals and objectives (Mager, 1990: Tyler, 1949), then an ideal curriculum programme cycle should resemble the diagram below.

Diagram 2.1 IDEAL CURRICULUM PROGRAMME CYCLE



The diagram above does not suggest the exclusion of other important factors, like needs assessment, availability of teaching and learning resources, motivation, issues of accountability and cost among others, from the curriculum programme cycle. It however indicates, in a simple form, how the main components of the programme should be linked in the cycle. That is whatever standards of attainment or learning outcomes achieved by the pupils/students should cover all that is spelt out in the curriculum goals and objectives and the focus of instruction, as well as the main

Diagram 2.2 CURRICULUM PROGRAMME CYCLE (CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK)



intents of assessment in the classroom. Thus the final external assessment should not only include tasks that reflect these curriculum goals and objectives, but should also cover the gamut of the curriculum, in terms of scope of content and spread over the learning domains. Programme evaluation should therefore involve looking at how classroom practices/activities and external assessment were closely related to the curriculum goals and objectives, as against other factors that might have influenced them. Such an assessment will then determine whether there is the need to review the curriculum in question or otherwise.

However, what seems to be reality in the curriculum programme cycle, the world over, is far from what the ideal, as illustrated above, suggests (see Kelly, 1999; Broadfoot, 1995; Madaus, 1988). Analysis of the study background coupled with the problem definition and what has been described in the literature rather suggest a complex web of relationships, involving the linkage of the main programme components with certain concepts and issues (see Diagram 2.2). In this relationship, the natural influence of the curriculum goals and objectives on classroom practices/activities is undercut and undermined by the demands of external assessment, which in itself does not wholly represent the breadth and depth of the curriculum.

The diagram for instance reveals that political control is what seems to be holding curriculum goals and objectives, external assessment, and classroom practices together, as there are apparently discontinuities in the relationships between these components of the curriculum process. Assessment decisions, pertaining to the choice of assessment tools and coverage, as it is shown, are influenced by certain ideological, philosophical and theoretical assumptions and the purpose that assessment is meant to serve. How it is perceived or conceived by the assessor and other issues relating to its social acceptability, the comparability, over time, of its results and the cost implications involved in its administration also go to influence assessment decisions.

It can also be induced from the chart that even though curriculum goals and objectives are arrived at after painstaking evaluation of research findings, demands of social forces and global trends, and carrying out needs assessment in the communities and society as a whole, the influence of the curriculum over external assessment and classroom practices is disjointed. Rather, it is external assessment that seems to be having a big impact on classroom practices and thus the curriculum itself. The diagram also reveals that teachers' personal and professional dispositions; training and professional competence; availability of time and other resources and their perception of accountability could also either mitigate or aggravate the kind of influence that external assessment has on their classroom practices.

The adoption of Diagram 2.2 as the conceptual framework for reviewing the literature and carrying out the study as a whole brings to the fore the following as important indicators in the literature review process:

- What assessment is conceived or perceived to be, including its purpose and role.
- Factors that influence assessment decisions and debates thereof.
- The relationship between assessment and curriculum goals and objectives.
- The impact of external assessment on the curriculum and its implementation.
- Other factors that may possibly influence teachers' instructional and assessment decisions.

However since it is difficult to get literature on the possible influence of other factors, as indicated in the chart, on teachers' classroom practices, this will be reviewed within the other indicators identified above.

2.2.0 WHAT IS ASSESSMENT?

According to Ebel & Frisbie (1991: 28) "Teaching does not occur unless evaluation of learner performance occurs". This thus makes assessment a very important cog in the wheel of education, particularly teaching and learning. However since one's ability to apply a concept efficiently depends, to a large extent, on how he or she understands that concept, we are tempted therefore to ask what assessment means to

those involved in applying it. What this means is that different people may conceive or understand assessment differently, and the conception of assessment invariably impacts on how it is defined and subsequently applied. Thus it is very important to know how assessment is conceived and defined in the literature in order to evaluate, effectively, how it is being applied.

Although many people, especially those involved in the education enterprise, are familiar with the term 'assessment', its use is so varied that it connotes different things at different occasions and is used inter-changeably with other terms. Thus in the opinion of Cizek (1997: 8) the term assessment "is used in so many different ways, in so many different contexts, and for so many different purposes, that it can mean almost anything".

Assessment, for instance, is sometimes used to connote evaluation (Nelson & Michaelis, 1980) or measurement (Kelly, 1999; Ecclestone, 1994; Gross, McPhie & Fraenkel, 1970). However, these writers among others have argued against the notion of equating assessment, evaluation and measurement as one and the same concept. Actually some have even tried to make clear distinctions among these three obviously separate, but related, terms.

Nelson & Michaelis (op cit), for instance, posit that evaluation is broader than assessment, and for that matter assessment is rather seen as part of the evaluation process (Lambert & Lines, 2000; Satterly, 1989). On the other hand, measurement is also seen as part of assessment (Coulby, 2000). Interestingly, Ecclestone (1994: 6) sees assessment as rather an act of measurement. She opines, "Assessment is the judgement of evidence submitted for a specific purpose; it is therefore an act of measurement. It requires two things: evidence and a standard or scale".

Mager (1990: 8) however defined measurement as "the process of determining the extent of some characteristic associated with an object or person. For example, when we determine the length of a room or weight of an object, we are measuring". That is using a standard/universalistic rule, like a ruler/measuring tape, weighing scale or a

compass to determine the extent to which some characteristics of an object or person can be associated with a value/measure on such standards or rules (criteria). Even though Ecclestone's (1994) assertion that measurement requires evidence and a standard or scale, is accepted by most writers, her view that assessment is an act of measurement is challenged by many other writers, and logically so.

Kelly (1999: 129) for instance argues,

“The term ‘measurement’ brings with it connotations of accuracy and precision, but it is plain to anyone who will look more closely at the matter that there is little accuracy or precision in most forms of educational assessment. And the degree of accuracy and precision varies inversely in relation to the complexity and sophistication of what is being assessed”.

Perhaps Ecclestone and her like do make the assertion that assessment is part of measurement or even assessment is measurement, because they see it in the like of tests and examinations. However Rowntree (1987: 4) disagrees with those people and argues, “Despite one of the assumptions commonly made in the literature, assessment is not obtained only, or even necessarily mainly, through test and examination”. Satterly (1989: 10) also states, “Educational assessment takes place in many ways using a variety of instrument designed for the purpose”. Thus

“All shades of assessment can be practiced without any kind of measurement that implies absolute standards; it may be enough simply to observe whether, for each student, some personal, even idiosyncratic, trait or ability appears discernable to a greater or lesser extent than hitherto” (Rowntree, 1987: 5).

Since there is no universal standard or scale to measure the extent to which such personal characteristics as; ability, skill, attitude and value, which are all ‘subjects’ of assessment, exist in a person, it will be inappropriate, as it is not supported by facts and logic, to accept the view of Ecclestone (1994) and others that assessment is an act of measurement or even is measurement. Rather, in assessment, measurement is sometimes applied when certain characteristics, like knowledge or cognition, are seen to be amenable to a measure and thus associated with a figure or value on a standard or criterion or norm. To sum up, assessment is seen as involving more than measurement (Nelson & Michaelis, 1980; Gross, McPhie & Fraenkel, 1970). And to

Eisner (1993: 224, also cited by Kelly, 1999: 129) “Assessment, like evaluation, is not one but several things”.

The act of evaluation on the other hand involves the comparison of a measure to a standard and afterwards making judgement on the comparison (Mager, 1990). Thus evaluation is often considered as an appraisal of the whole curriculum or instructional process, and for which assessment is part or a tool (Kelly, 1999). In fact assessment and evaluation, apart from the attempt by some authors, like Nelson & Michaelis (1980), to make a distinction between them and place assessment in the domain of the instructional process and evaluation at the end of the whole programme, sometimes become confusing in meaning. They look almost the same, when especially assessment is seen as being judgemental (Kelly, 1999; Cizek, 1997; Ecclestone, 1994; Wiggins, 1993) as in the case of evaluation. Wiggins (1993: 13) for instance defines assessment as “a comprehensive, multifaceted analysis of performance; it must be judgment-based and personal”.

There are, however, some authors who are of the opinion that assessment is not judgemental (Lambert & Lines, 2000; Wiersma & Jurs, 1990; Rowntree, 1987). In this school of thought, Wiersma & Jurs (1990: 8) were more straightforward and ‘daring’ with their opinion when they stated, categorically, “when assessment is taking place, information or data are being collected and measurement is being conducted. Assessment does not include making judgments about data, which is reserved for evaluation”. In this case a clear distinction is being made between assessment and evaluation. Whereas assessment is indicated to connote the collection of all kinds of data about students/pupils, evaluation is seen as the act of making judgements on the data collected. Thus assessment is seen as an important tool of evaluation.

Rowntree (1987) and Lambert & Lines (2000) were however cautious in making such a categorical assertion, as their views are implicit rather than explicit. Rowntree (1987: 6) for instance states that assessment “can be descriptive without becoming judgemental”. This can also imply that assessment can sometimes be judgemental

even though he did not make such a claim. Lambert & Lines (2000: 4) also indicated the subservience of assessment to evaluation when they wrote, as part of the explanation of the evaluative role of assessment, that the purpose is “to contribute to the information on which judgements are made concerning the effectiveness or quality of individuals and institutions in the system as a whole”. This also places assessment, squarely, in the domain of data gathering or collection.

It is however clear from the discussions so far that both schools in the assessment/evaluation divide do agree on a common ground that assessment involves the collection of data about individuals or a system. That is whether assessment is judgemental or not, there is no question about the fact that it involves obtaining some form of information about some personal or institutional characteristics or attributes. Thus Rowntree (1987: 4) states

“Assessment in education can be thought of as occurring whenever one person, in some kind of interaction, direct or indirect, with another person, is conscious of obtaining and interpreting information about the knowledge and understanding, or abilities and attitudes of that other person”.

The notion that assessment is about collecting information in relation to certain preconceived characteristics is given further boost, in the practical sense, when the Scottish Office Education Department, SOED (1991a), captures it in the preamble to the National Guidelines 5-14: Assessment, as “assessment is the means of obtaining information which allows teachers, pupils and parents to make professional judgements about pupils’ progress”. It is also stated in the introduction page of the above document that the essence of assessment “is determining what a pupil is actually achieving in relation to expectations of attainment and drawing conclusions from that comparison”.

It is interesting to note that the kinds of information being conceived in this case are not exclusively linked to those that are obtained through tests and examinations alone (measurement), but to others, including very informal or indirect ones (Lambert & Lines, op cit; Rowntree, op cit). Authors like Cizek (op cit); Ferrara & McTighe (1992); Baker & Stites (1991) and Stiggins (1991) argue that notions about

assessment need to be broadened and should include “the full range of information teachers gather in their classrooms: information that helps them understand their pupils, monitor their instruction, and establish a viable classroom culture” (Airasian, 1994: 5).

It has therefore been established that educational assessment, whether judgemental or not, is a process of obtaining all kinds of data about the characteristics of learners, in relation to set standards of attainment in the curriculum. Thus for the purpose of this study Satterly’s definition, which provides a comprehensive scope or parameters for assessment, will be adopted as the working definition. That is:

“Educational assessment is an omnibus term which includes all the processes and products which describe the nature and extent of children’s learning, its degree of correspondence with the aims and objectives of teaching and its relationship with the environments which are designed to facilitate learning” (Satterly, 1989: 3).

A pertinent question to ask at this point is, if assessment is considered an integral part of the instructional/educational process (Pratt, 1994; Sutton, 1991; Ebel & Frisbie, 1991; Black & Broadfoot, 1982), then what role and purpose is it to serve in this process?

2.2.1 The Role of Assessment in the Instructional/Curriculum Process.

As indicated in the above discussions, assessment plays a very definitive and significant role in the whole curriculum, and thus instructional, process. To support this point, Satterly (1989: 4) opined, “Assessment is seen not as a time-wasting appendage to classroom practice but as an integral part of planning of effective instruction”. Also Learning and Teaching Scotland (2003) have indicated in the 5-14 National Guidelines for Environmental Studies- Society, Science and Technology, that in being an integral part of teaching and learning, assessment should not dominate these, but should rather help pupils to identify their strengths and misconceptions in their learning. It is also stated in the same document that “assessment should clearly identify for both teachers and pupils what has been achieved and what they need to do next” (Learning and Teaching Scotland, op cit: 18).

Rowntree (1987: 1) also stated, “If we wish to discover the truth about an educational system, we must look into its assessment procedures”. This is because to him, “the spirit and style of student assessment defines the de-facto curriculum” (Rowntree, *ibid*). That is the intents and nature of assessment in the classroom indicates to a very great extent the contents, objectives and nature of teachers’ instructional activities. Even the very style of assessment, as applied in the instructional/classroom setting can define the classroom atmosphere/environment. That is whether the classroom environment is democratic, autocratic, friendly, creative, motivating, coercive, cognitive centred, developmentally or pupil centred, can be defined by the prevailing assessment culture in that classroom.

The links between assessment and the elements identified above are not far fetched, as a teacher’s use of assessment in the instructional process or the classroom setting, whether formal or informal, direct or indirect, can determine, to a very large extent, the presence or otherwise of any of these elements in the classroom. This view is given impetus by Tyler (1949)’s argument that evaluation or assessment of learning outcomes is necessary to also ascertain the environmental conditions in which the learning goes on, the skill of the teacher in setting the conditions as they are planned, the personality characteristics of the teacher and students among others.

Kelly (1999) also argues that it is the essence of good teaching that one should constantly be verifying the levels of pupils’ learning to ensure their continuous development, thus making assessment an essential tool for effective teaching. In this case assessment is used as a diagnostic tool in ascertaining strengths and weaknesses; what a pupil is capable of or not capable of doing; identifying emerging needs and interests and then the defining of objectives and planning of activities which are suitable for the development of the pupil’s abilities and aptitudes (Satterly, 1989; Rowntree, 1987).

Assessment also serves as a tool for providing and promoting formative feedback to, especially, pupils and teachers. For instance a TGAT report cited by Sutton (1991: 2) states, “Promoting children’s learning is a principal aim of schools. Assessment lies

at the heart of this process”. Perhaps an explanation of this statement can be inferred from Satterly’s (1989: 6-7) claim that “positive signs during learning can serve to enhance motivation, negative signs to the need to correct errors or rectify a strategy. Such signs can be externally controlled by teachers”. In essence, assessment, it is noted, undoubtedly provides focus to children’s learning. That is, it directs students to instructional priorities and influences their approach to learning (Pratt, 1994). Assessment can also be used “to consolidate students’ knowledge prior to moving to the next unit of instruction” (Pratt, 1994: 105).

On the part of teachers, assessment is supposed to provide some sort of information that will enable them evaluate their own practices, irrespective of the existence of an accountability system or not (Satterly, 1989). This thus makes assessment an indispensable tool for teachers, as the knowledge of pupils’ performance, as a result, provides them with valuable information which enables them to improve upon their teaching.

Another important role of assessment in the instructional process is what can be termed as the filtration role. Even though this role is often debated by some practitioners as unethical and perhaps unprofessional, it essentially provides teachers, particularly, with information about those who are gaining or failing in the attainment of instructional goals and objectives. This thus allows for remedial action to be planned and put in place for those who apparently would be seen to be failing (Coulby, 2000). It must however be noted that filtration is not only done for remedial purposes, but is also used for the purposes of selection and placement of students in the various levels of educations and career paths.

In all the various roles of assessment, discussed above, “the overall goal is to provide information for decision making” (Satterly, 1989: 3). This decision-making lies in many different domains, all linked, either directly or indirectly, to the educational process or system. This point is made more succinctly by Kelly (1999: 130) who argued, “Assessment has a number of different uses, educational, administrative or political”. It is important to note that it is these kinds of uses that have defined the

purpose of assessment in the past and present, and would probably continue to define it in the foreseeable future.

2.2.2 The Purpose of Assessment.

As indicated above, the end use or purposes of assessment in the educational or instructional process are many and varied (some of which have been discussed in the preceding section). These purposes can be placed under the following categories identified by Kelly (1999): Educational; Administrative and Political. However, a survey of the literature indicates that the distinctions made between these purposes, sometimes, are very thin and overlap. Others have listed the purposes of assessment as: Formative, Diagnostic, Summative, Evaluative and Grading or Certification (Lambert & Lines, 2000; Cizek, 1997; Ecclestone, 1994; DES, 1988; Rowntree, 1987).

However, it is apparent that this other categorization can still be placed under Kelly's. Thus they can also become functional tools for Kelly's categories of assessment uses or purpose. In other words Kelly's categorization can be said to be normative, whereas the other is a functional categorization. Specifically, one such purpose of assessment, which can also be termed educational, is the diagnostic purpose. In this case the purpose of assessment is to identify a child's learning needs and develop remedial strategies if necessary. It should be noted that this purpose of assessment is closely linked to what TGAT identifies as the formative purpose. Rowntree (op cit: 7) to this end noted, "Diagnostic appraisal, directed towards developing the student and contributing to his growth, can be thought of as formative assessment".

Another purpose of assessment, which also has a purely educational use, is the motivation of students. That is using assessment, in all its forms, to encourage students to learn (Rowntree, 1987). This can also be viewed as the provision of organising targets for learners (Pratt, 1994) and directing them to instructional priorities so as to influence their approach to learning. However, Rowntree (op cit) stressed that this purpose of assessment could only benefit the teacher rather than the

learner, in that it gives indication as to what counts as knowledge and what is not, thus defining the reality of academic life to students and in the end controlling their perceptions and behaviour. This can, however, have a negative effect on learners' motivation, if assessment activities are perceived as a means of controlling their behaviour, rather than providing feedback on their progress (Ryan, Connell & Deci, 1985) and thus calls for caution in that direction.

The use of assessment in providing feedback to learners, in connection with their levels of attainments, is yet another purpose that is closely linked to the motivational purpose. This, according to Farris (2001), is the first and foremost purpose of assessment, which is to inform educators, students and parents about the level of understanding and ability of the students in relation to the curriculum/instructional goals and objectives. Banks (1990: 468) also asserts that evaluation or assessment,

“is to develop as much precise and objective information about the instructional process as possible in order to (i) assess the effectiveness of instruction (ii) determine whether or not instructional goals have been accomplished; and (iii) provide feedback to students about their performance”.

This according to Pratt (1994: 106) is “to enhance students' self-concept and sense of efficacy”. However if the feedback is almost always negative it will rather have a negative impact on the self-concept, self-efficacy and self-esteem of the learner.

As indicated earlier on, there are other purposes of assessment that make very little or no contribution towards the instructional and thus the formative process in education and can best be described as administrative and or political. One of such purposes, closely linked with the feedback purpose of assessment, is ‘Assessment for Reporting’. This, according to Black & Broadfoot (1982: 7) is “reporting on student attainment, both periodically while the student is still moving through the school and at the end of his school life”. This is to provide information about pupils' levels of achievement at various points in their school life (Lambert & Lines, op cit). It should be noted that such a report is different from the feedback role, since the recipients of the reports are not learners and teachers, but parents and administrators, and also politicians, as in the case of external examinations. This is where some critics come

in to accuse politicians and administrators of constructing 'league tables', out of students' examinations results that do not reveal much about the educational process and are thus counter productive (Kelly, 1999; Pratt, 1994; Ebel & Frisbie, 1991).

A very common purpose of assessment, used everywhere in the world, is selecting learners for various kinds of educational or career opportunities (Lambert & Lines, op cit; Ecclestone, op cit; Rowntree, op cit; Thyne, 1974). Rowntree (op cit) further opined, "Such assessment always involves some kind of grading and the putting of people into categories, even if 'Pass' and 'Fail' are the only two used". This purpose of assessment is also sometimes termed as the 'Certification Role' (Lambert & Lines, op cit). That is people are selected into further educational opportunities or careers based on the quality of their certificate resulting from their achievement in an examination.

On the other hand Rowntree (1987: 16) argued, "Actually, it is often somewhat euphemistic to call them 'selection tests'. For the majority of candidates, many such tests function rather as 'Rejection' tests". He however conceded that Selection, and perhaps Rejection is necessary because no country believes it can afford to give every citizen all he or she might desire in the way of education. However, some studies have shown that there is very little correlation (if there is any at all):

- i. Between pre-tertiary academic performance and final university degree (UCCA, 1969; Nisbert & Welsh, 1966; Barnett & Lewis, 1963; Petch, 1961, all cited by Rowntree, op cit), and
- ii. Between high educational qualifications and success or achievement in later life or profession (Berg, 1973; Taylor et al, 1965; Hoyt, 1965, all cited by Rowntree, op cit).

Another purpose of assessment, mostly used by administrators and politicians, is 'Maintenance of Standards' (Satterly, 1989; Rowntree, 1987; Thyne, 1974). Satterly (1989: 9) put it as "assessment to obtain data---to ensure the maintenance of educational standards". It can also be looked at as ascertaining whether a specified standard has been reached (Thyne, 1974). Rowntree (op cit) did make it clear that

this purpose is closely related to the selection purpose (and thus by extension the reporting purpose of assessment), but then has a life of its own. He indicated that teachers, irrespective of how they feel about this purpose, would probably still feel obliged to assess for it. The clientele of this purpose of assessment, according to Rowntree (op cit) is broadly the same as with the selection purpose; including employers and academics in other institutions, particular those of higher learning. Thus as with the selection purpose the student is a secondary beneficiary in so far as he wants to be assured of the acceptability, almost literally 'the value', of his certificate (Rowntree, op cit).

Rowntree (op cit) however opined that one cannot determine the standard of an examination paper by simply looking at the questions, as there is also the need to know what the markers accept as a satisfactory response. He further argues that it is impossible to establish the equivalence of standards between subjects, let alone institutions and year groups. And he insisted that "even within a subject, standards being maintained are more probably of standard assessment procedures rather than standard attainments" (Rowntree, op cit: 21). The above therefore calls into question this particular purpose of assessment altogether. That is if standards, as perceived, are difficult to set, in the first place, within and across subjects and institutions over the years, then it becomes meaningless and futile to try and compare them, let alone maintain them.

Perhaps closely related to and right on the heels of the maintenance of standards is the accountability purpose of assessment (another controversial issue in assessment, which will be fully discussed in another section of this chapter). In this case, assessment is seen as a tool for obtaining data for accountability while ensuring that standards are not compromised (Satterly, 1989). That is, assessment is "to contribute to the information on which judgements are made concerning the effectiveness or quality of individuals and institutions in the system as a whole" (Lambert & Lines, 2000: 4). The above is also known as the evaluation role of assessment.

Yet another purpose of assessment, however unintended, has been identified as providing Symbolic Significance to learners and involves some kind of rituals (Pratt, 1994). Undoubtedly learners, faced with the prospect of assessment; before, during and after the task itself, whilst awaiting the results, enter into a state of insecurity, anxiety, tension, doubt and 'not being'. Anthropologists term this state as 'Liminality' and define it as a period of transition where one does not know, exactly, where he or she belongs. For this reason, "students facing examinations develop a sense of solidarity with one another, and graduates achieve a shared sense of identity" (Pratt, 1994: 106-7). It must, however, be noted that this kind of purpose/consequence of assessment is not necessarily beneficial to the educational system and stakeholders therein. In actual fact much of this symbolism and ritual could well be dysfunctional (Pratt, op cit), as it may have negative effects on the mental and emotional health of learners and even lead to examination malpractices. It thus becomes an important reason for educators to reflect on their assessment practice.

Actually the above should not be the only reason for educators to reflect on their assessment practices, but then all the purposes of assessment discussed in this section go to illustrate the power and control assessment has on students and even teachers. It has been made clear from the discussion above that assessment, through its various purposes, can influence students' self-efficacy, self-esteem, and further academic and career opportunities/progression in life either negatively or positively. On the part of teachers, the purposes of assessment, as revealed, definitely have obvious implications for their professional practice and effectiveness, and their career progression in some countries. The purposes of assessment and the perceived dangers and unfairness inherent in them have thus given rise to the current contentious debates about the nature, scope and intent of educational assessment, as it's being practised now.

2.3.0 FACTORS INFLUENCING ASSESSMENT DECISIONS AND DEBATES THEREOF.

2.3.1 Perspectives in Assessment.

The role of assessment in the curriculum/instructional process, as has been established above, is held to be mostly educational and thus formative/developmental, whilst its uses/purposes, however, are varied and span from educational through administrative to political (Kelly, 1999; Rowntree, 1987). Not only do the purposes of assessment, sometimes, contradict the kind of role it is supposed to play in the educational process, it is also potentially dysfunctional (Pratt, 1994; Rowntree, 1987) in some cases.

This apparent conflict between what should be the role and the current purposes of assessment has led to very vibrant debates in discourse and among practitioners. These debates are basically derived from intellectual/scholarly and professional perspectives. The debates or conflicts in this sense sometimes come about in the form of tensions during ‘assessment decision-making’ (McMillan, 2002) for assessment practitioners. The tensions (as will be identified) are underpinned by the principles that are expected to “provide the most essential fundamental ‘structure’ of assessment knowledge and skills that result in effective educational practices” (McMillan, 2002: 6). That is, the kind of assessment decisions that are made by practitioners are influenced by what is understood to be the principle underlying assessment in respect of; what it is, what purposes it is to serve, what is to be assessed, interpretation of results/scores, validity and reliability of evidence and grade determination.

For instance Broadfoot (1995), in her historical overview of assessment, pointed out that the practice of educational assessment, historically, was driven by a perceived need to measure individual intellectual capacity. This was, according to her, in response to institutional demands to provide a ladder/ hierarchy of opportunity into the expanding industrial economies of that era. This apparently informed the need to find a mechanism and assessment technique that not only would be socially

acceptable and able to identify the 'best' candidates, but also appear to be fair and objective, with a high degree of reliability. Most important was the emphasis on the need to assess for what was perceived to be measurable (in terms of learning behaviour in the cognitive domain). Assessment practitioners of this era thus settled on what is now being referred to as traditional assessment (paper-and-pencil test including multiple and essay type test items).

A direct result of the above was the desire to control the practice and results of assessment to ensure maintenance and comparability of standards and results over time respectively (Satterly, 1989; Rowntree, 1987). This thus led to the introduction of standardized and state/nation wide (high-stakes) tests, by politicians and educational administrators, to ensure that those being certified and selected in any given year are of the same standards (achievement wise) as those of preceding years. These tests or assessments are considered high-stakes because very important life-long decisions are made from their results and one's future career and progression are greatly dependent on them. However in contention are some professionals and intellectuals who hold contrary views to the above. They have argued against this kind of control that is seen to be restraining the professional practice (including decision-making based on professional judgements) of teachers in terms of instructional goals and objectives.

The arguments against the nature of assessment itself and the kinds of purposes it serves are fuelled by many questions in the field and in the literature. These questions can be summed up as follows:

1. Are the principles and perceptions underpinning traditional assessment relevant in this contemporary (post-industrial) era?
2. Should a straight, one-off test result be used for almost all kinds of purposes as it is now?
3. Should we still resort to the 'narrow' way of measuring learning outcomes in the face of current research findings and expanding knowledge in the area of cognitive science and how pupils learn?

4. Can traditional assessment be solely used to satisfactorily assess learning outcomes in a new curriculum, with more expanded goals, broader than and different from the traditional disciplines?

The last question becomes particularly imperative and of much interest to this researcher, in the light of the introduction of a new Social Studies curriculum in Ghana and the persistent use of traditional assessment to assess its learning outcomes among pupils. It must be noted that this new curriculum (CRDD, 1998) has expanded goals and objectives with the main focus being on the affective, and thus different in character and content from the traditional disciplines/subjects in the schools' curricula (see pages 4-14 above). In this sense, should learning outcomes in such new and innovative curricula continue to be assessed using traditional forms of assessment? Should this be the case, then what are the inherent dangers of such a practice? The danger here means the kind of impact (negative) this would have on teachers' assessment and instructional decisions and practices, and the effective implementation and sustenance of changes introduced into the new curriculum.

Such questions and issues, as described above, are what have clearly drawn the lines in the assessment debates and pitched all those engaged in it against each other on the following strands of seemingly dichotomous tensions:

- Traditional Assessment versus Alternative Assessment
- Reliability versus Validity in Assessment
- External/Summative (High-stakes) Assessment versus Internal/Formative Assessment
- Top-down Model of Accountability versus Partnership Model of Accountability.

Even though there are many more sides to these debates and tensions; including learning versus auditing and criterion versus norm-referenced (McMillan, 2002), the researcher, for the purpose of this study, will only focus on the first four tensions identified above.

It must, however, be noted that these strands of tensions within the assessment debates are not isolated, but rather related just as the elements within each of the levels of tensions are also related. That is, traditional assessment is much linked to external or summative assessment and the two operate on the same level and are both underpinned by the top-down accountability model of school evaluation. In other words, external or summative assessment is often the manifestation of the traditional assessment culture. On the other hand, internal or formative assessment is more akin to alternative or authentic assessment, and they are both informed by ethical and professional concerns in education as well as teachers being considered as partners in students' assessment instead of one of the targets of same.

The relatedness of the elements within each of the strands of tensions has to do with the fact that each lies on the opposite end of a continuum, rather than being dichotomous. As can be seen later in this chapter, traditional and alternative/authentic assessments can both be applied in the same setting, even as is done in certain countries (Broadfoot, op cit), whilst Ghana's example (pages 16, 20-21) shows that internal assessment can be made to complement external assessment for more comprehensive data on students' learning outcomes. The top-down and partnership models of accountability are also related in the sense that the latter is seen as an expansion of the former to bring more perspectives and better co-operation into the evaluation process.

2.3.2 Traditional versus Alternative Assessment

Lambert & Lines (2000) identified External and Classroom/Internal assessment as the 'two cultures' of assessment. However in as much as one would agree with this claim, current research focus and debates in the literature strongly suggest traditional and alternative assessment as the two 'key' cultures of assessment now in vogue. Traditional assessment is so termed to represent a culture/practice of assessment, which is based on traditional principles and perceptions of learning and behavioral change in the educational process. The main tool for this kind of assessment is what is referred to as 'pencil-and-paper' test, and includes essay type test or constructed response items and multiple-choice or selected response items (McMillan, 2002).

Others, which may still fall under any of the two assessment instruments identified above are, matching test, true-false and completion test items. It is important to note that constructed response test items are those items that require pupils to construct or supply their own responses to a question or assessment task, whereas selected response test items refer to those items that require pupils to choose from a list of answers, already provided, that which is the most appropriate response to the question or assessment task.

Traditional assessment, as has been noted above, is based on the premises of finding a mechanism of selection that appears to be objective and reliable (Broadfoot, 1995). The pre-occupation with, and over-emphasis on reliability, in relation to traditional assessment, have led to an over-concentration or near 'religious' attachment to learning outcomes that are seen to easily lend themselves to measurement (e.g. factual knowledge and recount/reproduction of solution algorithms or procedures). Wilson (1992) thus argues that such a practice leads, in all cases, to a relative, if not absolute neglect of higher-level intellectual skills, personal and social competences and attitudes. Broadfoot (1995: 10) also argues, "the question of validity – whether the test does indeed measure what it is intended to measure – has arguably been subordinated to the overwhelming need for comparability of results" arising out of reliability computations of test scores. Thus in traditional assessment the nature or construct of the test item (in respect of whether it is really assessing what it intends to assess and its fairness among other considerations) is not the major focus. What is deemed of paramount interest, in traditional assessment, is rather the consistency of results of learners who take it.

Critics of the traditional forms of assessment argue that the pre-occupation with assessing (or in this case measuring) only those learning outcomes that are deemed measurable and thus amenable to a higher degree of reliability, leads to a 'narrowing' effect on the curriculum. That is teachers, in this instance, pay particular attention to the form of the test and adjust their instructions accordingly (Madaus, 1988). Students on the other hand concentrate their learning time and efforts on what they perceive to be the main ingredients of the assessment task (Pratt, 1994).

In this case, Black & Broadfoot (1982: 3) quoting Wilhelms (1971) posited, “if a History teacher says he is aiming for big generalizations but organizes his evaluation feed-back (assessment) in terms of the memorization of facts, his students will soon attend to the facts – and so eventually will he”. Thus it is further argued that the narrowing effect traditional assessment has on the curriculum will lead to pupils knowing without understanding and ability to generalize from specific examples to similar problems in different contexts (Torrance, 1995). Neither will they attend to the development of personal and social skills (including disposition to actions and decision-making) nor desirable attitudes, which are all very important goals in the educational process and thus the curriculum.

Traditional assessment, as has been described, is premised on the philosophy and demands of the industrial era (Broadfoot, 1995) and the early notions of learning (Cizek, 1997). These notions of learning, derived from the behaviorist/associationist theories of learning, are themselves underpinned by the principles that learning is linear and sequential, and that “complex understandings can only occur by the accretion of elemental, prerequisite learnings” (Shepard, 1991: 6). The assumptions therefore derived from these theories and particularly held by psychometricians and test constructors are basically that learning can be measured and quantified in respect of an individual’s task performance, and in relation to a reference (either a norm or a criterion). Researchers like Resnick & Resnick (1992) have however rejected these notions, pointing out their inadequacies in respect of their being unrepresentative of thinking and knowledge acquisition, especially in the face of recent developments in the theories of learning and cognition.

In spite of the above arguments and criticisms, traditional assessment, as described, continues unabated and pervasively in many educational systems all over the world. Broadfoot (1995) in this regard points out that the prevailing assessment culture is still steeped in the pre-occupation with reliability and readily measurable learning outcomes, despite the fact that social imperatives for assessment have changed. That is in this age, where curriculum goals have changed and broadened; there is a higher priority on encouraging people to continue their education and develop to the

outmost, their abilities, rather than on excluding them (through selection or rejection). She further posited,

“Above all, there is an urgent need for education systems to train people who will have the appropriate range of skills and attitudes to be capable of understanding a variety of work roles in a climate of rapid technological change. Problem-solving ability, personal effectiveness, thinking skills and willingness to accept change are typical of general competencies straddling cognitive and affective domains that are now being sought in young people” (Broadfoot, 1995: 10).

What this means is that there is equally an urgent need for the introduction of new assessment techniques to completely assess for learning outcome on the whole range of curriculum goals and objectives, rather than the persistence of a single form of assessment that seems incapable of assessing for all such goals as it stands now. However in the advent of pursuing new curriculum and assessment practices as new needs manifest themselves in the educational process, contradictions have resulted between the old and the new, and between instruction and assessment concerns. Consequently the changes that have taken place or should have taken place have been very slow and, in most cases, very difficult.

The reason for the persistence of traditional assessment as the only form of assessment in many cases can be seen in many other respects. Torrance (1995: 4) for instance states, “The political need for simple and quick tests which can produce comparable results across very large groups of students, means that the pressure to return to (or retain, in some cases) paper-and-pencil tests is enormous”. Shepard (1991) on the other hand posits that the prevalence of the influences on the retention of traditional assessment may be as a result of an elaborate web of relationships at the centre of which is the belief of psychometricians. She further suggests that “measurement specialist:

1. Are no longer psychologists conversant with changes in learning theories
2. Operate from implicit learning theories---derived from behaviorist learning” (Shepard, 1991: 9).

Thus in the light of current notions of learning, which views learners as interacting with an external world that they actively engage, construct, and interpret, bringing to bear prior knowledge, experiences, interests, and attitudes (Cizek, 1997), it is pertinent that new or alternative forms of assessment are developed to take care of all learning outcomes. As noted earlier, this call becomes more important in the face of the introduction of new curricula with many (broader) goals that were hitherto absent from the schools' curriculum. Thus as Cizek (1997: 13) puts it, "as the universe of valuable educational outcomes expands, so to must the array of instruments necessary to assess those outcomes". Specifically, in the context of this study, the Michigan State Board of Education, MSBE, (1998) states that what is needed is an integrated approach to assessment in which all Social Studies content, standards and benchmarks are assessed with the most appropriate assessment method.

It is therefore being argued that anything short of broadening assessment tools and coverage will lead to distortions in the curriculum. In this regard Torrance (1995: 2) argues, "Traditional testing formats will inhibit such curriculum change, and thus there are good curriculum arguments for implementing assessment change alongside curriculum change". To support the above statement, Broadfoot (1995: 10) also states, "To the extent that the assessment industry falls short of matching these new educational priorities with appropriate new techniques, so it will also inhibit the pursuit of such new educational goals". This is because many curriculum planners and professionals have come to the realization that real change will be difficult to achieve in a situation where traditional assessment remain characteristically unchanged, thereby exerting a constraining and controlling impact on how teachers and students approach new curriculum.

For instance Linn, Baker & Dunbar (1991) in a Center for Research on Education, Standards and Student Testing (CRESST) technical report (no. 331) make reference to Collins, Hawkins & Frederiksen's (1990) view that if there are gaps in coverage (of assessment) teachers and students are likely to underemphasize those parts of the content domain that are excluded from the assessment. They then went on to describe a case where a Geometry teacher in New York had been recognized for superior

teaching, based on the performance of his students on the Regents' Geometry Examination, only to be discovered later on that the performance in question was more or less a charade. He had apparently made his students memorize the twelve 'proofs' that might appear on the examination.

This thus shows a clear case of misleading scores and misrepresentation of curriculum imperatives, when there is an overemphasis on and pre-occupation with traditional forms of assessment. In the light of the above, the calls for the introduction of new and alternative forms of assessment look completely justified. In the words of Madaus (1988: 117) we should be looking at "restoring the balance between testing, curriculum and instruction". Fortunately research findings and developments in cognitive science and learning offer us new underlying principles and methods that can help in describing, in a more meaningful and detailed way, what students know and can do than the traditional method did offer (Bennett et al, 2003).

Following from these developments are assessment techniques that attempt to assess higher-order learning outcomes like problem-solving skills, creativity and effective performance of curriculum tasks, derived from curriculum goals and objectives. To justify these techniques, Torrance (1995: 2-3) argued that "improved assessment must take account of higher-order skills and competencies such as problem solving, investigation and analysis, and thus must involve far more 'authentic' or realistic tasks than have traditionally been employed in the field" (see also Cole, 1990: Gifford & O'Connor, 1992).

These alternative forms of assessment; including open-ended problems, hands-on science problems, student portfolios, computer simulated real world problems and attitude scales, are collectively referred to as authentic assessment (Torrance, 1995: Linn, Baker & Dunbar, 1991: Wiggins, 1989). These are called so because they are viewed as involving performance of tasks that are valued in their own right. Thus not as correlates or indicators of other valued performance, as traditional assessment is seen to be doing (Linn, Baker & Dunbar, op cit), and also as more practical and

realistic (Torrance, op cit). According to Linn, Baker & Dunbar (1991: 3) “Although the call for authentic assessment seems new to many, it has been standard advice from measurement specialists for a long time”. To support this point they cited Lindquist (1951: 152) as arguing that “it should always be the fundamental goal of the achievement test constructor to make the element of his test series as nearly equivalent to, or as much like the element of the criterion series as consequences of efficiency, comparability, economy and expediency will permit”.

It is now no secret that alternative or authentic/performance assessment is in vogue and has been introduced in many states of the world (Broadfoot, 1995: McCallum et al, 1995: Wolf, 1995). Broadfoot (op cit) for instance has documented, from her research, the introduction and various practices of alternative assessment in countries like Australia, Canada, France, New Zealand, United Kingdom and the United States, all with varying degrees of success or otherwise. In this instance the Grade 8 Social Studies Assessment Model for the State of Michigan, USA, has in its preamble the following proclamation:

“The State-wide Social Studies assessment is designed to provide information about students’ Social Studies achievement, promote assessment practices that support learning for all students, and foster teaching that is aligned with the State’s Social Studies content standards” (MSBE, op cit: iii).

Broadfoot therefore supplies the common elements, out of her international comparisons, of this new assessment culture as follows:

1. An increasing emphasis on formative, learning-integrated assessment throughout the process of education.
2. A commitment to raising the level of teacher understanding and expertise in assessment procedures associated with the devolution of responsibility for quality assurance in the certification process.
3. An increasing emphasis on validity in the assessment process which allows the full range of curriculum objectives including cognitive, psychomotor and even affective domains of learning to be addressed by the use of a wider

range of more 'authentic' techniques for gathering evidence of learning outcomes.

4. An increasing emphasis on describing learning outcomes in terms of particular standards achieved – often associated with the pre-specification of such outcomes in a way that reflects the integration of curriculum and assessment planning.
5. An increasing emphasis on using the assessment of individual pupil's learning outcomes as an indication of the quality of educational provision, whether this be at the level of the individual classroom, the institution, the state, the nation or for international comparisons (Broadfoot, 1995: 12).

The 1998 Social Studies syllabus for the senior secondary schools in Ghana for instance recommends a series of assessment procedures or techniques for teachers to use in their classroom assessment. These assessment tasks, such as practical work, investigative study, written reports and observation that have been recommended (CRDD, 1998) can all be placed under alternative or authentic assessment. It is therein specifically stated, "In developing assessment procedures, try to select specific objectives in such a way that you will be able to assess a representative sample of the syllabus objectives" (CRDD, 1998: xi). In this instance, teachers are told to consider each specific objective in the syllabus as a criterion to be achieved by the students.

It (CRDD, *ibid*) also provides that "continuous assessment will essentially focus on attitudes and values" and that in developing test items, teachers should ensure that they have high content validity by adopting the criterion-referenced testing approach as stated above. What this means is that if teachers are to implement the provisions in the syllabus effectively and efficiently, the characteristics of such implementation will be no different from the common elements of authentic assessment, internationally, identified by Broadfoot (*op cit*).

The demands of the Social Studies syllabus in Ghana, as indicated above, is given further impetus by Tal & Hochberg (2003: 70) through the argument that "assessing

students' learning by means of various instruments is highly recommended in cases in which students are engaged in learning complex interdisciplinary topics and a variety of learning activities" (see also Dori, Tal & Tsaushun, 2003; Birenbaum, 1996). More specifically, Alleman & Brophy (1997: 325) also indicates that the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and other leading scholars "have been arguing for Social Studies assessment that is well aligned with major Social Studies goals, more complete in the range of objectives addressed, and authentic in the kinds of tasks included".

Alleman & Brophy (op cit) went on to cite the NCSS (1990)'s guidelines on assessment, which calls for a more authentic and comprehensive assessment of Social Studies that:

1. Bases the criteria for effectiveness primarily on the School's own statement of objectives;
2. Includes assessment of progress not only in knowledge but in thinking skills, valuing, and social participation;
3. Includes data from many sources, not just paper-and-pencil tests;
4. Is used for assessing students' progress in learning and for planning curriculum improvements, not just for grading.

In response, perhaps, MSBE (op cit) states in the preamble to the Grade 8 Social Studies Assessment Model that "the primary purpose of assessment should be the improvement of teaching and learning, and no single assessment instrument can provide all the information needed to accomplish this purpose".

Thus one of the questions this study will seek to find answers to is, whether teachers of Social Studies in Ghana's senior secondary schools are applying alternative/authentic assessment techniques (even as recommended in the syllabus and by the NCSS's guidelines) in their assessment practices, and whether they consider them as valid, in relation to the goals and objectives of the subject? The importance of this question lies in the findings of previous researches and reasons adduced from those findings thereon.

For instance, in a nationwide systematic survey of some 600 classroom teachers of Social Studies in the U.S by Dwight Allen, and as reported by Gross & Allen (1970) the following findings were made:

- Teachers frequently fail to relate their assessment practices to the aims they claim for their offerings.
- Teachers are reticent, even ideally to use the full range of evaluation techniques now available.
- Teachers are often inconsistent in their conception of evaluation.
- The use of many evaluation devices is misunderstood and such devices are often misused.
- Teachers place a great amount of blind faith in the indirect accomplishment of their objectives.

The following reasons were also adduced for these teachers' apparent lack of concern for examining and improving their evaluation/assessment practices:

1. Teachers have been satisfied with their evaluation, and with its accuracy and adequacy.
2. So many Social Studies objectives are vague and ambiguous --- and so do not lend themselves to precise measurement.
3. Many teachers are either unfamiliar with many methods or do not understand their purpose and sufficiently well to be comfortable in their utilization. Tests have been regarded as a panacea of evaluation, and teachers have automatically turned to tests (and even then only to certain favorite types) whenever evaluation (assessment) is considered necessary.
4. Teachers regard evaluation as an unfortunate appendage of teaching, rather than as an integral part of it. So long as teachers do not comprehend the integral relationship of the full range of evaluative techniques with teaching objectives and activities, evaluation will never be utilized in its full potential.

It must be noted that some of the reasons, as provided, are obsolete and do not inform current debates in the assessment scene. Particularly the idea that some Social Studies objectives do not lend themselves to precise measurement stands challenged on the following premises:

- Assessment is not only about measurement, but also includes the gathering of data even through observation and thus one of the reasons behind the call for the use of authentic assessment techniques in all educational systems.
- There is no evidence to support the fact that what is deemed amenable to a precise measure really indicates a correlation between a test score and actual performance of task in real life situations.
- Developments in cognitive science indicates that there is really a thin line between affect and cognition (Ebel & Frisbie, 1991) and thus by using approximation (Mager, 1990) affect can be assessed through cognitive means (Quartey, 1998).

In the light of the above and coupled with the fact that the study was carried out some four decades ago, and also within a different culture and context (the USA and Social Studies curriculum as it stood at that time), the focus of this study will be substantially different. It will seek to find why some teachers implement alternative/authentic forms of assessment, but others still prefer the traditional forms despite being encouraged by provisions in the syllabus to do otherwise. Thus a major assumption put forward and tested, in this research, was that the findings and reasons therein will be principally influenced by the kind of assessment imperatives in the WAEC (External) examination and perceptions of teacher accountability, in relation to how well their students perform on this examination.

It must however be noted that alternative/authentic assessment is not without criticism or problems. The foremost criticism is that it is not as reliable as the traditional forms of assessment (see Linn, Baker & Dunbar, 1991; Black and Broadfoot, 1982). Parkes (2000) for instance refers to Koretz et al (1994) as identifying raters and tasks as sources of error variance in performance/authentic

assessment. This obviously brings us to the other debate as to the primacy of reliability or validity in assessment (to be reviewed in the next section).

Another criticism of alternative assessment is its cost effectiveness. It is noted, in this sense, to be relatively expensive (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000) as compared to traditional assessment, and thus difficult to implement at the national level. It is, perhaps, for this reason that the Social Studies syllabus for the senior secondary schools (SSS) in Ghana recommends that the alternative forms of assessment should rather be the main tool in the internal assessment of learners (CRDD, 1998). As explained in the introduction chapter, internal assessment scores form 30% of the final scores of students in the SSS in Ghana. The question however is, will teachers ever be trusted and given the free hand to use alternative assessment and participate in the final assessment of students? This question obviously leads us to the last two tensions identified above.

It also appears that the fears of many of the critics of alternative assessment lie in the assumption that it is being promoted to completely replace traditional assessment, as the name suggests (Broadfoot, 1995). This notion has however been corrected by many others to allay those fears. It is for instance argued that alternative assessment is not to replace but to complement traditional assessment (Cizek, 1997: Broadfoot, 1995: Torrance, 1995). Cizek for instance posits that the emphasis on the need to introduce new assessment methods (especially where new curriculum goals have been introduced) does not in any way mean that these new modes should go to replace the traditional assessment. The principle being put forward is that different kinds of assessment should be used to serve different ends. To this end Rudner & Schafer (2002: 1) argues,

“No one source of data can be sufficient to assess what a pupil knows about school-related content. What is called for is a triangulation (corroboration) of several kinds of data drawn from various types of tests: standardized tests of achievement and aptitude, teacher-made quizzes, observations of behaviour, informal interactions, and the like”.

This argument is supported by McMillan (2002), when he argued to the effect that to have a complete picture of what students understand and can do, all data in relation to his/her learning outcomes or performance should be put together as pieces from different approaches to assessment. And Cizek (1997: 15) maintains,

“The practice of obtaining both kinds of information is not at all a dissonant desire. Instead, these divergent assessment goals simply reflect the long-standing reality that absolute performance is almost never completely understood without the interpretive assistance provided by comparative information”.

Moreover, recent research findings point to the fact that alternative assessment does indeed influence students’ motivation and learning (McMillan, 2002) and are also aligned more closely with instructional goals than the elemental questions that plague many large-scale tests and also brings to bear multiple processes involved in task performance (Bennett et al, 2003). Particularly, Newman (1997: 367) provides illustrations of authentic assessment tasks in Social Studies that scored high; based on an evaluation he carried out, on general standards for ‘authentic human achievement’. He listed these standards as follows:

- CONSTRUCTION OF MEANING;
 1. Organisation of information
 2. Consideration of alternatives
- DISCIPLINED INQUIRY;
 1. Disciplinary content
 2. Disciplinary process
 3. Elaborated written communication
- VALUE BEYOND SCHOOL;
 1. Problem connected to the world
 2. Audience beyond the school

The survey of the literature therefore suggests, at this point that it is clearly improper, unfair and unjustifiable to assess learning outcomes in, particularly, a new curriculum that introduces broader and varied goals other than those in the cognitive domain, with traditional assessment techniques only. Should this be the case however, then the following assumptions, which need verifying (thus the justification for this study), may hold:

1. Not all goals, as identified in the curriculum, will be adequately assessed (especially in external assessments which are largely traditionally based).
2. Teachers' own assessment practices in the classroom are likely to be so affected.
3. If teachers teach-to-the-test, then those goals that are not covered in the assessment tasks will be neglected during instruction.
4. An unplanned drift, through assessment and instruction, will characterize the curriculum process.
5. The curriculum change, as planned and introduced, stands being jeopardized and possibly jettisoned.

On the other hand if teachers' instructional and assessment practices are rather much dictated by the goals and objectives of the curriculum, while the external assessment tasks are still traditionally based then:

1. Many students' learning outcomes will not be assessed.
2. Results from such assessments will thus not be the true reflection of students' attainment levels in the subject's learning outcomes.
3. Such results can therefore not be relied upon.
4. Any decision whatsoever taken, using such results, will not be based on students' actual learning outcomes and thus will be unfair, unjustifiable and, at worst, criminal, as it will be an abuse of human dignity and rights.

The literature, as reviewed above, therefore reveals and supports the following as some of the questions for this research:

- Are teachers of Social Studies in Ghana employing the alternative forms of assessment, recommended in the SSS syllabus, in the classroom?
- What factors/reasons influence teachers' assessment decisions in the classroom?
- Is the prevailing assessment culture hindering the effective implementation of the new Social Studies curriculum in the Ghana?

2.3.3 Reliability versus Validity in Assessment.

The two most important traditional criteria for ensuring that assessments give true reflections of the state of capability of learners, and do so consistently with high level of predictability are Validity and Reliability. It has been said that of the two, validity is the most important, especially for the evaluation of assessment instrument (Mager, 1990; Tyler, 1949). However over the years “Reliability has too often been overemphasized at the expense of validity” (Linn, Baker & Dunbar, 1991).

Reliability, it must be noted, is about the consistency of test scores and not the test itself (Linn, Baker & Dunbar, op cit). It has been variously argued that much emphasis, in assessment, is often placed on reliability at the expense of the validity, because the traditional statistical model of reliability and validity holds that for something to be valid it must first be reliable. Thus it is often assumed that once an assessment is computed to be of high reliability, it automatically becomes valid. This assumption is apparently problematic, in the sense that there is evidence, both from research and experience, that this is not always the case.

For instance, if a teacher teaches his/her pupils the four basic operations in Mathematics, and ends up testing them on only additions, the reliability of the test could be quite high as pupils’ scores would possibly show consistency. However such a test will definitely not be valid in respect of the content lacking breadth of coverage and being unrepresentative of the intended curriculum objectives. It would also not provide a complete picture of what pupils have actually acquired and can do. The scenario above clearly indicates that the validity of an assessment instrument cannot be guaranteed just because it has been computed to have a high level of reliability. Haydn, Arthur & Hunt (2001: 237 – 238) also argue, “A test loses validity if the pupils are being assessed on content, skills or concepts which they have not been taught”. Thus while such a test may score high on the reliability test, the fact that it is assessing outcomes that pupils have not been instructed in makes it invalid.

It is also argued that the issue of test reliability itself is inconclusive and various questions have been raised against it. The first of such questions is about the

computation of the reliability coefficient of a test. For instance in the case of test-retest reliability, the argument is that it is practically absurd to give the same test to pupils on two separate occasions. It is also wondered, against the split-half reliability test, whether two different items can really measure the same thing or construct.

In the first instance, it is argued that whether the second test is taken immediately or sometime after the first one, many things could happen between the time spans to impact on the subsequent performance. Secondly it must be understood that reported error in reliability of traditional test scores is often underestimated (McMillan, 2002). Rogosa (1999) for instance illustrates this point effectively by showing, using percentile rank, the probable true score hit-rate and test-retest results (see McMillan, *op cit*). It therefore means that if the reliability of traditional test scores themselves cannot be absolutely relied upon, then in deciding what assessment technique to use in assessing for learning outcomes, we must rather emphasize validity. This view is supported by Tyler (1949) who argued to the effect that the most important criterion for an evaluation/assessment instrument is validity.

Thus in as much as measurement experts and test constructors go to great lengths to ensure the reliability of assessment instruments, they must also verify, and even more rigorously, the validity of such instruments. Certainly a test cannot qualify to be a good test if it has high reliability, but then lacks validity. And to this the SQA (2001) adds that assessment decisions are reliable when they are based on evidence that is generated by valid assessments. It therefore holds that in constructing or evaluating assessment instruments or test items, reliability should be considered as just one of the criteria and not the only criterion, and validity as rather the most important of the criteria.

As stated earlier on, the debates on the reliability and validity of assessment are directly related to that on traditional and alternative assessment. Thus in pointing out the shortfalls about the overemphasis of reliability as against validity, in the traditional assessment domain, many are now insisting on the introduction of alternative assessment techniques to ensure the comprehensiveness and validity of

assessment data. In the implementation, therefore, of authentic assessment, the U.S state of California is for instance of the view that performance or authentic task can be a basis for state-wide testing (Broadfoot, 1995). There are also clear indications that people are beginning to have strong convictions in alternative assessment, and an example of these is given by Broadfoot (1995: 16), who quoted Bill Horig, a former California State Superintendent of Public Instruction, as stating that

“The assumption was that a subjective grading process was appropriate for classroom assessment, but not for public accountability. But we can and must standardize this more valid assessments – it’s either that or live with the results of narrow assessment and poor accountability”.

In line with the above discourse, one may ask for the meaning of assessment validity and about the measure to put in place to ensure the validity of an assessment tool or item. “Test or assessment validity refers to the degree with which the inferences based on test scores are meaningful, useful, and appropriate” (Brualdi, 2002: 12). Moskal & Leydens (2002: 77) also refer to the American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association and National Council on Measurement in Education (1999) definition of validity as, “The degree to which the evidence supports that the interpretations are correct and that the manner in which the interpretations are used is appropriate”. This thus suggests that validity is about whether interpretations or inferences made of a pupil’s test results are true reflections of his/her ability to really perform the task that the test indicates. Thus according to Linn, Baker & Dunbar (1991: 1) “questions of validity focus their attention on long-range objectives, criterion situation... and the extent to which they are reflected in the tasks presented to learners on a test”.

In respect of the above, some people have argued that the traditional notion of validity has viewed the concept too narrowly (Brualdi, op cit; Messick, 1996 & 1989; Linn, Baker & Dunbar, op cit). For instance the traditional means of accumulating validity evidence have been grouped into three categories; content-related, criterion-related, and construct-related evidence of validity (Brualdi, op cit). Thus evidence for validity has been sought in terms of the following:

1. The correlation between tests measuring the same construct or between a test and the criterion behaviour of interest (Taylor & Nolen, 1996; Nitko, 1996; Linn & Gronlund, 1995; Hanna, 1993).
2. Tables of specifications to determine whether the content of a test measures the breadth of content targeted (Taylor & Nolen, op cit; Oosterhof, 1996; Linn & Gronlund, op cit).
3. Using a range of strategies to build a logical case for the relationship between scores from the assessment and the construct the assessment is intended to measure (Taylor & Nolen, op cit).

However, it is being argued that “there are no rigorous distinctions between them; they are not distinct types of validity” (Brualdi, 2002: 12). Instead, the modern concept of validity, as advanced by Cronbach (1988) and Messick (1989), views construct validity as the unifying concept underlying all validity (see Gipps & Murphy, 1994; Brualdi, op cit). The argument is that the traditional notion of validity is fragmented and incomplete, as it fails to take into account evidence of the value implications of inferences made from scores as a basis for action and also the social consequences of the way inferences are made from the scores. The proponents of the modern conception of validity therefore suggest that validity should be seen as a unitary concept and its categorisations rather than its components. They also called for an expanded view of validity to include other important concerns.

According to Linn, Baker & Dunbar (op cit) the idea of an expanded notion of validity becomes more imperative and central to the evaluation of the adequacy of new forms of educational assessment. They (Linn, Baker & Dunbar, op cit: 4) opine that such criteria “provide a framework that is consistent with both current theoretical understandings of validity and the nature and potential uses of new forms of assessment”. It must however be clarified that the components of the expanded conceptualisation of validity is currently inexhaustive (Linn, Baker & Dunbar, 1991), with different authors producing different lists of what should constitute the components of validity. However a close examination of some of the lists shows that

they have similarities among them, and that two or more components of validity, by one author could as well fit into a component of the other.

The above discussion therefore indicates that Linn, Baker & Dunbar (op cit) and Brualdi's (2002) lists of components of validity could all be merged to produce the following:

1. **CONTENT:** This will be the merging of Brualdi's (op cit) component of 'Content' and 'Substantive' with Linn, Baker & Dunbar's (op cit) 'Content Quality' and 'Content Coverage'. It refers to the extent to which the content of assessment is consistent with best current understanding of the field and at the same time reflective of what are judged to be aspects of quality. It also refers to the comprehensiveness of content coverage and the extent to which the assessment is relevant and representative of the construct domain (Brualdi, op cit).
2. **STRUCTURE:** This is suggested by Brualdi, and is about how the internal structure of the assessment is consistent with what is known about the internal structure of the construct domain (Brualdi, op cit: 13)
3. **TRANSFER AND GENERALISABILITY:** The evidence that the performance in a specific task can be transferred to other tasks to allow for consistency and thus generalisation.
4. **CONSEQUENCES:** This involves the collection of evidence about both the intended and unintended effects of assessment on the way teachers and students spend their time and think about the goals of education. In other words, this is about whether the interpretation of assessment results leads to either positive or negative consequences (Herman, 1992). Gipps & Murphy (1994: 187) for instance make reference to a TGAT Report (DES, 1988) that proposed that external assessment should, among other things, "not have undesired effects on the curriculum".
5. **FAIRNESS:** The questions here are whether assessments and the interpretations of their results take into consideration the cultural and socio-economic background of students and whether there is evidence of

offensive items to some students and/or sources of irrelevant difficulty for students.

6. **COGNITIVE COMPLEXITY:** The evidence that no matter the difficulty of the subject matter, items really require students to exercise higher order thinking and reasoning processes (Linn, Baker & Dunbar, op cit).
7. **MEANINGFULNESS:** Is the assessment task meaningful to students and does it provide worthwhile educational experiences?
8. **EXTERNAL FACTORS:** This is about the extent to which the relationship of assessment scores with other measures and non-assessment behaviours reflect the expected relations implicit in the intended construct. In this case, “the score interpretation is substantiated externally by appraising the degree to which empirical relationships are consistent with that meaning” (Brualdi, *ibid*).
9. **COST AND EFFICIENCY:** This aspect of validity, according to Linn, Baker & Dunbar (1991), is about the cost effectiveness of the assessment instrument, especially for large-scale assessment.

Having established the meaning of assessment/test validity and having identified its components therein, the next issue for consideration is how one ensures that an assessment instrument or item encompasses all these components and thus is potentially useful for assessing learning outcomes. A practical guideline, as provided by the SQA (op cit), is that an assessment is valid when it is appropriate to or fit for purpose (e.g. using practical assessment to assess practical skills), and allows the production of the evidence of students’ performance which can be measured against defined standards. This implies that in the construction of assessment items every effort must be made to ensure that their quality is mostly assured by their validity. In this direction Herman (1992) and Linn, Baker & Dunbar (op cit) provided the characteristics of a good assessment, with most of the criteria already identified as components of validity. This perhaps goes to support the assertion made by Mager (1990) and Tyler (1949) that the only good assessment is the assessment that is valid. In other words, test validity should capture the characteristics of good assessment (Dietel, Herman & Knuth, 1991).

McMillan (2002), on the other hand, identified the following as characteristics of good assessment:

1. Good assessment must enhance instruction, by its integration with instruction in the classroom.
2. Good assessment should be valid, in its modern and expanded form.
3. Good assessment should be fair and ethical, in that it must ensure students' knowledge of learning targets and the nature of the assessments prior to instruction and avoid stereotypes.
4. Good assessment must use multiple methods to ensure that a complete picture of what students understand and can do is put together in pieces comprised by different approaches to assessment.
5. Good assessment is efficient and feasible in the sense where benefits outweigh cost.

Apparently the components of validity and characteristics of good assessment, even though similar and are to be taken as one and the same thing, seem unwieldy if one is to consider the extent of the issues or concepts they embrace. These criteria therefore seem difficult for one, without the appropriate guidance, to meet when constructing an assessment item or tool. Mager (op cit) therefore provides a straightforward solution, by insisting that one simply needs to match the performance and condition of the item to that of the curriculum objectives. His mantra is, "write or select items that will ask students to do what the objectives say they are able to do" (Mager, op cit: 15). In other words "if the assessment items do not match the content and the behavioral construct of the objective, then the assessment is of the little value" (Farris, 2001:68 in reference to Cangelosi, 1990 and Popham, 1995). Thus Kurfman (1991) also, in reference to Chapin (1974), suggests that the important question for Social Studies educators should be the extent to which the items in the national testing programme are compatible with the Social Studies curriculum goals and objectives. And the SQA (op cit) confirms this by also stating that in devising assessments, one should ensure that all outcomes are covered to the appropriate level of demand, as described by the performance criteria or objective.

In furtherance to the above position, Mager (op cit) subsequently presented two models that could be used for the construction or selection of assessment items, and also serve as useful tools for the evaluation of test items. These models can be seen as classic benchmarks, in this direction, which will guide teachers and test constructors to come out with the appropriate tools for assessing learning outcomes. This will ensure that the use of inappropriate test items, which is a widespread phenomenon, is done away with and the whole assessment culture improved.

These models are:

1. An objective/item checklist; and
2. An objective/item flowchart.

The checklist is for instance a six (6) steps instruction that presents a systematic approach to item evaluation. This starts with the identification of the performance as stated in the curriculum objective, and verification as to whether it is an overt/covert main intent or indicator of the main intent, followed by the establishment of its clarity. The next step is to find out the performance being asked for by the item, after which the existence of a match/congruence will be determined between the two performances. The last step on the instruction is the establishment of a match between the objective and item conditions.

The flowchart on the other hand is an eighteen (18) steps criterion, which is just an expanded form of the checklist, described above. However anyone intending to use Mager's models for the evaluation of assessment/test items could as well expand it to include other important criteria like; fairness, cognitive complexity, meaningfulness (Herman, 1992), and the contextualisation of task in real-world applications (Dietel, Herman & Knuth, 1991). This will ensure that the criteria for evaluating test items will be more comprehensive and rigorous, and should result in very good test items that can really assess, in an objective and valid manner, whatever curriculum objective they intends to assess.

2.3.4 External/Summative (High-Stakes) versus Internal/Formative Assessment.

“Some educators regard as the only valid assessment a highly formal examination under controlled conditions. Others see assessment as meaningful only if it is an integral part of the continuing learning situation” (Pratt, 1994: 107). There are still a few others who reject the notion that these two forms of assessment should be seen as ‘polarized dichotomies’ (Pratt, 1994), and rather call for them to be seen as belonging to a continuum. Assessments or tests are referred to as high-stakes when their results are used to arrive at many important and far reaching decisions about a student, teacher, school or an educational programme. In many countries, particularly the UK and US (and recently in Ghana), one of such uses or abuses, as is often claimed, is the compilation of ‘league tables’ to compare schools and school districts (Dixon, 2000: Hargreaves, 1989: Madaus, 1988). Assessments of such nature inevitably command a great deal of influence on what both students and teachers do towards their preparations for them.

The kind of hold external/summative assessment has on the schools’ curriculum, as a result of their high-stakes nature, has led some professionals and scholars to allege that these assessments have resulted in the control over the curriculum being transferred from the professionals to politicians and the agency which sets or controls the examination. Madaus (1988: 97) for example indicates, “The agency responsible for a high-stakes test assumes a great deal of power or control over what is taught, how it is taught, what is learned and how it is learned”. This is explained in the context that in every setting where an external examination, which is considered high-stakes, operates, a tradition of resorting to past examination questions develops and eventually becomes the de facto curriculum.

It is also argued that students’ assessments are being employed as part of a kind of coercive strategy for ensuring compliance to external requirements and for controlling the activities of teachers and by extension the curriculum. Kelly (1999: 12) in this direction argues, “Pupil assessment has come to be regarded, and used, as key instrument in the establishment of direct political control, of combating that centrality of the teacher...”

The question some are however asking is whether it is fair and 'justiciable' to use the results of students to evaluate the performance of teachers, schools and or school districts. It also can be said that the belief, commonly held by policy makers that by setting standards and measuring their attainment teachers will be exhorted to teach better and students learn more (Shepard, 1992), will become absurd if it is found out that a mismatch exists between the set standards and those being measured in the assessment task.

It must be noted that the pervading existence of high-stakes/external assessments and the control they seem to exert on the curriculum have given credence to the claim (made all over in the literature, but with little research to support it) that teachers under such circumstances will begin to teach-to-the-test (see Broadfoot, 1995; Ebel & Frisbie, 1991; Madaus, 1988; Gross, McPhie & Fraenkel, 1970). That is teachers will eventually ignore the goals and objectives of the curriculum, which are not being assessed in the external examination, in favour of only those objectives covered by the test. The argument is that such a situation is often a perceptual phenomenon. That is, it matters very little whether policy makers are seeking to control the curriculum or not, teachers will still resort to teaching-to-the-test (even if they hate doing it) if they believe that the results of the test are going to be used in making very important decisions (e.g. selection, certification, promotion, etc) (Madaus, 1988). Madaus (op cit: 90) thus provides an evidence for the above assertion by drawing attention to the fact that "In 1938, Spoulding reported that teachers in New York disregarded the objectives in local curriculum guides in favour of those tested in the Regency Examinations".

An important question that has not been fully answered in the literature is whether it is just the perception of a test being high-stakes that makes teachers teach-to-the-test or other factors which might aggravate this phenomenon. That is, will teachers still teach-to-the-test if they are even encouraged, by the syllabus, to use other alternative forms of assessment to assess learning outcomes in areas where traditional assessment is perceived (rightly or wrongly) not able to effectively and accurately

measure, as is the case in Ghana (CRDD, 1998)? In this direction Ebel & Frisbie (1991: 2) argues,

“An increased pressure on educators to produce high test scores has led to the unhealthy state of test-driven curricula. That is the curriculum taught by teachers is determined more by the content of the up and coming mandated test than by the goals, values and perceived needs of the local community”

What if the perceived need of the local community is that of students getting very high scores on the test or very good grades in order for them to gain admission into higher education or employment into good jobs? Shepard (1992) in this instance cites the work done by Rottenberg & Smith (1990), which reported that teachers felt ashamed and embarrassed by low scores even when they recognized the influence of socio-economic factors on school rankings and the mismatch of the test content to instructional goals. It therefore means that social pressures, perceived needs of local communities and teachers own conscience and human feelings may also have an influence on their decision to teach-to-the-test. However, the only way to test this assumption is to conduct an empirical study, which also seeks to find out about other factors, apart from the external assessment, that might influence teachers' instructional and assessment decisions.

It must however be noted that teaching-to-the-test or test-driven curriculum is viewed by some people as positive and a good thing to happen in the educational process. It is, for example, argued that instruction that is measurement driven, whether or not the intentions are laudable, is purposeful instruction (Ebel & Frisbie, 1991) and prevents teachers from straying into unnecessary areas. Popham (1987) for instance argues that measurement can and should drive instruction (see Torrance, 1995). These proponents claim to the effect that if a test is measuring basic skills, then preparing students for such skills will serve as a powerful lever to improve those basic skills.

This argument is however flawed in the sense that “the only evidence to support this position is that the scores on test of basic skills rise, not that the skill necessarily improves (Madaus, 1988: 90). The reason why this argument is often made is that

proponents fail to distinguish between the skill itself and a score that gives an indication (fallible though as it is) of its existence. In other words, a secondary indicator of a performance or an achievement is too often confused with the performance goal or performance itself (Linn, Baker & Dunbar, 1991).

To cater for the apparent flaws in the proposition for measurement-driven instruction, many of the proponents are now calling for the use of more demanding authentic/alternative forms of assessment in external (high-stakes) examinations rather than the current traditional forms of assessment (Office of Technology Assessment, 1992; Resnick & Resnick, 1992; Torrance, 1995). This implies that if the test content improves it will also go to improve instruction naturally and eventually. However there is little indication or research evidence to support this assertion (Broadfoot, 1995).

Others have however argued strongly against the practice of measurement-driven instruction and opined that what is rather preferable is when assessment or measurement serves instruction as opposed to driving it (Cizek, 1997). This argument is centred on the fact that previous efforts to institute curriculum reforms through test/measurement-driven instruction failed to achieve the kind of change policy makers were looking for (Shepard, 1992). Thus Shepard (1992: 9) further argues, "If examinations were curriculum/syllabus driven, there would be in theory no distinction between practice on tasks mimicking the test and good instruction" However this theory has not been fully tested, probably because there has not been the opportunity since measurement-driven instruction has always been the case.

The criticism against the practice of test-driven instruction hinges on the potential or apparent distortions it brings to the curriculum. Pratt (1994: 103) for instance made reference to Short (1990) as positing that "measurement-driven instruction is, and always been devastating to both the curriculum breadth and teaching flexibility needed to ensure high quality education". Herman (1992) also argues that the pressure to improve test scores in the absence of serious and parallel support for instructional improvement is likely to produce serious distortions. The oft-cited

indication of such distortions is that high-stakes examinations in the traditional domain narrow the curriculum, in that tested content is taught to the exclusion of non-tested content (Shepard, 1992).

Shepard (op cit) draws on studies carried out by Darling-Hammond & Wise (1985) and Rottenberg & Smith (1990) to provide evidence to support the above assertion. In these studies, it was reported that certain important Social Studies and Science goals are being neglected because of the importance of raising test scores in basic skills. Particularly with Social Studies, the neglect has to do with citizenship, attitudes and values goals in the curriculum. Shepard also opines that high-stakes tests misdirect instruction even for the basic skills. That is when some skills, which are considered too practical and performance based to warrant any effective cognitive measurement are pushed to the periphery of instruction because they are either not assessed or assessed factually.

Another criticism is that test/measurement-driven instruction pollutes the test result and corrupts the inferences drawn from them about students' attainment (Pratt, 1994: Madaus & Kellaghan, 1992: Smith, 1991). In this case Koretz, et al (1991) report that students revealed dramatically less knowledge in reading and mathematics content when given an independent assessment, than they do appear to know on their routinely administered standardized tests (Shepard, 1992). This raises some serious questions about the inferences drawn from traditional assessment, which are considered as highly reliable and thus usually the main instrument employed in external (high-stakes) assessment.

There is also growing evidence to suggest that these external assessments are gradually becoming devices for the exclusion of the poor, minorities, and the handicapped (Madaus, 1988). That is the highly standardized nature of these assessments does not take into consideration the different conditions and socio-cultural imperatives that students find themselves and are thus educated in. It is therefore no wonder that in Ghana, the majority of students progressing from the SSS to the Universities come from the top twenty (out of about 503 public SSSs) schools

located in the cities and big towns to the exclusion of those from SSSs in small towns and rural communities.

The distortions and exclusivities that high-stakes external assessment brings to the curriculum and instruction have prompted many professionals to call for the consideration of internal/classroom assessment. It is argued that whereas formative/internal assessment provides data about how students are changing, summative /external assessment is only concerned with how students have changed (Pratt, 1994: Airasian, 1971). Pratt (1994: 111) for instance refers to summative assessment as a snapshot assessment and argues that such an assessment “has some of the limitations of photography. The picture that looks natural may in fact be posed”. That is this kind of assessment lacks the objectivity and detailedness to provide a true and comprehensive picture of a student’s real educational attainment. Thus according to Kelly (1999: 129) “This feature of assessment becomes particularly crucial, and dangerous, when far-reaching decisions concerning a pupil’s future, career or further educational provision are being made on the basis of such questionable data”.

It is therefore argued that internal assessment has more positive effects on students’ learning than do standardized or high-stakes external examinations (Madaus & Kellaghan, 1992). Internal assessment is also said to provide much more information to students about their strengths and weaknesses, enables them to set learning targets and gives them the opportunity to correct any misconceptions they might hold or mistakes they might have committed. To support this point, Herman, Dreyfus & Golan (1990) reported that Dorr-Bremme & Herman (1986) in a national study of elementary school teachers found that teachers’ classroom assessment provides more important information (in terms of curriculum, student promotion, teacher evaluation etc.) than any other type of test. Work done by Flexer (1995), Shepard, et al (1995) and Koretz, et al (1994) all points to the fact that classroom or internal assessment, especially when it is performance based, goes a long way to improve learning and teachers’ own instruction.

However, external assessment, as a major part of policy and practice alongside national curriculum, looms dangerously and largely over what goes on in the classroom and thus has overshadowed the curriculum itself (Kelly, 1999). Even when it has been identified that authentic assessment, due to its continuous and developmental inclinations, is best employed in the classroom and thus for internal assessment, teachers are often tempted to ignore such assessment forms and stick to only those employed in the external assessment.

Will teachers however feel more comfortable and freer to use authentic assessment if they are assured that data, collected, about students' learning outcomes through this means in the classroom will be incorporated into their final grades and certification? This question brings us to the issue of combining both external and internal assessment data (and by extension all forms of assessment) to arrive at a complete picture of what a student knows, understands and can do, including his/her personal disposition. That is, the final grades or scores of students should be seen to include aggregations of their assessment records over the years for proper accountability in the system. Thus according to Shepard (1992) consideration should be given to permitting students to accumulate examination credits over several years rather than sitting for a single graded or pass-or-fail test. This call is clearly meant to resolve the apparent injustice in asking students to sit for a short, one-off, test to cover all the learning objectives he or she has attained over the several years of his or her schooling.

Some have therefore asked that the credits to be accumulated should not only be in the form of grades or scores, but should also incorporate other meaningful data collected from sources such as observations, attitudinal scales, value voting and disposition to action among others (National Council for the Social Studies, NCSS, 1990). This, it is believed, will ensure that whatever decision is made from a student's final assessment records is based on a more comprehensive and complete set of data that provides a fuller description and understanding of his/her educational attainments, and not just his/her cognitive attainments being presented as his/her academic attainments.

Toohey (2002) in the light of the above called for certain personal attributes like self-appraisal, willingness to take responsibility for continued learning, self-management and ability to work with others, which were being developed as part of the goals of a new undergraduate medical programme, to be assessed. He was however of the opinion that such assessment should not be to certify competence, but rather to harness and direct the powerful effects of assessment onto an important aspect of practice. The question then is what will be the justification for assessing such an important aspect of practice only to exclude it from the certification process? It could well be said that Toohey perhaps made this statement because he could not fathom how such learning could be represented in the final grading of students. In as much as one would agree that these personal attributes do not in any way signify competence in a performance, they definitely add to the totality of a person's performance and thus need to be represented on the certificate one way or the other.

Thus the involvement of teachers in the assessment of their students will be to ensure that all kinds of assessment techniques are used to collect all kinds of data concerning a student's learning outcomes. Cizek (1997: 8) supports this fact by stating, "Even the best assessments are rough approximations of the truth and other ways must be sought if the goal of fairness to all pupils is to be realised". That is if assessments of students are going to be used to make very important and far reaching decisions about their future opportunities and progressions in life, then it is only fair that the teacher who did the instruction and has continuously been assessing them should have an input in the data that is used in making those decisions. Not only should the teacher be involved in the development and use of assessment tools, in this case, but his/her records of students' learning outcomes should also be accepted and thus incorporated into the final assessment data. Shepard (1992: 15) in providing support for this call reports that "Early experiences in California, Connecticut and Vermont suggest that involving teachers in this way...serves important staff development functions".

Unfortunately, the call made above has not been wholly accepted and embarked upon at the national level yet (Shepard, op cit). However, as indicated in the previous

chapter, Ghana as part of the 1987 Educational Reforms initiated this kind of integration or partnership, in which continuous assessment marks of students are made part of their final scores and grades. Despite the integration, there are many who have come to the belief that the kind of benefits this was to bring to the curriculum and instructional process, including students' learning and assessment data are not materializing. That is the use of various assessment tools to assess for different kinds of outcomes; varied instructional activities and the accumulation of assessment credits towards final grading and certification, among others seem to be a mirage now.

The use of alternative assessment in the continuous assessment of students in Ghana by teachers, as illustrated above, is perhaps no different from the case of South Africa. Vandeyar (2005) for instance reported that teachers in South Africa are not coping with the demands of continuous assessment on their classroom practices. The description of the South African continuous assessment policy, which was part of the 1994 educational reform programme in that country, fits very well into the characteristics or elements of alternative assessment, in that it is to provide explicit assessment criteria and focus on demonstrable performance. One of the reasons, given by Vandeyar, behind the apparent failure of teachers in South Africa to implement that policy was that the demands of the policy conflicted with the beliefs, assumptions and value system of the teachers. The source of the conflict was thus seen to stem from the fact that the new outcomes based assessment policy represented a radical departure in the philosophy of assessment and its role and relationship to learning, as held by majority of the teachers.

A similar situation also pertains in Scotland, where it has been reported that by the mid 1990s school inspectors were reporting that the implementation of the new 5-14 assessment advice and guidelines (SOED, 1991b) had hardly started, so that the quality and consistency of the information collected and reported on was very variable (Hutchison & Hayward, 2005). Apparently "there was little incentive for teachers to consider a wider range of evidence, or challenge a test result on the basis of their own judgement, especially when their perception that what mattered was test

results appeared to be confirmed by their experience” (Hutchison & Hayward, op cit: 229). One of the reasons they attributed to the above situation was the institution of new data requirements and the inability to integrate such data with the conventional test scores. What happened was rather the collection of aggregate attainment information with the expectation that it will be confirmed by the national test (high-stakes) scores.

Thus taking the experiences of South Africa and Scotland, as illustrated above, into consideration, the following assumptions can as well be made about the perceived failure of the integration/partnership programme in Ghana:

1. Students’ continuous assessment records from the schools are disregarded by the WAEC in computing their final grades.
2. Stakeholders perceive external assessment as more objective, reliable and thus important than internal assessments.
3. The likely inability of teachers and the WAEC to effectively aggregate or collate all the data from different assessment sources in their grading of students.
4. Teachers’ perceptions, assumptions and experience with assessment conflict with the demands of the new assessment policy/programme.
5. The use of external assessment scores to scale down scores accumulated from internal assessments.

These assumptions are derived from both the literature and the national debates that have characterized the integration since it was introduced in Ghana. For instance it was reported in the media that the GES is planning to review the Continuous Assessment system (the internal aspect of the integrated assessment). They argued that many pupils are getting very high scores in the internal assessment, but then perform woefully when it comes to the external examination, thus putting suspicion as to the objectivity of the internal assessment scores (myjoyonline.com, 2003). It was also argued that a study carried out by the CRDD showed that some teachers are not conversant with the operation of the system, while others were found to be ‘manufacturing’ marks for pupils’ cumulative records.

In as much as the evidence of such issues as described above could be found anytime in the field, the fact that the GES and the CRDD are also misconstruing their own assessment policy cannot be ignored. That is continuous/internal assessment was not supposed to be a direct replica of the external examination. It is for this reason that many of the syllabi in the school curriculum encourage teachers to employ other tools of assessment, which clearly are not meant for the kind of cognitive measurement that external examination seeks to do. Moreover, since this form of assessment is purely formative, and teachers were thus asked to use the best of pupils' assessment records or an aggregation of all of such records, there is bound to be characteristically 'high scores' being recorded as representing the attainment level of pupils. It is no wonder that these official comments or actions give credence to the perception that WAEC is after all disregarding such records from teachers in the computation of the final grades of pupils.

Another issue is that these continuous assessment records are always in the form of numerical scores. This thus clearly defeats the principle that it is not all learning outcomes that can be accurately represented by such scores, and thus gives credence to the third assumption as indicated above. However if Rudner & Schafer's (2002) suggestion for a triangulation of all assessment data is to be accepted, it will imply that qualitative data can then be used to give fuller meaning and understanding to quantitative data, as represented by assessment scores. This view is supported by the notion that absolute performance is never completely understood until there is interpretative assistance provided by comparative information (Cizek, op cit). The understanding is that it is not all learning that can be effectively represented by a mathematical or numerical measure and thus graded accordingly. To this effect Madaus (1988) cautioned that the more any quantitative indicator is used for social decision making, the more likely it will be to distort and corrupt that social process. Perhaps a way round this problem, as could be inferred from the suggestion of Rudner & Schafer (op cit), is to include those learnings, which are not amenable to quantitative measurement, on students' final grade or transcript as qualitative addenda.

Following from the above discourse, it will be appropriate to find out teachers' perceptions about the supposed control the external assessment has on them and whether they believe that the continuous assessment model adopted by Ghana is working effectively. Thus a focus of this study was to verify the foregoing and also to find out whether teachers believed their records of students' learning outcomes are being used by the WAEC, as the assessment policy demands. This clearly brings us to the accountability debates, and as to whether concerns about teachers' accountability to the system are being held sway over professional and ethical considerations.

2.3.5 Top-down Model versus Partnership Model of Accountability.

It will not be far fetched to say that the majority, if not all, of the tensions or debates that have characterized the assessment field are premised on the issue of accountability in the system. The issue of teacher accountability, in this light, has never been under contention, especially when their practices or conduct in the classroom have great implications for learners and the society as a whole. As Kelly (1999: 152) puts it, "It is of the essence of life in a democratic society that no one should be unaccountable for his or her public actions".

What is of contention, however, is how this accountability is measured or observed. Should it be to ensure that teachers, among other public sector actors, are doing their work according to the dictates and ethics of their professions or job functions, or to hold a controlling sway over what they do? In this context Kelly (ibid) argues, "Public accountability, however, has to be clearly distinguished from political control. Its concern must be to ensure the best possible practice not to control that practice". However the call for teacher accountability has been interpreted differently and thus sets the stage for different strategies to be implemented in ensuring that such accountability is attained.

Unfortunately, the most widely used strategy of ensuring teacher accountability is what Sockett in 1976 (cited by Kelly, 1999) referred to as the Instrumental, Bureaucratic Model of accountability or the Top-Down Model. And to Kelly (op cit:

153), “the means this adopts to assess teacher competence is setting tests which are administered but not designed by the teachers concerned”. In other words, the press for public accountability has led to the introduction and retention of Nationwide/State wide assessment (Ebel & Frisbie, 1991). In the words of Gray & Wilcox (1995:7) “The use of examination results has been at the centre of the government’s interest in the performance measurement of schools”. It must be noted that this is done in order to ensure school effectiveness, and by extension, teacher accountability. The theory, thus being applied in this case, is that these achievement scores can be used to assess the effectiveness of what teachers do in the classroom (Sockett, 1976: see also Kelly, 1999).

The above sounds like trying to judge the professional competence of a physician through how well his or her patient responds to treatment, with the assumption that such response can be used to assess how well the physician was able to diagnose the ailment and the efficiency of the treatment s/he was able to offer the patient. This argument is clearly problematic and goes to indicate equally how problematic the strategy of accountability, currently in place in many countries, is.

Clearly it is this notion of accountability that has stood in the way of demands for school-based or internal assessment to be made part of the final grading of pupils. Even when this call has been accepted, the scores, thus produced by teachers, are taken through rigorous statistical procedures to ensure that they are standardized and thus comparable across the board. For instance Wood (1991: 71) had referred to the Secondary Examination Council (SEC) of England’s argument that “school-based assessment is there to test aspects of attainment which may not easily or adequately be tested by final papers”, as a justification for the inclusion of school-based assessment in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). The argument then continues thus, “not only is there better correspondence between what is done in schools and what is examined which itself enhances validity, but the result is fuller and richer” (Wood, 1991: 72-3). Yet such teacher-produced assessment records are often faulted on the issue of bias (Wood, op cit) and thus judged to have a very low

level of reliability as compared to standardized external examinations (Broadfoot, 1995; Linn, Baker & Dunbar, 1991).

In as much as this claim could be true, the question that is often asked is, should we accept a highly mismatched test that has very little or no congruence with curriculum goals and objectives, but highly reliable, over another test which is highly congruent with curriculum goals and objectives, but has low reliability? This question is asked with the understanding that the issue of test reliability itself remains inconclusive (McMillan, 2002; Rogosa, 1999). Wood (1991: 74) makes this clear when he posits, “On one aspect of reliability, the availability of repeated observations, the teacher is better placed than the external examiner”. In spite of this, whenever there is a problem of correlation between internal assessment and external assessment scores, the scores from internal assessment are those that are always seen as the culprit and thus need scaling, weighting or reviewing (see myjoyonline.com, op cit).

For instance, the internal assessment component of students’ final grade in the SSSCE, in Ghana, was scaled down from 40% to 30% in 1995, due to recommendations from the Educational Reform Review Committee of 1994. The reason given was that most the first batch of students in the SSSCE, who had apparently performed very well at the BECE, had performed rather woefully in this instance. It was thus assumed that their BECE results could have been unduly inflated by their cumulative records from the internal assessments (MOE, 1995). Wood (1991: 77) thus argues, “If instrument Y exists to measure things other than instrument X manages, how can it be right to use X to scale Y?” in counter to such assumptions and practices as described above. That is if internal assessment exists to measure things other than external assessment does, as the case may be, how then can we justify the use of external assessment to scale down and thus weight internal assessment?

Kelly (1999: 154) in his condemnation of this practice cites Sockett (1976) as indicating that “it encourages the acceptance of simplistic educational goals by suggesting that what cannot be measured cannot be taught”. Thus in the case where

teachers are seen to be held accountable for what they have little or no control over, they will likely be forced to jettison or reject the curriculum intents and go for those covered by the external test in order to protect their professional integrity. This claim is particularly made valid by Noddings' (1992) assertion that the demands of accountability and the emphasis placed on scores representing cognitive performances of students as a measure of school effectiveness has led to many schools becoming poor cultivators of emotional intelligence among other affective outcomes. Thus a question for the study, in relation to this section, will be to find out whether teachers, for the fear of losing face because their students performed badly at the external examination, are thus forced to structure their instructional and assessment practices to cater for the intents of such examination.

The issue of the morality of external assessment as an instrument of teacher or school accountability has also been raised, both on the account of the interest of students and the professional functions of teachers. This, it is argued, has led to the alienation of students from the curriculum and instructional process (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998) and made them mere objects, which must be 'whipped' into towing a particular line and whose interests are never considered. A study conducted by Cullingford (2002) for instance indicates that what is really important and useful in education to students and which they think will be of utilitarian value to them in the world of work, are far from the official notion or policy. Wiggins (1993: 7) in this direction also claims,

“Preponderance of testing (as the sole instrument of most external examinations) as opposed to assessment is never in the student's interest, whether we use multiple-choice or performance-based tests, because a test, by its design, is an artifice whose audience is an outsider, whose purpose is ranking, and whose methods are reductionist and insensitive”.

Thus to use information from such assessments, which is clearly a gross misrepresentation of the student's total attainments, even in the cognitive sense, amounts to a disregard of his/her interests and a debasing of his/her personality, and thus immoral if not illegal. It will be illegal in the sense that it can be argued that a student's human rights is violated when an incomplete and thus invalid data about his

educational attainments are used to deselect him or her and subsequently prevented from realising his or her full academic and, by extension, economic potential. Even though students, like teachers, only 'get on' with the official position of using their performance on an external examination as an indication of their attainment level and the effectiveness of their schools because they have no or little choice, they are nevertheless critical of their experiences in school (Cullingford, op cit). And Wiggins (op cit) posits, "When we isolate the learner's knowledge from the learner's character in a test, we no longer feel an obligation to get to know the assessee well (or even to pursue the meaning of an answer)". Thus Cizek (1997) on this issue warns about the potential harmful effects external/summative assessment, used in the manner as described above, has on the self-esteem of a student whose results are insufficiently encouraging.

The issue of external examination being used as an instrument of accountability, to ensure that teachers are exhorted to teach better and students to learn more (Shepard, 1992), raises concerns that border on the validity of this theory. That is, the more schools and teachers are held accountable for their classroom activities, through the performance of their students on the external assessment tasks, the more they will improve upon those activities and thus the better students' performance will be. For instance Hopkins (2001) refers to Leithwood, et al (1999)'s studies in this respect, which reported that the use of performance as a mechanism of instituting school reforms and by extension accountability has not been working in all the places that the studies were carried out. In this direction Elliott (2001) posits,

"The idea of evidence-based teaching as a process of rectifying deficiencies, identified by measuring performance against a normative template of fixed indicators, rests on a distorted conception of what constitute relevant evidence about the relationship between teaching and its outcomes. Evidence of measurable improvement, defined as bringing performance up to a fixed standard, is not the same as evidence of performance, defined as an open-ended and ongoing process over time"

The above indicates a misunderstanding or misconception about what is entailed in the learning process and about the indicators of performance.

Crew, Jr. & Anderson (2003) in their study of performance in 'Charter Schools' in Florida, US, based on the accountability theory, also came to the conclusion that student performance in these schools, which had strict accountability demands placed on them, were no better than the performance of students in regular public schools. It was also found that there was no indication of teachers or schools changing their behaviour in response to the accountability demands. That is, their instructional practices did not become any better as there were no efforts on the part of these teachers to improve upon such practices, which thus contradict the notion within the accountability theory, as explained above. It must be noted, however, that Crew & Anderson (op cit) attributed the outcome of their study primarily to shortcomings in establishing accountability for the actions of the charter schools, and the fact that the accountability in question goes further than the mere use of external assessments to include financial and administrative strategies and the transfer of oversight responsibilities on these schools to an independent managerial body.

The above findings do, however, bring interesting dimensions to the accountability debates, in the sense that they indicate a case of people not necessarily prone to changing their behaviour in any way anticipated because of their being held accountable, in one way or the other, for their actions. As Hardie (1995: 55) posits, "There is...a danger that schools may be tempted to respond to externally imposed schemes by producing whatever is required without themselves using the data for review of professional practice in the school". On the contrary, they indicated, such persons will at best find ways of 'cheating the system', as is with the case of teachers who teach-to-the-test, but not necessarily improve upon their instructional behaviour, to ensure that their students, at least, maintain a certain level of performance on the external/high-stakes assessment.

The foregoing reveals that the only way the top-down model of accountability influences teachers' behaviour is that they, in response to its demands, resort to cheating the system by teaching-to-the-test. Perhaps there is the need to place the issue of school or teacher accountability in its proper context in order to have a clearer picture of what strategies to use to ensure that. Wiggins (1993: 257) for

instance argues, “Accountability is a moral and sometimes, by extension, legal obligation to be responsive to those with whom one has a formal relationship”. It also means being responsible for one’s own actions towards those with whom s/he has such a relationship. As to who should be the arbiter in this relationship, there is no doubt about the fact that an outside person or agency should be made to come in to perform this role. However the issue of who should provide the indicators of the responsiveness and responsibilities in such a relationship should be understood and accepted to be the sole prerogative of the beneficiary or the client in the relationship.

Thus

“If the answer to the question of whom should/are schools (and by extension teachers) truly accountable is the school’s client and customers, and not oversight agencies, then standardized (or external/summative) testing has little to do with accountability...because the client’s satisfaction or dissatisfaction will be due to more routine and direct indicators” (Wiggins, 1993:257).

This notion, however, compounds the problem if the client’s satisfaction or otherwise is directly and highly influenced by the uses to which external assessment is put. This thus brings in the issue of ‘perceptual phenomenon’, as described by Madaus (1988). That is, it matters less whether the use of external assessment as an instrument of teacher/school accountability is a public or administrative policy or not, the fact still remains that teachers and schools, and their clients or customers will feel compelled to come under the influence of such an accountability system if they believe that results of this examination are used to make very important decisions about their future.

It has been made clear from the foregoing that this apparently dysfunctional system should not be allowed to continue to operate in this post-industrial (post-modern) era, where democratic values underpin every aspect of human life, including human rights and dignity. That is accountability should and must go with responsibilities, justice and fairness. This implies that people should be held accountable for only those actions they are responsible for, and in a fair and justiciable manner. Fairness and justice, here, means the inclusion of all kinds of data from all possible sources, in

relation to all components of the educational system, in evaluating teacher responsiveness and responsibilities, and school effectiveness.

The above view is supported by Creemers (1996: 30), when he suggested that “more and different kinds of measurements should be used to measure the quality and effectiveness of education” (see also Royer, et al, 1993: Wolf, et al, 1991: Porter, 1990). Thus where there is a credibility gap, as in the present circumstance, between the intents of the instrument used in the collection of data about students’ learning outcomes and the actual performance/intents in the curriculum, fairness and justice become sacrificed, in this case on the altar of expediency, and accountability suffers. Wiggins (1993: 261) in this context claims, “The absence of credible tests makes summary judgments about school...performance almost impossible”.

Thus to solve this problem, some practitioners are calling for the institution of a partnership model, both for students’ assessment, as already discussed, and teacher accountability, instead of the current ‘top-down’ approach. The notion is that if assessment is expanded and enriched to include cumulative records of a student’s entire school life and learning experiences, embodying all curriculum goals and objectives, then we will have better and more credible students’ records, representing the true and complete picture of their educational attainments, to make judgments on. It is thus assumed that basing teacher/school accountability on a different and more democratic premise will give teachers the freedom and space to make good professional decisions in respect of their instructional and assessment practices and thus improve upon them.

It is for instance argued that criteria for school effectiveness can be discerned from all kinds of variables relating to the general components of the system, being the inputs, processes and the output. These components are thus defined as follows:

- **INPUT:** Number of students, resources, teachers and their quality (having to do with their qualification and teaching experience), quality of buildings etc.;

- **PROCESSES:** Number of clubs, extracurricular or co-curricular (as is used in Ghana) activities, hours spent in school, school's pedagogical climate, quality of teaching and the functioning of the school as an organization;
- **OUTPUT:** Academic outcomes, students' well-being etc (Creemers, op cit: 25)

This therefore means that instead of relying on only one form of criterion, which in itself is very narrow, to evaluate the effectiveness of a school and thus what goes on there, a more open system will be to include data from all these components and aggregate them in such a way as to give a true and comprehensive picture of such effectiveness.

Sockett (1976) thus calls for a new model of accountability, which he terms as the Intrinsic, Democratic Model to be instituted. To him, such a model will seek "for adherence to principles of practice rather than for results embodied in pupils' performance" (Sockett, op cit: 42, cited by Kelly, 1999: 154). Thus the use of students' performances in external examinations to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of teachers and schools should be done away with. Instead, clear cut principles of professional practices and a code of conduct or ethics, pertaining to teachers' responsiveness and responsibilities, and in relation with the kind of support and resources they get, should be established and be the basis upon which they will be held accountable. In this direction (Kelly, 1999: 155) opines, "It, intrinsic, democratic model of accountability, also encourages an acknowledgement of the fact that teachers can in justice be held accountable only for those things which it lies in their power to affect". That is since the teacher does not, in any way, have absolute control over the actual learning that goes on in a student (just as a doctor does not have absolute control over the healing process his/her patient undergoes), he or she must not be held accountable for the performance of the student in the external examination.

Instead, the teacher will only be held accountable for his or her instructional and assessment decisions on the basis of whether they meet professional and most importantly curriculum criteria, and his/her responsiveness and responsibility to

his/her clients. Gray & Wilcox (1995: 25) thus provide bases for performance indicators by which the effectiveness of schools can be evaluated, as such indicators should:

1. Be central to the process of teaching and learning;
2. Cover significant parts of schools' activities;
3. Be capable of being assessed, and not just measurement;
4. Allow meaningful comparison to be made over time and between schools;
5. Be couched in terms that allow schools, by dint of their own efforts, to be seen to have changed their levels of performance.

The above principles, it is further argued, will result in 'Good' schools, where a high proportion of students or pupils:

1. Make above average levels of academic progress;
2. Are satisfied with the education they are receiving;
3. Have formed good or 'vital' relationships with one or more of their teachers
(Gray & Wilcox, op cit: 26-7).

It is hereby assumed that when these partnership and democratic models of assessment and school/teacher accountability are instituted, the professional freedom they are likely to bring to bear on the educational system will ensure that teachers' instructional and assessment practices are all curriculum-driven, instead of being test-driven. Thus one of the questions asked, in this research, was whether teachers instructional and assessment decisions and practices will be curriculum-driven, instead of test-driven, if the partnership/democratic model, as discussed, is instituted?

In asking the above question, cognisance was given to the fact that the model of accountability in Ghana is more akin to the partnership/democratic model, as already described. Thus the issue of a top-down model of accountability existing, in this context, is likely to be a perceptual phenomenon. This is so because teacher effectiveness, promotion and further career opportunities are not officially based on the performance of their students on the external examination. In this respect, the question was asked based on the assumption that any hint about the existence of the

top-down accountability model is more of a perception than reality. It was thus linked to the perceived pressures teachers encounter from the local community, students, parents and the GES, among others and their perception about the incorporation or otherwise of the internal assessment records of students into their final grades by the WAEC.

The discourse on assessments, as has been revealed so far, indicates a certain inviolable relationship between assessment and curriculum goals and objectives that must be maintained at all times and at all costs. It is however argued that the sanctity of this relationship is being violated with the current assessment culture and thus resulting in the contentious debates that are raging in the field of assessment lately. It is therefore important to look at the characteristics/components of this relationship and place them in the context of this study.

2.4.0 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ASSESSMENT AND CURRICULUM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES.

Assessment, as has been established from the discussions above, does not take place in a vacuum, and thus before one undertakes an endeavour in assessment he or she should know why he or she must assess; what to assess; how to assess and how to interpret the results (Rowntree, op cit). Assessment imperatives therefore demand that decisions about assessment should be guided by certain parameters, blueprints, guide-lines or criteria. This, according to Rowntree (op cit: 11) has to do with “selecting, from among all the means we have at our disposal for learning about people, those we regard as being most truthful and fair for various sorts of valued knowledge”. As Phye (1997a: 45) puts it, “Classroom learning can run the gamut from rote memorisation of vocabulary, facts, and concepts, to critical thinking, reasoning and problem-solving”, and not in the least, value clarification among others. Thus just as each of these learning categories will demand different kinds of learning and instructional approaches and strategies, so also will each need an assessment mode, which is most appropriate to its nature.

It is thus important for those engaged in assessing learning outcomes to understand and identify appropriate tools and items for assessment based on those guide-lines. In this direction, the most important of these guidelines, it is argued, is linking assessment to the curriculum intent (Mager, 1990; Tyler, 1949) to ensure a more comprehensive and complete data on students' learning (McMillan, 2002).

2.4.1 Assessment and the Learning Domains

Traditionally Cognitive, Psychomotor and Affective have been identified as the main domains under which learning can be categorised. This implies that as far as possible all subjects/disciplines under the school curriculum should have the above components for their offerings. In this categorisation, Cognitive learning or Cognition refers to knowledge in the form of facts, concepts or ideas and its acquisition, comprehension and application among other things. Psychomotor learning on the other hand refers to the acquisition and use of manipulative skills through the co-ordination of the mind and the limbs. Affective learning or Affect implies the development of personality traits, including emotions, self-esteem and disposition to actions or issues. Over the years however, there have been the introduction of some concepts leading to the expansion of the scope of some of the domains. For instance some curriculum designers/planners use the term Skills, instead of Psychomotor, to reflect the inclusion of processes other than the use of the limbs. For example critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving and decision making have all now come to be regarded as skills that are worth imparting to students. Affect is also being replaced by Attitudes and Values in some disciplines.

A practical example of the representation of the learning domains in the school curriculum is the Social Studies syllabus for the SSS in Ghana (CRDD, 1998). It is indicated in its rationale that the curriculum will equip students "with the relevant knowledge, attitudes, values and skills to help them solve their personal and societal problems" (CRDD, op cit: ii). However, as already indicated, the designers use the term skills, instead of psychomotor, to signify the broadening of its scope, and attitudes and values to represent the affective domain. Moreover a critical analysis of the SSS Social Studies syllabus in Ghana (CRDD, op cit) shows that some of the

skills, as identified, straddle both the cognitive and affective domains and serve as a kind of bridge between the two. For instance in the General Aims (CRDD, op cit: iii) are provisions for the development of critical, analytical, problem-solving and decision-making skills.

It must therefore be noted that the nature of and what goes on as one is engaged in problem-solving or decision-making, as illustrated by Banks (1990), can be said to belong with metacognitive processes or metacognition (Bennett et al, 2003; Tal & Hochberg, 2003; Herl et al, 1999; Baker, 1997). There are however other skills; like adaptation, inter-personal and citizenship, listed in the general aims of the subject, which can be said to be more akin to the affective domain of the subject.

The issue of certain skills, as especially identified in Social Studies, being a bridge between cognition and affect becomes apparent when one examines Banks' (op cit) decision-making model. In this model Banks (op cit) argues that decision-making is central to citizenship and the development of citizen actors, and thus at the heart or core of Social Studies, therefore differentiating it from the other social science disciplines. The model thus, in a systematic way, succinctly shows how cognitive and affective processes can be harnessed and used as a skill in making decisions and thus solving problems.

The foregoing indicates that if the evolution of assessment blueprints (Quelmalz, 1997; Bloom, 1956) and the need to match assessment intents and performances with that of curriculum goals and objectives are held to be important, then learner outcomes in all the learning domains of Social Studies, as identified above, should be assessed. This will ensure that all the goals and objectives of the subject are attained by learners even as the curriculum states they must be attained. Unfortunately the above position is rather negated by the recommended assessment structure in the SSS Social Studies syllabus (CRDD, op cit). When one looks at the weight given to the assessment of attitudes and values, coupled with the fact that such assessment is restricted to the school, it becomes obvious that very little or no seriousness is being attached to these kinds of goals and objectives.

An examination of the recommended structure of assessment, in SSS Social Studies, in the syllabus shows that whereas the assessment of attitudes and values is absolutely absent from the external examination (SSSCE), teachers are being asked to devote about 83% of their assessment tasks to this domain. On the other hand the structure, as mentioned, gives no indication as to the assessment of skills; both externally and internally. Meanwhile, on the whole, teachers' assessments of students form only 30% of the final mark that makes the grade of these students. This therefore means that a domain which is to cater for 83% of internal assessment emphases and intents, if it is done as recommended, only gets to add 25% to the final score and thus grade of learners. Thus with teachers teaching to the test, it can be said that two out of three of the learning domains in Social Studies in Ghana are effectively being sidelined, either by default or deliberately.

A question that is reflected in the literature is; will teachers feel obliged to teach and assess curriculum areas that contribute very little or nothing at all to the final grades and certification of learners? This question made it imperative to evaluate the impact of the policy, as described above and practised by the WAEC, on teachers' instructions and assessments.

2.4.2 Assessment and Curriculum Goals and Objectives

Curriculum goals and objectives are the demonstrable and achievable standards of attainment set for learners in any curriculum and straddle the gamut of learning domains. Thus any single curriculum objective, sometimes called specific objectives (CRDD, op cit: v) is directly related and may fall under any of the learning domains or a combination of them. Benjamin Bloom, in his 1956 work on the taxonomy of educational objectives under the cognitive domain, identified six hierarchical levels of learning. As indicated by Quelmalz & Hoskyn (1997: 105), "Bloom's taxonomy was developed to place educational test items and objectives into a hierarchy". The idea was to clearly identify and place the various aspects of learning in the cognitive domain in a hierarchy of complexity, and enable educational practitioners to come out with a blueprint that will aid them in instructing and assessing pupils to cover all the learnings in the cognitive domain. This is to ensure that instructional objectives

are selected to represent each of the levels identified. Also the instructional and assessment focus, in this sense, is to be based on the importance, according to the level of complexity, of each of the levels in the taxonomy of educational objectives in the cognitive domain.

There have been several attempts by others to come out with newer taxonomies, which will look different from Bloom's, as they do not wholly agree with him. In this circumstance, the most important issue driving these exercises is whether the traditional pre-occupation with the cognitive domain is adequately serving the needs of society, in terms of educational goals and objectives. The critical question being asked in this case is whether it is enough to concentrate on functional literacy alone, as some authors do term this kind of educational emphasis, in this post industrial/post-modern era. For instance Calfee, in 1994, argued that "Functional literacy is inadequate for today's students. The alternative is critical literacy, the capacity to use language in all forms to think, to solve problems and to communicate" (Calfee & Masuda, 1997: 78).

Calfee's (op cit) argument tends to give much support to Quelmalz's model/taxonomy of educational objectives under the cognitive domain, which incorporates reasoning processes. The Quelmalz model, for instance, provides the following criteria:

1. Problems or tasks should represent important recurring issues or activities.
2. Emphasise purposeful, sustained, reasoning that requires integration of reasoning strategies rather than demonstration of discrete isolated skills.
3. Assessment tasks should permit multiple interpretations or solutions, rather than one right answer. That is the encouragement of alternative points of views and conclusions.
4. Assessment formats should elicit explanations of inquiry processes, not just the answer.
5. Assessment tasks and problems should represent a range of generalisation and transfer.

6. Assess reasoning strategies directly, not as undifferentiated components of a more complex solution.
7. Assess meta-cognitive strategies for planning revision and self-evaluation (Quelmalz & Hoskyn, 1997: 105).

The above recommendations even become more imperative in the context of the new Social Studies curriculum in Ghana, which has among its general aims; the development of enquiry and problem-solving skills, the development of critical and analytical skills, and the ability and skills to function as good citizens (CRDD, op cit: ii-iii). In this respect Nickell (1993: 2) posits, “If we really expect students to be able to do these things, then assessment instruments must be designed to provide evidence that such is the case”. It therefore becomes necessary that assessment instruments and items used in assessing learning outcomes in Social Studies in Ghana are evaluated to see whether evidence exist that students are being assessed for all the outcomes, as specified in the curriculum.

It must however be noted that the above alone is not enough in ensuring an instrument that can potentially assess learning outcomes in all the domains. Phye (op cit), for instance, is of the view that the use of Bloom’s taxonomy of objectives in the cognitive domain and Quelmalz’s framework for evaluating reasoning process come under, what he terms as, the academic learning domain. The question then is what becomes of goals and objectives under the skills, attitudes and values or personality traits development domain? That is if we are to find out whether goals and objectives under these domains are being attained, then it logically follows that provision must be made for the assessment of same.

In relation to the above, Moskal & Leydens (2002: 79) argued that “Reasoning is not the only construct that may be examined through classroom assessment. Problem solving, creativity, writing process, self-esteem, and attitudes are other constructs that a teacher may wish to examine”. They (Moskal & Leydens, op cit) went on to state that regardless of the construct, an effort should be made to identify facets of the construct that may be displayed and provide convincing evidence of students’

underlying processes and considered in the development of assessment instruments and scoring criteria. What is being argued here is that “an outcomes-based approach requires that we test in authentic ways what is considered to be most important in terms of knowledge, skill, values and attitudes” (Nickell, 1993: 2).

In this direction Bloom and others’ taxonomy on the affective domain becomes quite instructive when one is considering the selection of instructional and assessment objectives under this domain. However this taxonomy has not received the same kind of interest and acceptance as the one in the cognitive domain. For some reasons, perhaps due to the traditional notion of education, the issue of the affective and skills domain of learning has been relegated in preference for the purely academic learning. However the present situation of curriculum change, to reflect the concerns and needs of this post-modern/post-industrial era, demands that assessment imperatives must also change to be in tandem with new curricula.

It is important, at this point, to note that it has been established that affect and cognition are not independent aspects of the personality, and that many affective goals can be reached, at least in part, through cognitive means (Ebel & Frisbie, 1991). And thus it is argued that learning outcomes in the affective domain can be assessed through approximation, even by using the traditional forms of assessment (Mager, 1990). In this case performances and or indicators such as; accepting responsibility, perceiving, communicating feelings, agreeing to issues, showing concern, showing commitment, adapting, conceptualising, justifying behaviour, advocacy and defending decisions can be employed within the traditional assessment setting to find out about students’ learning outcomes in the affective and skills domains. And as Bennett et al (2003), Tal & Hochberg (2003) and Herl et al, (1999) suggest, this can be made possible by also assessing cognitive and metacognitive processes that embody the exhibition or application of these performances or indicators.

A fundamental concern or issue in all these assessment debates can be said to be what Phye (1997b: 533) posited as, “An assessment system cannot be developed and

then remain unchanged when the curriculum, instructional techniques and our current knowledge of how students learn is in a state of flux”. It therefore calls for the continuous appraisal of all assessment systems, on periodic bases, to ensure that they are appropriate for the purposes for which they were developed. Tyler (1949) for instance argued to the extent that it is very necessary to evaluate each assessment device against the objectives that are being aimed at to see whether each of these devices uses situations likely to evoke the kind of performance or behaviour seen as desirable educational goal or objective.

The above makes it imperative to find out whether this thinking has in any way influenced both internal and external assessors in their construction and development of items/tools to assess students’ learning outcomes in SSS Social Studies in Ghana. It is for instance important to verify whether the content of the SSSCE, in this particular context, matches all the curriculum goals and objectives (Dietel, Herman & Knuth, 1991) and whether teachers’ instructional and assessment emphases also match these goals and objectives.

2.5.0 THE IMPACT OF EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT ON THE CURRICULUM AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION.

It is a common knowledge among educational practitioners, and shared in the literature, that external assessment drives classroom instruction, students’ learning and influences curriculum content (see Harlen, 2005; Havnes, 2004; Grant, 2000). However, it is argued that the evidence for an external assessment’s influence on either the curriculum content or instructional process is not clear (Mehrens, 1998) or at best presents a mixed picture (Grant, op cit). This might be due to the fact that much of the research, on the impact of external assessment, focuses on the relationship between students’ learning and the assessment (Natriello & Pallas, 1998; Wolf, 1998). That is, relatively few empirical studies explore the relationship between teachers and the external assessment administered on their students (Grant, op cit) and, even far less, the exploration of the systemic impact of the assessment on the whole curriculum process. Here, the curriculum process is defined as incorporating the rationale for the curriculum; the identification of its goals and

objectives, teaching, learning and assessment in the classroom, and the realisation or attainment of the goals and objectives by learners.

The foregoing makes it imperative to broaden research in this context to the systems level, having in mind that much has already been carried out in respect with students' learning. Thus the aim of this section is to review how external assessment is perceived to affect some other major aspects of the curriculum/educational process, particularly on teachers' instructional and assessment decisions, activities and emphasis, curriculum content and the possible attainment of the curriculum goals and objectives by learners.

2.5.1 The Impact of External Assessment on Teachers' Classroom Practices.

According to Mehrens (op cit: 18) "While there is no proven cause and effect relationship between assessment and the curriculum content or instructional strategy, there is some evidence and compelling logic to suggest that high-stakes assessments can influence both curriculum and instruction". To this, Harlen (op cit) also adds that the high stakes nature of external assessment is universally found to make teachers focus on the content of the tests, administer repeated practice tests, training students in the answers to specific questions or types of questions and adopting transmission styles of teaching.

An example of the above is found in the 1938 study carried out by Spoulding, and cited by Madaus (1988), which revealed that teachers in New York disregarded the objectives in local curriculum guides in favour of those tested in the Regency Examinations. Linn, Baker & Dunbar (op cit) also provides another evidence, by describing a situation where a Geometry Teacher in New York was found to have made his students memorize the twelve 'proofs' that might appear on the examination (see chapter 2, pages 60-61). And Koretz, et al (1991) add that students who have apparently done well in a routinely administered standardised test revealed less knowledge in reading and mathematics content when they were given another assessment independent of the standardised one.

Thus it is argued that teachers, irrespective of the views about the nature of the external assessment, will resort to teaching-to-the-test if they know that very important decisions are going to be made out of the results. In this case, test-driven instruction, as teaching-to-the-test is also known, is said to have devastating effects on the teaching flexibility needed to ensure high quality education (Short, op cit). What is being said, in this case, is that teachers will have no option than to tailor their instructional focus (i.e. what they are to teach and how they are to teach) to the intents of the external assessment.

Another way of viewing how external assessment makes teachers teach-to-the-test is by relating it to the assumption that teachers will be forced to teach what students consider as worthwhile knowledge, when it comes to high-stakes assessment. It is for instance argued that assessment directs students' learning, because the assessment system defines what is worth learning, as it is in itself an institutionalised mechanism created to shape the learning process among students (Havnes, 2004). On the other hand learning, according to the activity theory of Vygotsky (1978) and as further developed by Engeström (1987), is viewed as a social practice situated in a specific historical and socio-cultural context. The focus or emphasis of learning is thus on a mechanism that makes people act in certain ways that typify specific social contexts and that such action patterns are consistent across individuals and over time (Havnes, op cit).

Judging by the foregoing and coupled with the fact that the nature of learning, as viewed within the activity theory, is what is defined and safeguarded by external assessment, then it could be said that students in a more democratic context will be in the position to challenge their teachers on content/curriculum areas that are viewed as non-examinable or un-examinable. That is, as students attend to the facts of the assessment, teachers will have no option than to also attend to those facts themselves (Wilhelms, 1971). In this situation, not only will teachers' instructional objectives and content reflect those of the external assessment, but also their instructional strategies and activities (Harlen, op cit).

The above can be viewed within the context that teachers do feel ashamed and embarrassed if their students perform poorly on an external assessment, even when they recognise a mismatch between the assessment contents and curriculum/instructional goals and objectives (Rottenberg & Smith, op cit). In this context, teachers are more likely to resort to teaching what has been defined as learning by the assessment, and accepted as so by students, in order to feel fulfilled by the students' performance.

This argument can also be placed within the context of what motivates teachers in their working lives. Cockburn & Haydn (2004) report that a survey of 24 newly qualified teachers (NQTs) revealed that teachers enjoy their job because of the children. Some of these teachers commented that they experience joy when they see the children happy and progressing or when the children are pleased at understanding something. One of these teachers was cited as saying, "The excitement from seeing a child's work that is far better, in whatever aspect, than expected" (Cockburn & Haydn, op cit: 85) was what gives her joy in her work as a teacher. Others were cited as mentioning positive comments from school heads and colleagues and positive feedback from parents as what makes them enjoy being teachers. It is further argued that teachers in this respect experience responsibility for the results of their work, which is often interpreted as the performance of students at the external assessment, and thus derive meaningfulness of their work from these results.

Thus in the situation where the performance of the students is poor or below what was anticipated teachers will feel just as bad/sad as their students will feel about their own results. In addition to this, the likelihood of negative comments from parents and perhaps school heads and colleagues on the results will make teachers feel ashamed (as Rottenberg & Smith, op cit report) of their work and perhaps themselves. In other words, teachers do feel ashamed of the poor performance of their students in the external assessment, because the factors that give them motivation to carry on with their work are premised on this performance.

Apart from the teachers' instructional practices, external assessment is also known to have an influence on teachers' classroom assessments (Harlen & Deakin Crick, 2002). In Harlen & Deakin Crick's study of the impact of summative assessment on students' motivation and learning, it was found that students interpreted classroom assessment as purely summative regardless of teacher intention, possibly as a result of teachers' over-concern with performance rather than process. That is as teachers prepare their students for the external assessment; their pre-occupation with the students' performances on this assessment drives them to assess their students in a way that mimics the external assessment. Thus as teachers resort to what is also termed as coaching, the formative role of classroom assessment becomes under-emphasised and neglected. In this situation the function of classroom assessment looks similar to that of the external assessment with all its negative consequences (see the section under external versus internal assessment, pages 78-89).

If cognisance is taken of the fact that assessment-driven instruction is held to be positive by some practitioners (see Popham, 1987) then one might say that the influence of external assessment on teachers' classroom practices should not be viewed negatively, as it is seen to drive purposeful instruction (Ebel & Frisbie, op cit). This position is however challenged by many others (Linn, Baker & Dunbar, op cit; Madaus, op cit) with the argument that the traditional assessment tools employed in external assessments do not assess all learnings and thus have a narrowing effect on the curriculum. This thus brings us to the issue of the impact of external assessment on the curriculum.

2.5.2 The Impact of External Assessment on Curriculum Content.

As has been indicated above, the major concern critics have towards external assessment is that it does have a narrowing effect on the curriculum. It is argued that the tool used in external assessments (traditional assessment) only focuses on trivial learnings (Ebel & Frisbie, op cit) and thus employs elemental questions (Bennett, et al, 2003). As a result, it is further argued, external/summative assessment is not able to assess high order learning because its tools, which are measurement oriented, cannot adequately assess that learning. It is rather common that external assessments

tend to emphasise mere reproduction of the more readily ascertainable content, which mostly lie in the cognitive domain, to the relative or absolute exclusion of progress in higher-level intellectual skills, personal and social competencies and attitudinal changes (see Wilson, 1992; Gross, McPhie & Fraenkel, 1970).

The outcomes of emphasis for external assessment, as has already been shown, are underscored both by the philosophical underpinnings of assessment (Broadfoot, 1995) and the early theoretical notions of learning (Cizek, 1997). One of such notions is that creativity is not taught and thus cannot be assessed (Cowdroy & Graaff, 2005). However these notions have been challenged through research (see Resnick & Resnick, *op cit*) and it is now held that students learn from the meaning they construct out of their dealings and experiences with the concept in question and thus are able to conceptualise and map up their thought processes in solving problems (Bennett, *et al*, *op cit*; Moskal & Leydens, *op cit*). Cowdroy & Graaff (*op cit*), however, explain that the absence of assessment criteria for conceptualisation and schematisation (both levels of creativity) means that they cannot be and are not being assessed and therefore are not being taught.

Cuban (1992) for instance had made a distinction between the intended, the taught and the learned curriculum to explain the changes and drifts that a curriculum could undergo when under the influence of certain powerful agents. Much of the literature, as has been revealed in the discussions above, identifies assessment, particularly external assessment, as a major tool that is used to influence what is taught and what is learned (Madaus, *op cit*). Havnes (*op cit*) in his evaluation of the 'Exam Philosophicum' (ExPhil) programme in the University of Oslo, Norway provided a typical example of the foregoing, when he reported that the assessment structure has contributed to the establishment of a learning context that is contrary to the declared content and thus objectives of the programme. This means that as external assessment is only able to assess a very small area of the curriculum, its influence on what teachers teach and what students learn eventually leads to a shared curriculum between teachers and students that is quite, if not very, different from the actual curriculum.

Thus for Tanner (1988), testing or external assessment is fast usurping the role of the curriculum as the mechanism of defining what education is about. It is thus of little surprise if one considers the fact that the WAEC has examination syllabi, which are quite different in content and objectives from the teaching syllabi in Ghana. And it is also of little wonder that in a study carried out by WAEC's own research department, it was reported that the question papers for Clothing & Textiles, especially for the years 1997, 1998 and 2000, did not adequately cover the teaching syllabus (WAEC, 2002). It therefore follows that if teachers are going to teach only those areas that are covered by the external assessment, then the actual curriculum stands in danger of being jettisoned in favour of the assessment coverage as the de facto curriculum in the schools.

What the above means is that the apparent gaps in the external assessment coverage are more likely to make teachers and students under-emphasise those parts of the curriculum excluded from the assessment. That is, as the curriculum used by teachers becomes more determined by the content of the external/mandated assessment (Ebel & Frisbie, op cit) and as students also concentrate their learning on the main ingredients of the assessment (Pratt, 1994), control over the curriculum is thus transferred from the school setting to the agency responsible for the external assessment (Kelly, 1999; Madaus, 1988). The result, in this case, is that a de facto curriculum emerges, through a relatively unplanned and adaptive drift (Hoyle, 1969), that looks characteristically different from the actual curriculum and thus inhibits the attainment of the goals and objectives of the actual curriculum.

2.5.3 The Impact of External Assessment on the Attainment of Curriculum Goals and Objectives.

Following from the above, it is thus argued that in the circumstance where assessment coverage is inadequately representing curriculum content, the learning outcomes that are expected from the implementation of the curriculum are almost certainly not going to be attained (see Kliebard, 1988; Madaus, op cit). That is, since some important curriculum areas are not covered by external assessment, teachers and students will also not cover those areas in the teaching and learning respectively,

thus hindering the attainment of those objectives and the curriculum goals as a whole.

The inability to attain all the goals and objectives of the curriculum, because of the external assessment coverage is even said to be more pronounced in the case where a new curriculum with new educational goals that are not supported by philosophies, assumptions and theories behind the traditional mode of assessment have been introduced. Broadfoot (op cit) for instance posits that external assessment is most likely to inhibit the pursuit of such new educational goals, since it falls short of matching these new priorities with appropriate new techniques of assessment. Kliebard (1988: 21-22) went further, in this direction, to theorise that “when a curriculum change is introduced without due regard for a modification of the context in which the change is to take place, that innovation is almost surely doomed to a short life”.

The context that Kliebard (ibid) is referring to is none other than the assessment culture that is used to verify the attainment or otherwise of the curriculum goals and objectives by learners. Thus he (Kliebard, op cit: 22) further stated that “as long as criteria of success that are incompatible with the survival of the reform remain in place, the new programme’s place in the school curriculum is bound to be short-lived”. In effect, the current assessment culture, where curriculum goals and objectives like; higher order intellectual skills, personal and social skills, active citizenship and attitude changes are overlooked, will lead to the focus being shifted from the central themes of the curriculum to the peripheral indirect elemental/basic outcomes that are often substituted for the real things by the external assessment. What will happen is thus the unplanned adaptive drift from the actual curriculum to the content of the assessment coverage thereby rendering the roll out of such new curriculum imperatives stillborn.

2.6.1 SUMMARY

This review of the relevant literature on assessment and curriculum goals and objectives reveals certain important issues and raises some pertinent questions and

assumption for research. It has, for instance, been shown that what to assess, how to assess and for what purpose are all influenced by certain factors like the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of learning and assessment, social acceptability and comparability of results and cost implications among others. However there seem to be various sides to the factors or issues influencing assessment decisions, thus resulting in what some have referred to as dichotomous debates about what to assess, how to assess and the purpose for which one is to assess.

The literature also reveals that for now the traditional notions of learning and what and how to assess is what is driving the assessment industry, particularly external assessment. Thus in the face of research evidence to show the desirability of other methods of assessment, the issue of reliability of these methods are often raised to question their acceptance and use, even at the school level. In countries where a partnership model of assessment and integration has been instituted, it has been realised that teachers do not embrace these alternative forms of assessment. This is as a result of either one or a combination of the following: the impact of the external assessment, teachers' perception of accountability, conflict of the demands of the new tools with their own understanding and experience of what assessment is.

In any case, the prevailing traditional assessment is held to have a constraining effect on teachers' classroom practices and students' learning, resulting in the emergence of a de facto curriculum, which is quite different in content and emphasis to the actual curriculum. That is, as external assessment more and more defines what is legitimate knowledge for both teachers and students, an unplanned adaptive drift will bedevil the school's curriculum thereby leading to the non-attainment or under attainment of the goals and objectives of the actual curriculum.

The above summary can also be seen from the perspective of the conceptual framework adopted for the review and thus the study (see Diagram 2.2, page 39A). In the framework, it is shown that whereas the influence of curriculum goals and objectives and classroom practices on external assessment is distorted and disjointed, thus defeating the ideal curriculum process, the influence of external assessment on

these two components is rather great and thus constraining. Therefore one proposition for the researcher is to examine the extent to which the continuation of traditional assessment will negate the introduction of a new curriculum with expanded goals and objectives.

3.0.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the methodology employed in carrying out this research. It is divided into sections comprising: the research questions, an evaluation of methodological issues pertaining to research and a rationale for the choice of methodology for this particular research. There are also sections on the research design adopted for the study, the limitations and delimitations of this particular research, description of the subjects of the study and the sources of data thereof. Other sections are on the sampling techniques adopted for selecting subjects for the study, instruments used in collecting and analysing data, validity and reliability of the instruments, the procedure adopted for collecting the data and how the analyses of data were carried out.

3.2.0 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.2.1 Major Research Questions

The research sought to find answers to the following questions, based on the objectives of the study, the findings of previous research and assumptions made in the literature:

- 1. To what extent are WAEC's SSSCE items in Social Studies congruent or compatible with the Goals and Objectives of the curriculum?** Congruence or compatibility, here, will be established through comparing the breadth and depth of coverage of the assessment items, in respect of their task objectives and their spread over the learning domains and content area, with that of the curriculum, as spelt out in the syllabus. It will also be established through comparing stated objectives of the curriculum with the implicit objectives of the assessment items to find out the extent to which they match each other.
- 2. What impact do WAEC's assessment practices have on the classroom practices of Social Studies teachers in Ghana's SSSs?** Classroom practices of teachers are hereby defined as the instructional and assessment practices of these teachers.

3. **Does a relationship exist between the demands of external assessment and the implementation and attainment of curriculum goals and objectives in the schools?** Effective implementation and attainment of curriculum goals and objectives are defined as the situation where teachers teach exactly all that have been provided in the subject's syllabus as its goals and objectives and assess their students to that effect. That is, their teaching and assessment of a subject must cover the whole curriculum and not parts thereof.

3.2.2 Minor/Subsidiary Research Questions

Following from the above major research questions are derived the following minor research questions:

1. Do the SSSCE items measure all the major learner outcomes in Social Studies?
2. Are teachers of Social Studies in Ghana's Senior Secondary Schools teaching to the test?
3. If the answer to question 2 above is positive, are there other factors that make teachers teach to the test?

3.3.0 METHODOLOGY

It is recognised by most people engaged in the research enterprise that the first issue that confronts the researcher is the choice of appropriate methodology to study their particular problem and also to justify the research design, choice of data and analytical tools/procedures (see Gaskell & Bauer, 2000). However, the choice of a methodology is not a straightforward matter, particularly for the relatively inexperienced or first time researcher, especially when that choice and methods therein will have to be justified. This issue becomes compounded when one becomes embroiled in the controversial quantitative – qualitative divide in research. Especially so when the research enterprise in education, like other fields of inquiry, has been characterised by these pitched debates about the relative strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Tierney & Dilley, 2002).

These debates have pitched the two traditions as dichotomous and thus have nothing to do with each other, as they are seen to represent different theoretical and ideological perspectives, which have different characteristics. These contending theoretical and ideological perspectives are identified as the positivist on the one hand and the post-modernist/constructivist on the other.

In this dichotomous divide, the positivist see the research enterprise as a purely scientific process that must of necessity follow all the rigorous rules of scientific inquiry so as to ensure accuracy in the results. These rules call for the quantification of the phenomenon under inquiry, the holding of certain variables as constants and the use of statistical tests, among others, to either explain the existence of a relationship or make predictions about how something occurred in the past or will occur in the future. Thus researchers belonging to this school have more affinity towards employing the quantitative methodology as a way of thinking about and carrying out their studies.

To this, the post-modernists or constructivists counter that, especially in the field of social inquiry, reality cannot be fully captured and reported on by relying on numerical/statistical representations, which are the tools of quantitative methodology. In other words, facts cannot be fully represented by numbers alone when working within the social context. The oft asked question in this direction is, what are the facts (meaning) behind the figures? Their belief is that the only way to fully comprehend social reality is to present the facts, as it were, from the point of view of those engaged in the research process and not from the point of view of any preconceived and preordained conceptualisation of the phenomenon under enquiry. This argument, quite naturally, places those of this school of thought within the qualitative research tradition.

Bryman (1988) is of the view that there are both minimalist and maximalist versions of the quantitative and qualitative debates, which he describes as the technical and the epistemological, respectively. The technical version is said to base the choice of either numerical (quantitative) or non-numerical (qualitative) methods, purely, on

pragmatic considerations. Thus for instance, the choice of any of these traditions or research methods will mainly be based on the scope for and constraints upon operationalising the research variables; the availability of time and resources and the compromises involved in making decisions about sampling. The epistemological version, on the other hand, views the gathering, analysis and interpretation of data being carried out within the broader understanding of what constitute legitimate enquiry and warrantable knowledge. This thus places the debate within the Constructionism – Realism continuum. And Henwood (1996: 26) is of the opinion that “Researchers who adopt a more open, interpretative, constructionist stance have a clear affinity for qualitative research plus a strong conviction that choice of method is liberated and informed by the position one takes within the epistemological debate”.

Henwood’s (op cit) argument suggests that those who hold a more dogmatic view of methodological issues in research are more likely to position themselves on the realism end of the continuum. Thus supporting their convictions with arguments about what is legitimate and warrantable knowledge. And, in the more positivist view point, legitimate and warrantable knowledge is seen as knowledge that resulted from a rigorous scientific procedure, normally within a controlled setting. However, cognisance is taken of the fact that Bryman’s (op cit) epistemological postulation places the contention between the two traditions on a continuum, as suggested by Bavelas (1995), rather than viewing it as a dichotomy, as held by proponents of these two traditions.

Some researchers are of the opinion that the epistemological underpinnings of the quantitative motif postulates that there exist definable and quantifiable facts within the social context, whilst the qualitative position hold that reality cannot be subsumed within numerical classifications. These views have informed the kind of arguments proponents of these two traditions make for their respective methodologies and against each other.

It is for instance argued that “Quantitative research often produces banal and trivial findings of little consequence due to the restriction on and the controlling of variables” (Burns, 2000:10). It is further argued that the mechanistic ethos of the quantitative research tends to exclude notions of freedom, choice and moral responsibility from the data so gathered. In this case, it is held that the researcher has no scope to find out the beliefs, feeling or perceptions of the respondents that do not fit into the pre-ordained response categories. And thus can prevent the building of trust and rapport between the researcher and the respondent.

On the other side of the divide are those embedded in the quantitative traditions, who argue that methods employed by the qualitative researcher do not fit into the rigorous scientific inquiry model. Thus this brings into question the legitimacy, reliability and the generalisability of findings from such researches, which are considered unscientific.

The discussions above bring to the fore the issue of primacy of the research traditions in any kind of study in the field of inquiry, particularly in the social context. Especially, as “much effort has been invested in juxtaposing quantitative and qualitative research as competing paradigms in social research” (Bauer, Gaskell & Allum, 2000: 7). According to Tierney & Dilley (op cit: 454) “there are those who believe that education has utilised the interview as a central tool in its research efforts for more than a century and has experienced a quantum leap in the use of its qualitative versions in the past few decades”. This thus suggests that the qualitative tradition has taken primacy when it comes to research in the educational sector.

However, irrespective of the dogmatic positions often taken in favour of either quantitative or qualitative research the issue is not of primacy, but rather when and how each paradigm might be useful and practical to the researcher. More so when, as Bauer, Gaskell & Allum (op cit) posited, “space has been reopened for a less dogmatic view of methodological matters”. This space can first be placed within the school of thought that suggests that the dichotomy way of viewing the two research

traditions must be challenged and replaced by a continuum way of discussing their usage in research (Bavelas, op cit).

In this way the researcher is given the opportunity to select his/her methods within this continuum and based the justification of same on a mixture of philosophical assumption, ideological perspective and technical/pragmatic consideration rather than on purely theoretical arguments within the ideological perspective. There is also evidence to suggest that the dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative research methodologies might not be as incompatible as purists from both sides argue, as studies using mixed method design have shown that integration of these traditions within the same study can be seen as complementary to each other (Caracelli & Greene, 1997: Tripp-Reimer, 1985).

It can therefore be suggested that the definition of a good research is not a function of which of the traditions was used in the research, but, as Caracelli & Greene (op cit) implied, varies according to initial assumptions, values and philosophical positions shared by the researcher and based on the intended use of the results. To this Bauer & Gaskell (op cit: 337) also add, "To some extent the choice of method is a function of the researcher's theoretical orientation". Also, indication may apply to choice of methods, but then "proper indication necessitates the awareness of and competence in using different methodological tools" (Bauer & Gaskell, op cit: 338).

Thus instead of dwelling on which methodology to apply to this research, the major consideration for the choice of a research design was based on the methods that will most appropriately enable this researcher to collect all the data for the research, analyse and interpret them accordingly. The appropriateness of the methods is seen within the framework for the research, operational definitions of the variables, assumptions and the ideological perspective brought into the whole process.

Thus having taken into consideration all the factors mentioned above, coupled with the audience, purpose and issues to be considered in this research, this researcher

decided to settle on the mixed-method/multi-method research approach as the most appropriate research design for the study.

3.3.1 Rationale

The choice of design, as indicated above, implies the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods in carrying out this study. This decision was not just based on choosing a bimodal approach to bring in complementarity and triangulation to the research process, but, as indicated above, based primarily on the framework and the operational definitions of the research variables as well as the philosophical assumptions and ideological perspectives brought into play by the researcher. In other words, the choice of research design for this study was primarily based on pragmatic considerations.

Clearly the independent variable in this research is the external assessment imperatives of Senior Secondary School Social Studies in Ghana, which evidence lies in the SSSCE Social Studies papers, prepared and administered by the WAEC. This implied that to gather any evidence on what for and how WAEC is assessing Ghanaian SSS students in Social Studies it was necessary to collect past SSSCE Social Studies papers and subject them to a kind of content analysis. It has been described elsewhere (the data analyses section) in this chapter that the major aim of the analysis of the external assessment papers was to compare/match the performance/intent in the items with their corresponding learning objectives or attainment standards in the syllabus. In this case the method of analysis employed (comparative analysis) no matter how formal it was, is a qualitative one. However, the interpretation of its results and the reporting of same were both qualitatively and quantitatively done.

The major dependent variables in the research, on which data was collected and or analysed, were identified as the classroom practices of Social Studies teachers in Ghana and the 1998 Social Studies curriculum for the SSS. Classroom practices of teachers were defined as their instructional and assessment practices, in relation to what they view to be important in selecting their teaching objectives, teaching

content and the kind of learning outcomes they assess in their students. These kinds of data can be collected through various means which may either fall within the qualitative methodology or the quantitative methodology. One way of collecting data on teachers' classroom practices is by interviewing them, which clearly falls within the qualitative research tradition.

Even if one decides to observe teachers' instructional practice in the classroom or collect their teaching plans/notes and assessment papers for analyses, one will still be using methods that fall within the qualitative sphere of research. However if the decision is to collect the data on classroom practices, using a closed-ended questionnaire then the method that is applied is definitely within the quantitative tradition. As described in the data collection section of this chapter, the methods used to collect these data were the questionnaire and interview, each representing the quantitative and qualitative traditions respectively.

The other dependent variable, so far as this research is concerned, is the curriculum goals and objectives of the SSS Social Studies in Ghana. The data in this respect had to do with whether teachers' classroom practices cover the gamut of the curriculum goals and objectives, and the circumstances that mitigate or aggravate the ability or inability of teachers to cover them. One of the methods used, in this case, was purely qualitative; comparing what teachers say their classroom practices entails with the curriculum to see whether they are teaching to and assessing the gamut of the set goals and objectives that the syllabus of the subject says students should be able to attain.

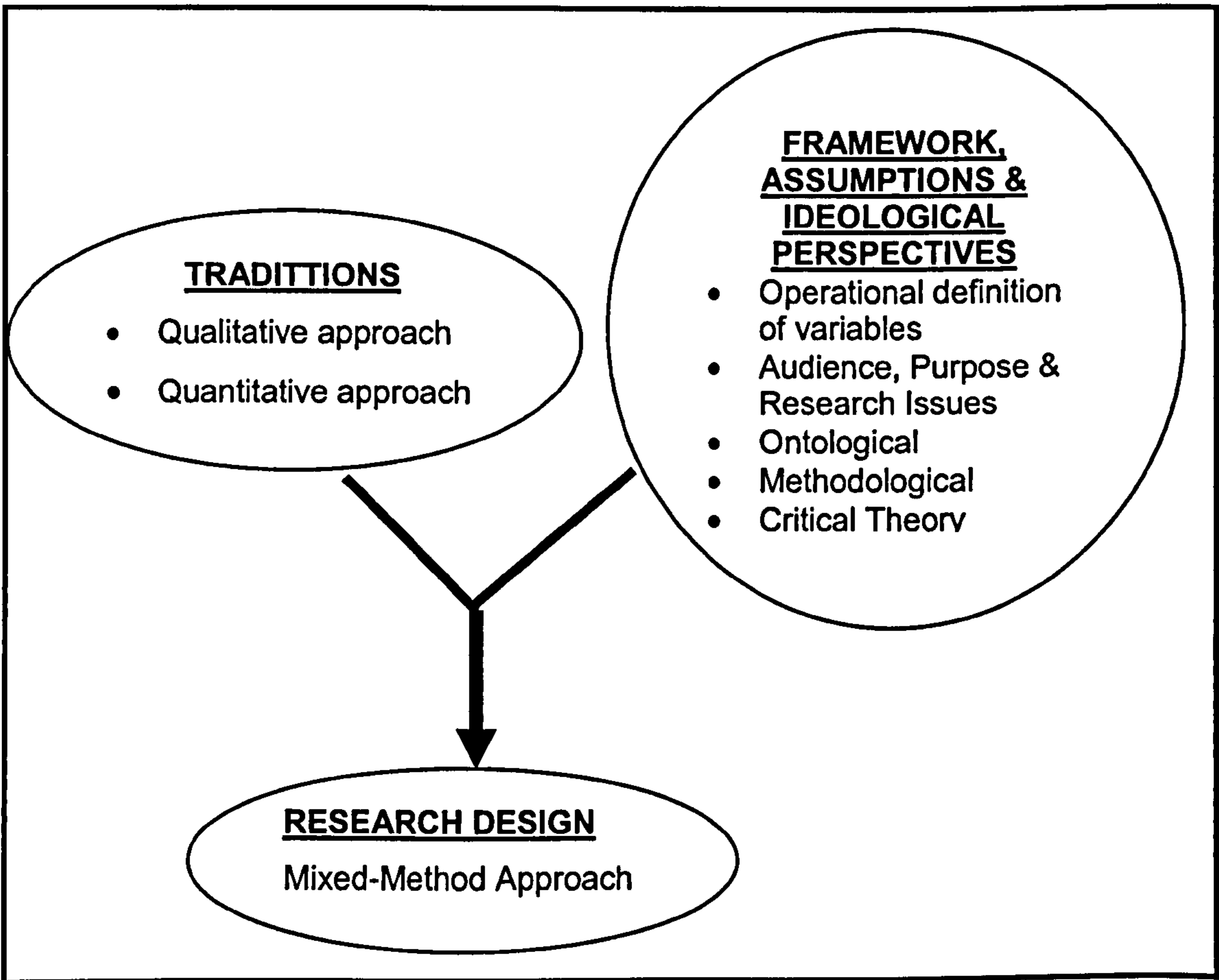
The major aim in this respect was to evaluate the impact of the external assessment imperatives on the way the curriculum is being implemented, through the instructional and assessment practices of the teachers. Since this information was also collected through the questionnaire as well as the interview, a crosstabulation of the variables in this case can be performed to see whether any relationship exists, as to whether the nature and scope of the SSSCE Social Studies is having an impact on the attainment of the curriculum goals and objectives of the subject by teachers, and

thus by students. The crosstabulation thus performed is clearly a type of quantitative analysis, thus once again borrowing from the quantitative tradition for purely practical considerations.

The framework for the collection and analyses of data, as described above, and the interpretations thereof resulted mainly from the operationalisation of the research variables which were in turn informed by the intended audience and purpose of this research and the issues to consider therein. The audience, as spelt out under the 'significance of study' section of the introduction chapter, includes policy makers in the educational sector, curriculum and assessment designers and researchers, teachers, other stakeholders in the educational industry, and specifically in the case of Ghana, the WAEC, Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service. The interpretation and presentation of results should be done in such a way as to make each and every member of the above audience understand and appreciate the findings of the study and also have something cogent to act on. This thus not only demands the interpretation and presentation of the results to be done in a clear and precise manner, but also to add an interpretative colour of rich text, capturing the voices; beliefs, feelings and perceptions of the teachers involved in the implementation of the curriculum.

The purpose of the study, also indicated in the chapter on introduction, was to evaluate the systemic impact of the SSSCE on the effective implementation of the new Social Studies curriculum in Ghana, and also develop theory pertaining to the relationship that exists between external assessment and the full attainment of all curriculum goals and objectives in the classroom. The aspect on the evaluation of the impact of external assessment imperatives on the curriculum can either be done quantitatively or qualitative or, as was employed in this research, both. However the researcher's ideological perspective on the issue of theorising falls within the sphere of critical theory, which stipulates that a variety of research strategy can be employed to reach the end goal of social theorising. Thus in this direction, the researcher fell on the grounded theory approach of data analyses, a purely qualitative endeavour to arrive at the emerging theory. The choice of the grounded theory approach was due

Diagram 3.1: ARRIVING AT THE RESEARCH DESIGN



to the fact that the data used in this respect was a qualitative one (interview data), and the approach is noted to be best suited for that particular kind of data. It must however be noted that the grounded theory approach was utilised in respect of only the third major research question (see page 117) and not the whole study. Also, the indication for this particular research question resulted from the initial content analysis of the interview data.

Other issues that gave indications to the research design are the philosophical assumptions adopted by this researcher and brought to bear on the research process. One of such assumptions is the ontological assumption- the nature of reality- which holds that reality is constructed by individuals involved in the research situation. That is both the informants in the research and the researcher(s). Thus to capture and report reality, one needs to rely on the voices and interpretations of the informants through usage of extensive quotes in the report. To be able to do this effectively is to resort to an in-depth/content analysis of data collected from the informants in the research process.

The other philosophical assumption that was brought to bear on this research was methodological. The position taken in this respect is the conceptualisation of the entire research process through inductive logic or reasoning. This involved the studying of the research topic within its particular context, and using an emerging design to carry it out to its effective conclusion. Thus after conceptualising this research topic within the framework adopted, and described above, and upon other considerations, also discussed above, the mixed-method/multi-method approach emerged as the design/paradigm that can clearly and possibly enable the research to be carried out effectively and conclusively.

The diagram on page 125A (3.1) describes the processes involved in arriving at the research design. It does reveal the issues that were taken into consideration before the design was finally arrived at. These issues were as follows:

- ❖ Arguments within the two contending research traditions,
- ❖ The framework adopted for the research, and

- ❖ The assumptions and ideological perspectives that were brought to bear on the research process.

In arriving at this particular research design, sight was not lost on the possible or probable advantages and disadvantages that it might bring to the study, and thus affect the way in which results are interpreted. In fact proponents of the mixed-method design, without doubt, point out the advantages that the choice of this design brings to the research process. It is, for instance, believed that with the combination of the two research traditions in one research, each of them adds something essential to the ultimate findings.

Nau (1995) opines that the utilisation of these two methodologies in a single research paradigm could be productive, in the sense that such blending of research methods from the two traditions can produce a final product which can highlight the significant contributions of both. And one of the most important contributions this type of research design is said to bring to the research enterprise is the linking of the qualitative depth with the quantitative breadth in any single research.

Another advantage of the mixed-method approach lies in the fact that both qualitative and quantitative methods of research bring different perspectives into how data is viewed, and thus have the tendency to provide complementary data sets which together may produce a more complete picture of the issues being researched than can be obtained using either method singly. That is by utilising the strengths in each of these traditions one can possibly cater for the weaknesses in the other and thus produce a more insightful and richer body of knowledge than any one of them could singly produce.

This is because with the qualitative approach, the broad aim is to look for meaning and understanding (Gaskell, 2000) and thus often provides a far richer description of the phenomenon under study by capturing the perspectives and experiences of the respondents. The quantitative methods, on the other hand, are more number driven and thus are able to provide a more precise description of the phenomenon, and

enable the researcher to answer questions like; how often or how much of the phenomenon is present within the research context. It is also enables the researcher to explain or predict what has occurred and what will occur in the future (Nau, op cit).

Greene, Caracelli & Graham (1989), in contributing to the debate on the purposes and advantages of mixed-method design, highlighted five major ones that might enhance the research as; triangulation, complementarity, development, initiation and expansion. Triangulation in research is to test for the consistency of findings obtained through different instruments. That is, in the case of this particular study, testing for the consistency of findings from the questionnaire data with that of the interview data or vice versa. However, cognisance was taken of the danger (discussed later in this section) such an approach might bring to the research process.

The case of complementarity is basically to clarify and illustrate results from one method with the use of another method. Thus in this study, results from the interview were used to clarify those from the questionnaire and to provide more meaning and understanding to the research findings. That is the voices of the respondents, about their experiences with and perspectives about the phenomenon being researched were brought to bear on the precise findings produced by the questionnaire analysis.

The issue of development as a purpose or advantage of the mixed-method design is the use of results from one method to shape subsequent methods or steps in the research process. However in this particular research, even though the interviews were conducted after the administration of the questionnaire, the data from the questionnaire had not been analysed then. Thus it cannot be said that development in the sense, as has been explained above, was brought to bear in this research. Rather, the issue of development could be inferred from the use of findings from the questionnaire to back the theory that was developed from the interview data.

Initiation in the mixed-method research design is to stimulate new research questions or challenge results obtained through one method. In the particular instance of this

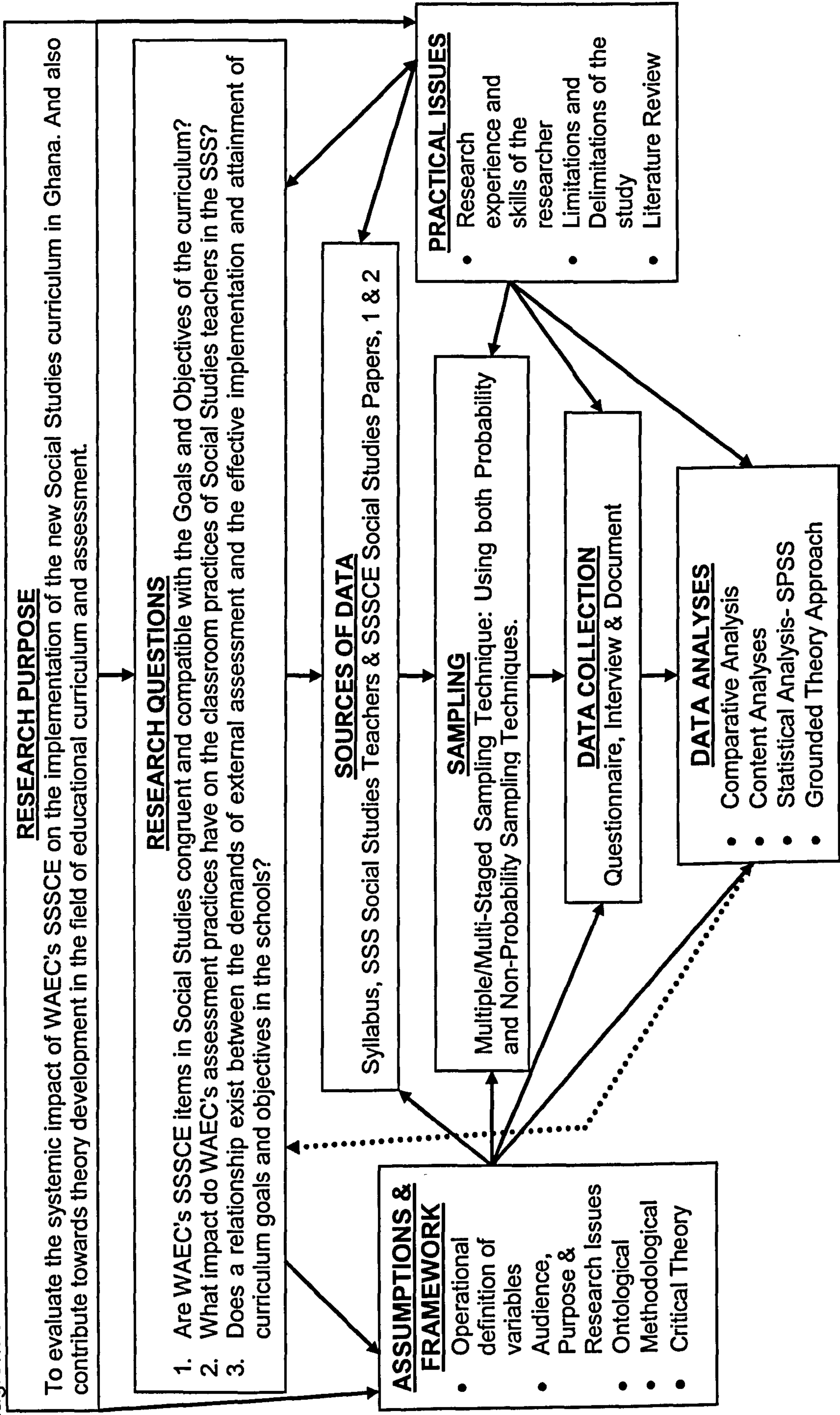
research, the apparent inconsistencies and contradictions in some of the findings of the questionnaire as against those from the interview provided the researcher with new insights as to the use of questionnaire in conducting studies that border on the practices of individuals. That is when the response categories/options provided seems broader and perhaps richer than the information to be provided by the respondents, it might lead them to second guess the researcher and thus modify their responses by selecting options that will project a favourable image to the researcher.

Expansion is defined as providing richness and detail to the study by exploring specific features of each method. In the case of this research the mixed-method approach gives more depth to the issues under consideration and thus is more likely to enlighten the debate about ensuring a parallel change in assessment imperatives whenever those of the curriculum are changed or expanded.

However the mixed-method design and thus any design that seeks to marry the two research traditions are not without inherent dangers which require one to tread cautiously when applying them in a single research endeavour. Bauer & Gaskell (op cit: 345), for instance, stated that “approaching a problem from two perspectives or with two methods will inevitably lead to inconsistencies and contradictions”. They posited that some inconsistencies might be due to methodological limitations; however they may also demonstrate that social phenomena look different as they are approached or viewed from different angles. Thus if the major aim of the research is to authenticate results from one method with the other, the inconsistencies and contradictions that may inevitably arise will jeopardise the whole research.

Fortunately the aim of choosing the mixed-method design was not to authenticate results from one method with the other method, or to legitimise the results of one with the other. Creswell (1998: 75-76) for instance cautioned in this respect thus, “qualitative research is legitimate in its own right and does not need to be compared to achieve respectability”. However this does not wish away the apparent inconsistencies and contradictions that appeared in the findings from the two methods applied. Burns (2000) proffers a kind of solution to such inconsistencies and

Diagram 3.2: RESEARCH DESIGN



contradictions by arguing that close-ended items or questionnaires have the tendency to force responses that are inappropriate (and perhaps inaccurate) whereas open-ended interviews allow the interviewer to make a truer assessment of what the respondent really believes or says. In respect of the foregoing more emphasis was rather placed on the interview results, in the chapters on the presentation and discussion of findings, where it was found that they, at any point, contradicted those from the questionnaire.

The above stand is supported by the cognitive processing perspective. For instance Schober & Conrad (1997) theorise that addressees/respondents make sense of questions by relying on speakers/interviewers to help interpret the question. In this respect, Singleton, Jr & Straits (2002: 74) hold that “the problem with strictly standardised interviewing or questionnaire is that interviewers are not supposed to help respondents to arrive at their own, sometimes erroneous, interpretations”. To this, Sudman et al (1996) add that cognitive processing perspective requires that in obtaining reliable and valid responses the respondents need to:

- a. Comprehend the literal and intended meaning of the question;
- b. Retrieve the information required from memory;
- c. Formulate a response in accord with the question and the information retrieved; and
- d. Communicate a response deemed appropriate.

Thus because of the potential breakdown in the questionnaire task, as a result of its inherent limitation as far as the above processes are concerned, interview responses are deemed as more reliable, since the interview process allows the above cognitive processes to go on.

3.3.2 Research Design

The diagram (3.2) reveals all the elements involved in the research process and how they affected or influenced each other within the design employed in the conduct of this study. It depicts how the purpose of the study, the evaluation of the systemic impact of external assessment on the attainment of curriculum goals and objectives and the development of theory that describes the relationship between these

variables, led to the identification of the research questions. The indications for the framework and assumptions adopted for the research were informed by both the purpose of the research and the research questions, as revealed by the diagram. At the same time these two elements, together with the sources of data led to the determination as to what the practical issues that might affect the other processes within the design will be like. The diagram also shows how the nature of the research questions themselves led to the determination of the sources of data and subsequently the sampling techniques (multi-staged) that were adopted for the study.

The next stage in the research process, as depicted by the design, was the data collection methods, which were informed by the kinds of data being sought for and the purpose for which they were being sought. This flowed directly from the purpose of the study, the research questions that were subsequently asked and the sources of these data. Thus the methods arrived at and employed in this stage were the use of questionnaire, conduct of interviews and the collection of documents pertaining to past assessment papers in Social Studies from the WAEC. As can be inferred from the above data collection methods, both quantitative and qualitative methods were brought into play in this direction. The dotted line showing a reverse linkage between the data analyses stage and the research questions indicates that at least one of the research questions (the third research question, to be specific) was arrived at from the result of the initial analysis of the interview data.

The data analyses stage, also going by the mixed-method design, utilised both quantitative (statistical analysis) and qualitative (content analysis and grounded theory analysis) methods. The kinds of analyses done were not only influenced by the types of data collected and how they were collected, but also the overall purpose of the study, as it flowed through the research questions to the sources of data and sampling techniques employed in this research.

Diagram 3.2 (page 129A) reveals how the framework and assumptions adopted for the research impacted, significantly, on the identification of data sources, sampling techniques, data collections and data analysis methods used in the research process.

It also reveals how the practical issues that came to be considered as a result of the research purpose impacted on how the sampling of research subjects, collection and analysis of data were conducted. It also shows how the research questions and the practical issues on one hand and the sources of data and the practical issues on the other impacted on each other.

Much of the framework, as already stated in the rationale section above, was influenced by the purpose of the research, the audience for the report, the issues that were to be considered in the whole research process and the operationalisation of the research variables. The assumptions used for this research were mainly philosophical, bordering on the ontological and the methodological, as already explained above. On the ideological side was the issue of critical theory, where it became apparent that there was the need to engage in theorising about a certain relationship that was emerging out of the initial analysis of the interview data. This therefore led to the choice of the grounded theory approach of analysing interview data for that purpose.

The grounded theory approach is a research methodology that was discovered by Glaser and Strauss, in the 1960s and resulted in their epochal book “The Discovery of Grounded Theory” in 1967. However these two researchers parted ways in the 1990s, as to what the grounded theory approach entails (see Creswell, 1998). Even though this resulted in what has come to be known as the Glaserian and Straussian schools of grounded theory (Stern, 1995), the approach is still being used in various forms all over the world (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, op cit; Glaser, 1995; Stern, op cit). According to Stern (op cit) the Straussian school of grounded theory differs in both process and product from the Glaserian school, in that the strict formalism introduced into the approach by Strauss infuses quantitative canons that result in a forced theory instead of an emergent one.

Irrespective of the fact that Glaser and Strauss seem to differ about their conception of grounded theory, both define the approach as a method or methodology that applies a systematic set of procedures to develop/generate an inductive theory about

a phenomenon or a substantive area (Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It is argued that in terms of overall structure, a study may not cover all the facets of grounded theory procedures (Creswell, op cit; Glaser, 1995), but what is important is that the purpose of that study should be the generation of a theory “using a ‘construct-oriented’ approach” (Creswell, 1998: 34). And according to Glaser (1998), the proof of a grounded theory is in the outcome. That is, questions that must be asked to satisfy oneself about the use of grounded theory approach are, “Does the theory work to explain relevant behaviour in the substantive area of Research. Does it have relevance to the people in the substantive field? Does the theory fit the substantive area? Is it readily modifiable as new data emerge” (Glaser, 1998: 17).

Even before the generation of the theory, it is said that what counts in the use of the grounded theory approach are the procedures, both for the collection and analysis of the data (Strauss & Corbin, op cit; Creswell, op cit). According to Strauss & Corbin (op cit: 23) “Data collection, analysis and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other”. It is thus held that a typical data collection process, in grounded theory research, is based on several visits to the field to collect data to saturate the categories of information that emerge (Creswell, op cit). “However the number of passes one makes to the field depends on whether the categories of information become saturated and whether the theory is elaborated in all of its complexity” (Creswell, op cit: 57).

Atypically, a researcher may also collect and analyse observations and documents. According to Glaser (1998: 9), “secondary analysis of data already collected for other purposes is very worthwhile for the grounded theorist to theoretically sample and analyse. It saves the data collection time”. This thus suggests that whereas one might skip the several visits to the field to collect data, if the data already exists, it is necessary for all the steps in the data analysis process to be followed in order for the theory to emerge (see Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, op cit). Creswell (op cit: 57) listed the following as the procedures to be adopted in grounded theory analysis:

1. Open coding, where initial categories of information about the phenomenon being studied are formed by segmenting the information.

2. Axial coding, where the data is assembled in new ways by identifying the central category of information, exploring causal conditions, specifying strategies, identifying the context and intervening conditions and delineating the consequences for the phenomenon being studied.
3. Selective coding, where a story line is identified to write a story that integrates the categories in the axial coding model.
4. Conditional matrix, where a diagram that elucidates the conditions influencing the central phenomenon is developed to visually portray the theory in all its complexity.

It must be noted that Creswell's procedures match those provided by Strauss & Corbin (1990).

Glaser (1992) is however of the view that the inclusion of axial and selective coding in Strauss & Corbin's (1990) procedures suggest the forcing of data and the theory, instead of allowing the categories to emerge from the data. Glaser (1992) thus questions the exclusion of the theoretical sampling step from Strauss's procedure, which he claims will eventually lead to the emergence of the theory. Charmaz (op cit: 2) is however of the view that "the guidelines offer a set of general principles and heuristic devices rather than formulaic rules". This means that even though the procedures for conducting grounded theory analysis are systematic and formal, they are yet flexible enough to allow for its use with twenty-first century assumptions and approaches (Charmaz, op cit).

Thus whether one uses the Straussian or Glaserian systematic procedure of data analysis is a non issue, as what is important is that the procedure results in a theory that is well grounded in the data (Charmaz, op cit) and meets the four most central criteria: fit, work, relevance and modifiability (Glaser, 1992). Also, a cardinal principle that must underline the use of the grounded theory approach is that "the initial decisions are not based on a preconceived theoretical framework" (Glaser & Strauss, 1968: 45) and the research question is never asked, directly, in the interviews, as it will preconceive the emergence of data (Glaser, 1992). This is because "entering the field with no preconceived interest or problem maximises

openness to the emergent main concerns” (Glaser, 1995: 9). It is also argued that “grounded theory methods can complement other approaches to qualitative data analysis, rather than stand in opposition to them” (Charmaz, op cit: 9).

3.3.3 Limitations and Delimitations

This study was not without limitations, which one way or the other may affect the way the results are interpreted. One of such limitations is the absence of a list of Social Studies teachers in the Senior Secondary Schools in Ghana, and thus the inability to use probability sampling techniques, in the first instance, to select respondents from this group for the study. The foregoing limitation was handled by the use of the multi-stage sampling method, as suggested by Singleton & Straits (2002). That is combining both probability and non-probability techniques to minimise the sampling error that might have been introduced had only non-probability sampling techniques been used.

Time, resources and the difficulty in accessing some areas of the country, due to the geographical terrain and their remoteness, were also limitations to this research. That is, schools and thus teachers in the whole country could not be used, in this situation, as the sampling frame for the selection of respondents for the study. This obviously makes it problematic, if findings are going to be generalised for the whole country. The researcher therefore did not intend, and did not try, to make any stringent generalisation out of the findings of the study. On the issue of time for instance, the researcher had only two months at his disposal to collect all the data needed for the study. Resource wise, the researcher was short on the means of transportation and the money to hire one for the data collection.

Another limitation of this study, which was somewhat subtle but was foreseen, was the feeling of some of the teacher-respondents, if not all, that their personal effectiveness as teachers was being evaluated. This made them reluctant in handing over copies of their own constructed assessment items to the researcher. This they did, by giving various excuses as to why they couldn't hand them over. The difficulty, as explained above, forced the researcher to review the original design to

also evaluate teacher-made assessment items and thus exclude that portion from the research. Also, in order to minimise any effect this feeling of teachers may have on other data collected from them, the researcher ensured that they well understood the aims and objectives of the study and saw its relevance, to want to contribute by being co-operative and as objective as possible.

The foregoing limitations also forced the researcher to delimit the scope of the study. One of such delimitations of the study is the restriction of the sampling frame of schools and thus teachers to only five administrative regions of the country, and also to further delimit the geographical areas of the schools to the regional capitals and districts which are very close in distance to the regional capitals.

Although the research design shows that two different methods- questionnaire and interview- were used to solicit responses from the teachers, the scope of the analyses and reporting of findings did not include the use of one method to authenticate results from the other. This is due to the difficulty such an approach inevitably leads to (Allison, et al, 2003: Caskell & Bauer, 2000). The objective was rather to look for meaning and understanding of the responses of the respondents, and also to capture their own perspectives on the issues, which the research questions sought to deal with. However the scale of the interview was delimited to only a fraction or a sample of those on whom the questionnaire had been administered. This was due to time constraints involved in the collection of the data and the fact that the prospect of analysing over seventy (70) interviews was never going to be easy for the researcher.

3.4.0 SOURCES OF DATA

The research questions, as stated above and shown in the research design, gave clear indications as to what should be the main variables for data collection, analyses and their sources. Thus for the purpose of the study, the following variables, on which data was gathered, were deduced from the research questions:

1. Curriculum goals and objectives of Social Studies in the Senior Secondary Schools in Ghana, as spelt out in the 1998 syllabus.
2. WAEC's SSSCE Social Studies Assessment Items.

3. Instructional and Assessment decisions and practices of Social Studies teachers in Ghanaian Senior Secondary Schools.

The above variables clearly show that the 1998 Senior Secondary School Social Studies Syllabus, SSSCE Social Studies papers one and two, and Senior Secondary School Social Studies teachers in Ghana were the sources for the data collection. This thus implies that these three sources formed the population from which various samples were selected at various stages of data collection in the course of the study.

3.4.1 The 1998 SSS Social Studies Syllabus

As described in the introductory chapter (Pages 10-12), the goals and objectives of Social Studies in the senior secondary schools in Ghana are clearly defined and outlined in the syllabus distributed to the schools for the purpose of guiding instructional and assessment practices. The syllabus itself contains twenty (27) topics distributed over five main thematic strands; being Procreation, Sense of Purpose, Education, Government and Economy. There are therefore five (5) topics under procreation, four (4) under Sense of Purpose, six (6) under Education, five (5) under Government and seven (7) topics under Economy. The 27 topics are also spread over the three year period of the SSS as follows: Nine (9) topics for the first year, Ten (10) topics for the second year and Eight (8) topics for the final year. Thus the main goals and objectives of the subject are made to reflect in the specific/instructional objectives for all the 27 topics in the syllabus.

These specific/instructional objectives, under each of the topics, are the benchmarks or standards of attainment that teachers are required to select their instructional objectives from and subsequently plan their instructional activities around to ensure that they are attained by students. Therefore all the data pertaining to the curriculum goals and objectives of Social Studies, in the course of the study, were taken from the syllabus for the SSSs.

3.4.2 WAEC'S SSSCE Social Studies Items

These include all the examination questions in Social Studies at the SSSCE, both multiple and essay type items, from 1999, when the SSSCE in Social Studies began,

to 2004, the year in which the analysis of data for the study took place. The SSSCE in Social Studies are organized under two different papers. Paper One is made up of fifty (50) Multiple or 'Objective' type test items, with each having a main stem and four options lettered 'A' to 'D'. These assessment items are sampled from all the 27 topics and thus the five thematic strands of Social Studies in Ghana, however their placements on the SSSCE paper are not in any order that may be said to represent or resemble the order of the strands or the topics in the syllabus.

Paper Two on the other hand is made up of ten (10) essay type questions distributed among the five thematic strands of the subject in Ghana, thus making it two questions per strand. Each of these questions is usually taken from a separate topic under a particular strand. This thus implies that ten topics are selected for assessment each year, so far as the essay type items are concerned.

There are also two major examinations in all subjects at the SSSCE in any given year. The first set of examinations takes place between May and June, previously held between June and July, for school candidates and the second set of examinations coming off between October and November for private candidates or former school candidates who want to better their grades. However, before 2001 there used to be only one examination for the SSS and it was held between October and November. It thus means that ten (10) papers each (for Paper One and Paper Two) have been written under Social Studies between 1999 and 2004.

The ten papers written under Paper One translate into five hundred (500) multiple choice items in all. Thus the population of multiple choice items from which a sample was taken for analysis was 500. In the case of Paper Two, the population of the items (essay type) was one hundred (100) making it twenty (20) items in each thematic strand.

3.4.3 SSS Social Studies Teachers in Ghana

It is obvious, as already explained, that the main source of data for instructional and assessment decisions and practices, in relation to the curriculum goals and objectives

of Social Studies, of SSS Social Studies teachers in Ghana are the teachers themselves. It must be noted that the actual number and thus the list of teachers of Social Studies in the SSSs in Ghana is not readily available, as there are no indications about the existence of such data in the country.

However the official number of senior secondary schools (both public and private) in Ghana is 503 (see the Ghana Government website at <http://www.ghana.gov.gh/studying/schools/index.htm>). Assuming there are, on the average, two (2) teachers of the subject in each SSS, it thus implies that the total number of such teachers is about one thousand and six (1,006). Thus there was a population of not less than a thousand (1,000) teachers, from which samples for the study were taken.

In general senior secondary school teachers in Ghana fall within three main categories, in respect of their highest academic qualifications. That is, there are those who hold a Masters Degree (rather very few in numbers), Bachelor Degree holders, who are in the majority, and some Diploma Certificate holders. The holders of the Diploma Certificate are all professional teachers and hold Diploma in Education (Dip Ed) Certificates, with specialisation in various subject areas. The Bachelor Degree holders are in two categories; those who are not professional teachers, but have specialised in subjects that are taught at the SSS, and those who are professional teachers with either a Bachelor of Education Degree (BEd), a Bachelor of Arts (BA) or a Bachelor of Science (BSc) with a Dip Ed or Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). There is yet another subcategory of professional teachers who are degree holders in Ghana. This group had initially trained as teachers for the Post Secondary Teachers' Certificate 'A' and later proceeded to the university to read either a BA or BSc degree. Teachers with the Masters degree are also professional teachers, who have gone to study for their postgraduate degrees. These degrees are usually MEd, MA, MSc or MPhil.

Teachers of Social Studies in Ghana also come in three categories. These are those who read Social Studies at the University of Education, Winneba, (UEW); those who

also read Social Studies, but from the University of Cape Coast (UCC) and those who read other subjects apart from Social Studies at any of the universities in the country. The distinction is made between Social Studies specialists from UEW and UCC, because, as indicated in the introductory chapter, the subject in these two universities is perceived differently. Whereas Social Studies in the UCC is viewed as the integration of the Social Science subjects in their discrete forms, in the UEW it is viewed as a trans-disciplinary subject that is built on thematic strands relating to the problems of survival in a particular society than topic in any particular discipline. Thus whereas a graduate from the UCC might major in any one of the social science disciplines, History, Economics, Geography among others, the one from the UEW will major in a single discipline known as Social Studies and other subject of his/her choice.

3.5.0 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

The nature of the research variables, the sources of data, notwithstanding the limitations and delimitations of the study, demanded a multiple/multistage approach in the selection of samples, from the various populations, from which data was going to be collected. That is different methods of sampling were used for the various research variables, some involving probability sampling, some also involving non-probability sampling, and yet another involving a combination of both in a multistage technique.

3.5.1 The 1998 SSS Social Studies syllabus

In view of the fact that the syllabus is a single source document which is supposed to be used by every teacher anywhere in the country, and also coupled with the fact that it is the only source of all the curriculum goals and objectives of the subject, it was selected as a whole document. That is the whole syllabus was selected as a single source from which all data on the curriculum goals and objectives of the subject were collected. Another reason was the fact that the curriculum goals and objectives were used to analyse the SSSCE assessment items, and since these items were drawn from almost every topic in the syllabus, selecting the whole document instead of parts thereof, made of the topics or strands, was the most appropriate thing to do.

3.5.2 The SSSCE Social Studies Items- Paper One

The researcher used the multistage sampling technique to select the items from the SSSCE papers on Social Studies. Thus in the case of Paper One (multiple choice items) all the years (1999 to 2004), in which SSSCE in Social Studies has been written, were first selected to be the sampling population. These are as follows:

1. SSSCE Social Studies Paper One, November 1999
2. SSSCE Social Studies Paper One, November 2000
3. SSSCE Social Studies Paper One, July 2001
4. SSSCE Social Studies Paper One, November 2001
5. SSSCE Social Studies Paper One, July 2002
6. SSSCE Social Studies Paper One, November 2002
7. SSSCE Social Studies Paper One, July 2003
8. SSSCE Social Studies Paper One, November 2003
9. SSSCE Social Studies Paper One, July 2004
10. SSSCE Social Studies Paper One, November 2004

All the years of examinations in Social Studies were selected as both the population and the main sampling frame, because the researcher wanted to be able to identify trends over the years. Subsequently, each of the 10 papers listed above become another sampling frame from which 10 items, out of the 50 in each paper, were selected, using the simple random sampling technique, to become data for analysis as far as this particular variable was concerned. Thus the total number of multiple choice items sampled for analysis was 100. The list of items sampled from the past SSSCE Social Studies Paper One Items are provided in the appendix (see Appendix-G)

3.5.3 The SSSCE Social Studies Items- Paper Two

Here again all the examinations in all the years were to be selected as the population from which sample was to be taken for analysis towards the study. The examination papers thus collected are as follows:

1. SSSCE Social Studies Paper Two, November 1999
2. SSSCE Social Studies Paper Two, November 2000

3. SSSCE Social Studies Paper Two, July 2001
4. SSSCE Social Studies Paper Two, November 2001
5. SSSCE Social Studies Paper Two, July 2002
6. SSSCE Social Studies Paper Two, November 2002
7. SSSCE Social Studies Paper Two, July 2003
8. SSSCE Social Studies Paper Two, November 2003
9. SSSCE Social Studies Paper Two, July 2004
10. SSSCE Social Studies Paper Two, November 2004

The next step was to make each of the papers listed above as a sampling frame for selecting items under this paper, thus resulting in ten (10) sampling frames in all. This was followed by the identification of the five (5) thematic strands, under which the assessment items are set, as clusters in each sampling frame. Thereafter three (3) clusters each from a frame was selected by employing the simple random sampling technique.

Finally one item from each cluster/strand selected, in each of the examination papers listed above, was also randomly sampled. This gave a sample size of 3 items for each examination paper. In view of the fact that there were 10 examination papers in all, the total number of items in the sample, pertaining to the SSSCE Social Studies Paper Two, came up to thirty (30) (see Appendix-H for the list of Paper Two Items selected). However during the analysis of the items to find out about their coverage over the curriculum content, all the 100 items (i.e. the population) under consideration were analysed.

3.5.4 SSS Social Studies Teachers in Ghana

As has already been noted in this chapter, the actual number/list of Social Studies teachers in the SSS in Ghana is not readily available at the national level, and since one will have to move from school to school to be able to compile this list, a sampling frame could not be built for this population. The absence of a sampling frame for this population, coupled with the limitations and delimitations of the

research, set out above, called for the use of the multistage approach in arriving at a sample for this population of the study.

The first stage of the sampling involved the choice of schools to become the sampling frame, since there was no list of teachers of Social Studies in the SSS to be used as such. However, in view of limitations; such as the difficult transportation links between certain parts of the country, and time and resource constraints on the researcher, the selection of schools was delimited to only those from districts that are considered to be most accessible in the southern half of Ghana. The southern half of the country is defined by this research to be the five, out of ten regions in the country, that lie between the Gulf of Guinea, on the south, and the upper boundary of the Ashanti Region, in the north, And also between the Volta River, in the east, and the Ivorian Border in the west. The regions thus selected are as follows:

1. Greater Accra Region
2. Eastern Region
3. Central Region
4. Western Region
5. Ashanti Region

In the second stage of sampling all the districts within which the administrative capitals of the regions fall were automatically selected, due to easy accessibility. Furthermore two districts each from the Greater Accra, Eastern and Central Regions were also purposefully selected, bearing in mind their closeness to the regional capitals and thus easy accessibility for the data collection. In the case of Western and Ashanti Regions, their distance from the national capital and time available for the collection of data, allowed for only one other district each to be selected, also purposefully. Thus there were three districts selected from each of the first three regions listed above, and two districts each for the last two regions listed above. This brought the total number of districts selected to 13. The following is the list of the selected districts by their respective regions:

1. Greater Accra: Accra, Tema, and Ga.
2. Eastern: New Juaben, Akwapim South and Akwapim North.

Table 3.1: DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOLS SELECTED FOR THE STUDY

Region	District	No. of SSSs	No. selected for the Questionnaire	No. selected for the Interview
Greater Accra	Accra	21	20	5
	Tema	7	6	2
	Ga	4	3	1
	Total	32	29	8
Eastern	New Juaben	6	5	2
	Akwapim South	5	5	1
	Akwapim North	10	9	2
	Total	21	19	5
Central	Cape Coast	11	10	3
	Agona Swedru	5	5	1
	Mfantsiman	5	4	1
	Total	21	19	5
Western	Shama/Ahanta East	12	11	2
	Wassa West	6	5	1
	Total	18	16	3
Ashanti	Kumasi	15	14	3
	Sekyere West	4	3	1
	Total	19	17	4
Grand Total		111	100	25

3. Central: Cape Coast, Mfantseman and Agona Swedru
4. Western: Shama/Ahanta East and Wassa West.
5. Ashanti: Kumasi and Sekyere West.

The next stage involved the listing of the SSS in each of the districts selected for a random sampling of the school to take place. The researcher wanted to use a maximum of 100 teachers, on whom the questionnaire was to be administered, thus the number of schools selected at this stage was made to reflect that number. This was done proportionally, according to the total number of SSSs in the selected districts of each of the five regions. Thus Greater Accra was allocated 29 places, out of the total number of 32 SSSs in the three districts, Eastern and Central were allocated 19 places each, out of the 21 SSSs each in their selected districts. Western Region was allocated 16 places, out of a total of 18 SSSs in the selected districts and Ashanti, 17 places, out of a total of 19 SSSs in the selected districts.

This implies that a quota was first allocated to each cluster/district, and then subsequently the schools selected from within the clusters to meet the quotas, using the simple random technique. It also means that a Social Studies teacher from each of these 100 schools was to participate in the study, thus arriving at the 100 teachers set out for the study in respect of the administration of the questionnaire. Since the research design also included interview sections with some SSS Social Studies teachers, apart from administering the questionnaire on them, a total number of 25 schools were further sampled (simple random) from the 100 already sampled. That is a teacher each from this 25 schools was to be interviewed after the questionnaire has been administered and returned. In this case Greater Accra was allocated a quota of 8 schools; Eastern, 5 schools; Central, 5 schools; Western, 3 schools and Ashanti, 4 schools

The full lists of schools selected for both the administration of questionnaire and the interview are shown in appendices 'E' and 'F' respectively. Table 3.1 (page 143A) specifies the regions, districts, total number of schools in each district and region, and the number of schools selected for both the questionnaire and the interview. The

final stage of teacher selection for both the questionnaire and interview was done during the data collection stage. That is, the researcher used the sampled schools as the main point of contact, and subsequently chose a teacher of Social Studies on arrival in each of these schools. The actual selection process of the teachers for the study will be described, in full, in the research procedure section of this chapter.

3.6.0 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Two major instruments were designed and used to gather the necessary data from the teachers who were sampled. These were a Questionnaire and an Interview. Another instrument was designed for the analysis of the SSSCE Social Studies items.

3.6.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire is divided into two main parts, consisting of a preliminary personal data part and research data part, and also an introduction page. The introduction page introduces the rationale, objectives and significance of the study to potential respondents. It then explains the importance of respondents, and thus their responses to the whole study and encourages them to take some time off their schedules to respond to the questions to the best of their understanding and experiences.

The first part of the questionnaire is designed to solicit some personal data from the respondents. These preliminary data concern the highest academic qualification of respondents, subject of specialisation, number of years spent in teaching in general and number of years spent in teaching Social Studies. Others have to do with whether respondents teach other subjects apart from Social Studies, and what made them decide to teach the subject if they did not specialise in it. The items in connection with the preliminary data are numbered from i to vii.

The second part, which is the main questionnaire, is further divided into three (3) sections for the collection of different sets of data for the research. These sections were informed by the research objectives and assumptions made in the literature. The first section of the main questionnaire has eight (8) items, including three (3) multiple-response sets that were meant for collecting data on the instructional

practices of the respondents. These ranged from the sources of their instructional objectives and contents through their instructional purposes to the influence that the SSSCE has on their instructional practices.

The second section of the main questionnaire sought to gather data on teachers' assessment practices. This section contains twelve (12) items, including two multiple-response sets that sought to find out from teachers, the methods of assessment they often use in the classroom and the main learning outcomes they seek to assess. It also sought to find out whether teachers' assessment tools cover all the goals and objectives of Social Studies, and the factors that influence their assessment practices.

The third and last section consisted of nine (9) items, including two multiple-response sets that were based on teachers' perceptions of accountability and how that impact on their instructional and assessment practices (see Appendix-A2 for the questionnaire and Appendix-A1 for the introduction page). Also included in this section were items that sought to solicit from teachers their views about the way the SSS Social Studies curriculum was being implemented and what they thought are affecting the successful implementation or otherwise of this curriculum.

3.6.2 Interview Schedule

The other major instrument used in gathering data for the study was an Interview. This was in a semi-structured form (i.e. open-ended questions, which respondents answered by formulating and constructing their own answers). Thus an interview schedule was designed to serve as a guide to the interviewer in providing a general framework for the questions put to the respondents. This schedule contained fifteen (15) main questions with space for prompts in some occasions, depending upon how interviewees were going to respond to the main questions.

The first four questions were rudimentary, ranging from where interviewees had their highest academic qualification from, through whether they were or are currently teaching other subjects to why they decided to teach Social Studies. The rest of the

questions on the schedule were on teachers' knowledge of the goals and objectives of the subject and their attainability through instructional activities, and their views about how the subject is currently being assessed. Some of the questions also sought the perception of accountability among the teachers and how it ultimately influences their classroom practices, and also about the impact the SSSCE is having on these same practices and the reasons behind this influence/impact (see Appendix-C for the interview schedule).

3.6.3 Assessment Item Analysis Model

Another instrument that was employed in the study was a model for establishing congruence between the performance within an assessment item and that of the curriculum/learning objective. This instrument was used to verify the appropriateness, domain and content spreads of the SSSCE Social Studies items. A major issue that came up in the literature was the widespread use or misuse of inappropriate test/assessment items (Mager, 1990). There was therefore the need to investigate this, in respect of the SSSCE Social Studies items, to see the extent to which it holds true or not. This is particularly important as, already noted in the introductory chapter, the WAEC is still using the narrow traditional form of assessment in assessing students' learning outcomes in a new curricular, whose imperatives have been expanded and focus changed.

The model, which was used for this analysis was an adaptation of Mager's (1990) Models of Objective/Item Checklists to ensure congruence between curriculum objectives and test item intents. As can be inferred from the literature review (page 77) Mager's argument is based on the thesis that the best way to ensure the validity of an assessment item/tool is to ensure that the performances and conditions of curriculum/instructional/test objectives match those of the test/assessment item. Mager's Checklist is a six-step chart of things to do: from the identification of the performance stated in or inferred from the objective and that of the test item, through matching them to see whether they are congruent, to matching the conditions in the objectives and the test item, also to establish congruence.

In as much as this model was seen as a practical and standard way of ensuring the validity/appropriateness of assessment items, and thus bringing reliability into the evaluation of these items, it could not be said to wholly serve the purpose for which this researcher intended to employ it. There was therefore the need to modify this model, so as to input the ability to verify the learning domain to which an item may belong and also the content area of the curriculum on which learning outcomes are being assessed. Thus the modified model (see Appendix-D) included steps to identify the curriculum topic or content area of the item and the learning domain of the subject that the item seeks to assess. The decision to design a model for the analysis of data from the assessment items was premised on the attempt to introduce formalism into the research process.

3.7.0 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF INSTRUMENTS

The validity and reliability of research instruments are very important considerations that every researcher gives to his/her study in order to ensure that findings and conclusions drawn from such studies are the best approximations of the reality in that respect. Thus this researcher went through very careful and stringent procedures to ensure that all the instruments employed in the study meet these two criteria.

3.7.1 Validity of the instruments

It is important to note that these instruments in and of themselves do not have validity, but validity is rather the appropriateness, meaningfulness and usefulness of the inferences or conclusions that may be drawn from the findings as a result of using the instruments. In pursuance of this, areas/components of validity that became of interest to the researcher were construct, conclusion and external validity and all the threats that may possibly be posed to, especially, construct validity. Thus the questions to ask in this respect are:

1. Do the constructs to be measured/analysed by these instruments reflect the actual constructs or the operational definitions thereof?
2. Are there any relationships between certain variables as have been assumed by the design of the study and the instruments?

3. Could findings resulting from the use of these instruments be generalised to other situations or area?

To ensure that the first issue of validity is almost guaranteed, in this study, the researcher adequately defined and explained the constructs in questions at the beginning of the study. Also, items in the Questionnaire and Interview Guide were carefully worded to remove all kinds of ambiguity, so as to ensure that they solicit from respondents exactly what they are intended to solicit from them. These instruments were initially given to the researcher's supervisors and professional colleagues for scrutiny and comments. The resulting suggestions were then applied to ensure that the instruments met this criterion of validity.

Some items in both the questionnaire and the interview guide are premised on the assumption that the variables they are intended to measure are related, in a way, to the other. In view of this, these relationships (e.g. external assessment and teachers' instructional practices) have been identified and evaluated within the assessment discourse and practice in the chapter on literature review. Having thus identified these relationships, as alluded to in the literature, the stage has been set for conclusions to be drawn from the analysis of data gathered in respect of such items to be held as appropriate, meaningful and useful.

Last, but not the least of the validity concerns is the issue of generalisability. Since some kinds of relationships have already been identified between certain variables, establishing them in this particular research may give credence to any generalisation that might be made from such findings.

3.7.2 Reliability of the Instruments

In this case the researcher was concerned about the consistencies in the responses of the respondents on the questionnaire. Therefore in trying to ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, in particular, it was pre-tested on five (5) teachers, who did not form part of the sampled respondents, and evaluated together with them later on. In this case, there were given back the questionnaire to go over and make changes if

they felt a response wasn't right the first time. All those involved stuck to the original responses they gave, thus indicating, even though without any statistical evidence, that the items on the questionnaire are so clear, direct and valid that the reliability of the instrument can be assured.

The other instrument, which the researcher sought to make reliable, was the Assessment Item Analysis Model. Here, the focus was on inter-rater or inter-evaluator reliability to ensure the objectivity and the validity of conclusions drawn out of the evaluation/analysis of the SSSCE Social Studies items. In this case too, five persons, who are professional colleagues were given a set of assessment items (ten in all) to evaluate, using the model in question, so as to measure the consistencies in the conclusions they will make regarding each of the items. Except for two people disagreeing with the rest on one question, there was unanimous agreement and thus consistency in the conclusions that were drawn from analysing these items.

3.8.0 RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The research procedure adopted for the study is defined as the processes and techniques employed for the collection of the relevant data. In view of the fact that different instruments were employed to gather data from various sources and for different research variables, the procedure for the data collection was staggered to cater for these differences. Thus the collection of the SSSCE past papers in Social Studies, the administration of the questionnaire and the interviews were done separately and at different stages of the whole data gathering process.

3.8.1 Data Collection Stage: Questionnaire

All the data for the study were collected from the field in Ghana between 12th May, 2004 and 27th June, 2004, and involved both the administration of questionnaires and conducting of interviews. As has been indicated in Table 3.1 of this chapter, the number of SSSs and thus teachers selected for the administration of the questionnaire was one hundred (100). However, time constraints and inaccessibility of some of the schools, due to distance and road conditions (the period of data collection also

happened to be the major raining season in the country and some roads had been rendered impassable), made it impossible to visit fourteen (14) out of the selected schools. Thus the researcher was able to visit and distribute the questionnaire to eighty-six (86) out of the 100 schools selected for that purpose.

The distribution of the 86 schools, visited for the purpose of administering the questions, over the five sampled regions of the country is as follows:

1. Greater Accra – Twenty-Six (26) schools
2. Eastern – Seventeen (17) schools
3. Central – 17 schools
4. Western – Twelve (12) schools
5. Ashanti – Fourteen (14) schools

The process of administering the questionnaire also included the process of identifying the individual Social Studies teachers from the schools selected for that purpose. This involved first going to see the Headmaster/Headmistress or the Assistant, whoever was available at the time, upon arrival at the school and explaining the mission of the visit to him/her, and also asking for the permission to contact one of the school's Social Studies teachers for the administration of the questionnaire.

Each of the Heads of Schools visited was given a copy of an introduction letter written by the lead supervisor (see Appendix-B), which sought to introduce the researcher as a Research Student from the institution (University of Strathclyde) who should be assisted in carrying out the research in their schools. In all the cases the school authority involved either called the Head of the Social Studies department or any of the teachers who was immediately available. Thus these teachers automatically became respondents for the study. This implies that the sampling of teachers for the study, at this stage, was more or less accidental.

Each teacher, thus selected, was then given a copy of the introduction letter mentioned above and thereafter had the objectives and significance of the study explained to him/her (even though this has been provided in the addendum to the

questionnaire). The permission of the teacher involved was then formally sought for the administration of the questionnaire, and thereafter the questionnaire handed over to them.

In the case of the Greater Accra Region, where the administration of the questionnaire began, respondents had between two and four weeks to complete the questionnaire before the researcher went back to collect them. In the Eastern and Central regions, this ranged between a day and four weeks for the distribution and collection of the questionnaire. Respondents in the Western and Ashanti regions had only a day for them to complete the questionnaire, after which the researcher went back to collect them (see Appendix-E for the List of the schools and the dates of distribution and collection of questionnaire from each of them).

The differences in the time of distribution and collection of the questionnaire in the regions were due to changes in the original plan of administering the questionnaire and also the limited time left for the collection of the data in Ghana before the researcher returns to the UK. The initial plan was to distribute the questionnaire over a two week period in all the schools selected and then use another two weeks to collect them. However with the start of the distribution in the Greater Accra Region, it was realised that following this plan was not going yield the collection of any significant amount of data. Thus the collection of the questionnaire in the outlying regions from the national capital was speeded up in order to be able to meet the collection of a significant amount of data.

Out of the 86 teachers who were given the questionnaire, 74 handed their completed questionnaire back to the researcher when he went back to collect them. The other 12 were either not in school when the researcher went back to collect the questionnaire or had misplaced the questionnaire and thus could not hand it over to the researcher. This thus indicate that in all there was an 86% success rate in the distribution of the questionnaire, in respect of the original number of schools selected for that purpose, and another 86% success rate in the return of same, in respect of number of questionnaires distributed.

The number of teachers that returned their completed questionnaires is as follows:

1. Greater Accra – 20
2. Eastern – 17
3. Central – 13
4. Western – 11
5. Ashanti – 13

One will realise, after comparing the list of the distribution of the questionnaire on page 150 with the list of the returns of the questionnaire above, that the Greater Accra and Central Region had the most number of teachers not handing back their completed questionnaire to the researcher (6 and 4 teachers respectively). Western and Ashanti Regions had a teacher each not returning his/her completed questionnaire, whereas the Eastern Region achieved a 100% rate of returns.

One reason that could be assigned to this particular situation is the time it took between the distribution and the collection of the questionnaires. In schools where the period between the distribution and collection of the questionnaire was short, in most cases only a day, the rate of returns was almost 100%. However, most of the teachers who did not hand in their completed questionnaire were from schools where the period between the distribution and collection of questionnaire was considerably longer.

3.8.2 Data Collection Stage: Interviews

As stated above, 25 schools, out of the 100, were initially selected for the interview of Social Studies teachers to be conducted. However certain unforeseen circumstances prevented the interview to be conducted in 5 of the schools, thus leaving 20 schools in which a teacher of Social Studies was interviewed as part of the study. All those, teachers, interviewed had also completed the questionnaire and thus part of the 74 teachers who returned their completed questionnaire to the researcher. The following is the list of distribution of interviews per region in the sample:

1. Greater Accra – 8
2. Eastern – 5
3. Central – 4

4. Western – 3

As can be noticed from the list above, no interview was conducted in the Ashanti Region and one interview in the Central Region could also not be conducted. This was due to the fact that the distribution and collection of the questionnaire were done by a proxy in the Ashanti Region with the researcher intending to go there, later on, to conduct the interviews himself. However all the schools involved had gone on Mid-Term break when the researcher got there and thus could not meet the teachers who had completed the questionnaire and therefore needed to be interviewed, according to the initial design. In the case of the Central Region, the teacher involved was absent on all the three occasions that the researcher visited the school after giving her the questionnaire. Thus the questionnaire, in that case, could also not be collected from this particular teacher.

All the interviews were conducted on the day that the researcher went back to collect the questionnaire, and lasted between 10 and 17 minutes. Thus the interviews were conducted between 28th May, 2004 and 23rd June, 2004 (see Appendix-F for the full list of dates on which interviews were conducted). Most of the interviews were conducted in the staff common rooms of the schools, at corners where the teachers involved had set up their desks. However, in almost all these instances there were few teachers around who respectfully kept their distance and thus did not interfere or disrupt the interview in any manner. The other interviews were conducted in the offices of the individuals involved and thus within an atmosphere of absolute privacy.

On the whole, the interviews went smoothly, as all the interviewees exhibited eagerness and commitment to the study. The responses of the interviewees were easily forthcoming, as they freely volunteered all the necessary information pertaining to the interview schedule and thus the study as a whole.

3.8.3 Data Collection Stage: SSSCE Social Studies Papers

These assessment papers from the WAEC were collected from various sources, as the WAEC offices couldn't supply them all when the researcher went there. Thus some were collected from past students and others from Social Studies teachers in some of the SSSs in the country. The foregoing therefore made it very difficult for the researcher to have all of the papers at the time he visited the field to collect data for the study. That is papers initially collected were 7 for Paper One and 8 for Paper Two. It was therefore at a later stage of the study, when items from the first set of papers collected had been analysed, before the three other papers for Paper One and two papers for Paper Two were sent over. Thus the analysis of sampled items from these papers was done almost a year after the first set of items had been analysed. This therefore made it imperative to do the analysis of the SSSCE items all over again in order to deal with any bias or error of judgment that could have been introduced into the analysis as a result of the time gap.

3.8.4 Data Collection Stage: Teachers' Internal Assessment Items

The initial study design included the collection of assessment items which have been constructed by teachers in their internal assessment practices. These were to be analysed in the same manner as those of the SSSCE and subsequently compared to find out the extent to which these sets of assessment items match. The aim was to verify the modes and emphasis of assessment employed by these teachers in their internal assessment practices.

However, as stated in the limitations and delimitations section (pages 134-135) many of the teachers who were sampled for this data were reluctant in handing over copies of their assessment materials to the researcher. They gave various reasons for their inability to get copies of their assessment items for the researcher. This include, "I don't have a copy for myself", "I am not sure of where I have kept the copies" and "I don't have them with me" among others. Thus after the first ten teachers, who were sampled for this particular data, gave excuses for their inability to hand over copies of their assessment items the researcher decided to exclude this data from the study altogether and make do with those that were relatively easy to collect.

3.9.0 DATA ANALYSES

This stage of the research covered a period lasting almost a year, due to the different types of data collected and the different methods employed in analysing them for effective and authentic interpretations. In all four main methods were used for the data analyses, one each for the SSSCE Social Studies items and the questionnaire data, and two different methods for the interview. The analyses of all the data collected were also done in stages, starting with the SSSCE Social Studies items and ending with the interview.

3.9.1 Data Analyses Stage: SSSCE Social Studies Items

During this stage, individual sampled items from the selected SSSCE Papers, both Papers One and Two, were analysed for their congruence with the curriculum goals and objectives using the model described in section 3.6.3 of this chapter. This involved, first, identifying the curriculum content area or topic under which the assessment item falls, and then identifying the performance in both the item and the curriculum area, followed by matching them to see whether there is congruence between them. If no content area or topic is identified, as under which the item is related, the item is rejected as not being authentic. Should a content area or topic be identified and yet the performance in the item does not match that of the curriculum topic under which the item falls, the item is rejected as not being appropriate or authentic for assessing learning outcomes in the subject.

The next step was to compare the item to some other criteria for good assessment, namely: whether the task in the item has positive consequences, contextualised in real-world application, has complexity, engages learners in meaningful problems and whether it is fair to all learners, irrespective of their cultural and socio-economic background. Items were then passed as potentially useful for assessing learning outcomes in the subject if they happened to meet majority of these criteria, otherwise they were rejected as not being wholly appropriate.

Another step in these analyses is identifying the main learning domain, under which the item falls. That is whether the item is assessing outcomes in the cognitive, skills

or affective domains of the subject. The foregoing, together with the identification of the content area of the item were used to identify the extent of spread of the items analysed over the curriculum content area and the major learning domains. This was done to find out whether the assessment items have been so constructed to assess outcomes in all the learning domains of the subject, and also whether they are fairly spread over all the topics/content within the curriculum.

The individual results, after each item was analysed, in both Papers One and Two were then aggregated under the following categories:

1. To be Rejected
2. Needs Modification
3. Potentially Useful

Thus for both Paper One and Paper Two, items were either identified as; to be rejected, needs modification or potentially useful and later aggregated with their respective percentages, in relation to the total number of items analysed in each case. The skewness or otherwise of the items in relation to the curriculum contents and learning domains was also analysed and identified.

3.9.2 Data Analyses Stage: Questionnaire

This stage involved the quantitative analyses of the questionnaire data using SPSS software. It began with the coding of the responses for each of the questions/variables and inputting them into the software against each respondent/case. The codes were mostly numeric, with a few strings, and also mainly in the ordinal and nominal scales. None of the variables fell within the interval or ratio scales, therefore the subsequent analyses were mainly descriptive. Inferential statistical analysis was only conducted where there was the need to establish a relationship between two or more variables.

In the case of the descriptive statistical analysis, the major focus was on the central tendencies in all the major variables, especially the modal response category in each of these variables. The absolute value of the modal response category or the percentage value or both were used in reporting the findings of the research in this

respect. As earlier indicated, the response categories of the variables in the questionnaire were neither interval nor ratio scales, therefore in the analysis of the data, means and medians of these categories were not considered. Also the dispersion or spread of the responses over the variables (i.e. range, standard deviation and variance) was not considered due to the same reason adduced for the foregoing.

As indicated above, the only inferential statistical analysis that was performed was crosstabulation comparisons of variables to establish relationships between them, and the chi-square analysis was mostly the tool used in this occasion. Where a strong relationship is revealed by the significance value of the chi-square tests, this value is further compared with values for the Fisher's Exact Test and other symmetric measures like the Spearman Correlation to see whether they match significantly.

In almost all the cases, the significant value was set at 0.05 (that is a 95% confidence interval). However, in some of the cases the chi-square tests revealed strong relationships at the 0.01 significant value or 99% confidence interval. Thus a strong relationship is deemed to have been established if the 'P' value of the chi-square tests corresponds with either the 0.05 or 0.01 significant values, whichever was applicable. Here again, the nature of the variables did not permit the use of other parametric statistics, like the ANOVA (analysis of variance) and the rest.

3.9.3 Data Analyses Stage: Interview

Two distinct techniques were employed in the analysis of the interview data. In the first place, an in-depth content analysis of the data was carried out for each of the interview responses. In this instance responses were categorised and coded, with the main aim of looking for meaning and understanding of the responses. The categories so identified were then placed under the relevant themes, based on the research variables, and a kind of modal response category identified for each theme. Samples of statements, as voiced by the respondents, are then placed alongside the response categories to give meaning and understanding to them. Such statements always contain the word (s) that was used for the initial coding, so as to ensure semantic validity in the whole analysis, and especially the coding.

While using the in-depth content analysis technique for the interview data, it became evident that certain important inter-related concepts were emerging that seem to suggest a kind of theoretical relationship between the research variables. In order to explore that emerging theory, the researcher decided to perform another analysis of the interview data, this time using the grounded theory approach, as propounded by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and as specifically outlined by Creswell (1998). The procedure for data analysis in grounded theory approach is outlined on pages 132 – 133 above.

The first step in the grounded theory analysis involved the open coding of the interview data to identify categories of information about the concepts or phenomena that emerged during the first content analysis. This was followed by an axial coding that led to the identification of the central phenomenon and its relationship with the other phenomena, and the exploration of causal conditions for the relationships so identified. The context of the relationship and the intervening conditions were established and the consequences of the central phenomenon identified. Next step involved the use of selective coding to identify a “story line” (Creswell, 1998) to integrate the categories of concepts in the axial coding and led to the presentation of conditional propositions and substantive-level theories. The final stage in this approach was the development of a conditional matrix, which illustrated the conditions influencing the central phenomenon and its consequences.

3.10.1 SUMMARY

This chapter lists the three (3) major and 3 subsidiary research questions, with further descriptions about the 3 major research questions provided. It discusses the research design used in carrying out this study within the context of the debates among researchers about the primacy of one or the other of the two main research traditions. The rationale for the choice of the research design utilised (the mixed-method design) is also discussed. The justification for this design is said to be based on the operational definitions given to the research variables, the philosophical assumptions and the ideological perspective of the researcher, which was brought to

bear on the research process. Most importantly, the choice of the research design was said to be primarily based on pragmatic considerations.

Diagram 3.2 (page 129A) reveals all the elements and steps involved in the research process, from the conception of the purpose of the research to the analyses of data collected. The operational definitions of the research variables led to the identification of appropriate sources of data concerning these variables. The nature and locations of these sources of data resulted in the use of the multi-staged approach in selecting samples of data and respondents for the study. Thus both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were employed in this research. Data was collected, mainly, through teacher interviews, the use of a questionnaire and documents on the curriculum guidelines of Social Studies in Ghana and external assessment items. The various methods used to analyse the data collected have been described in this chapter.

Also described in this chapter are the instruments used in gathering and analysing the data. The steps taken to ensure the validity and reliability of these instruments, and the stages involved in the gathering and analyses of the data have also been described. The chapter also includes a discussion on the limitation of the study and the delimitations that were consequently applied to the study.

4.0.0 APPROPRIATENESS OF THE SSSCE SOCIAL STUDIES ITEMS.

4.1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings resulting from the analyses of data in respect of two of the research questions stated in the methodology chapter of this thesis. These are the first major and the first subsidiary/minor research questions. This presentation and the subsequent discussions followed the analyses of some sampled items of WAEC's SSSCE in Social Studies, in relation to the extent to which they match or are congruent with the curriculum goals and objectives of the subject and their coverage over the content of the curriculum. It also includes results from the analysis of data from the questionnaire, administered on a selected number of SSS Social Studies teachers in Ghana, which represents the views of teachers on whether the SSSCE is adequately assessing all the goals and objectives of the Social Studies curriculum.

As stated in the methodology chapter, the analysis of the SSSCE Social Studies items was done qualitatively, using an adaptation of Mager's (1990) Objective/Item Checklist and Herman's (1992) criteria for good assessment. The resultant model was then used to analyse the sampled SSSCE items, item by item. A statistical tool (the SPSS) was used in the analyses of the data gathered on the item in the questionnaire, which sought the views of the teachers on whether the SSSCE Social Studies items adequately cover all the goals and objectives of the curriculum.

Statistical tables and figures are presented to paint precise and concise pictures of the various phenomena studied under this particular research question. Although the analysis of the SSSCE items was done qualitatively, the descriptive statistics, in the form of counts and percentages, are employed to help bring conciseness to the findings by quantifying the phenomena as they occur in the field where they were studied. This has been done in order to ensure that they are easily understood by the intended audiences. In the case of the questionnaire data, the item was designed to allow for statistical analyses thus the results are presented in SPSS tables and hence

explained. The major findings are highlighted, fully described and inferences made from them. The findings are then discussed within the context of the literature on the research questions stated below, and also that of the whole study by establishing and pointing out the links of the findings to the other research questions.

4.2.0 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

4.2.1 Major Research Question

- ❖ To what extent are WAEC's SSSCE items in Social Studies congruent or compatible with the Goals and Objectives of the curriculum?

4.2.2 Subsidiary Research Question

- Do the SSSCE items measure all the major learner outcomes in Social Studies?

4.3.1 WHAT THE LITERATURE SAYS

A survey of the literature, particularly those critical of external assessment, reveals claims about the narrowness and baseness of the items that are often constructed and administered to students during external assessments. In this case traditional assessment methods, which are employed in most large scale or external assessments, are held to be the culprit of the narrowness and baseness of these items. Bennett et al (2003) for instance alleged that many large scale or external assessments are plagued by elemental questions. That is, external assessments by their traditional nature only assess knowledge to the neglect of other important and higher educational/learning attainments like higher-order intellectual skills, personal and social competencies and attitudes (Torrance, 1995; Wilson, 1992).

If it is accepted that assessment items should ask students to do what the curriculum objectives say they should be able to do (Mager, 1990), and also cover all outcomes to the appropriate level of demand, as described by the performance criteria or objectives (SQA, 2001), then it is argued that traditional/external assessment falls short of matching many educational priorities (Broadfoot, 1995). Mager (op cit) for

instance argues that the development of items that test for an objective, in theory, is a straightforward and simple matter for those whose objectives are derived from task analyses and are well stated. He therefore acknowledges that where no performance is mentioned in the objective or the task in the objective is not clearly stated, it presents a difficulty in preparing items to assess the attainment of that objective. Another difficulty, which has been identified in the preparation of items, is the tendency to expand items to cover enough grounds (Mager, op cit). The foregoing, it is thus argued, leads to many such items having little or no relation to the objectives being assessed.

Therefore to many people, the use of such inappropriate test items in many external examinations, which is claimed to be widespread, should be stopped and improvements brought to bear on these assessments (Mager, op cit; Tal & Hochberg, 2003; Alleman & Brophy, 1997; Cizek, 1997). And to them, the use of alternative and authentic assessment techniques in all educational assessments will ensure that higher-order intellectual skills, civic competencies and attitudes are well assessed.

It must, however, be noted that many of the claims above have been made without the presentation of empirical data to support them. That is, very little research has been carried out to find out whether external assessment items are really elemental or base and narrow. One of the closest researches, on the foregoing, by Spoulding in 1938 (cited by Madaus, 1988) revealed that teachers in New York disregarded the objectives in the local curriculum guide in favour of in favour of those tested in the Regency Examinations (see page 79 of literature review).

Even though this particular research is too old and thus may lack validity now, it does give an indication of the fact that the test objectives of the external assessment agency, sometimes, look different from that of the schools' curriculum. What is not clear is whether the Regency Examinations were supposed to assess students' attainments in the objectives as provided in the local curriculum. In the situation where the external examination is supposed to assess attainments in already given teaching syllabi, the study done by the research department of the WAEC (see page

Table 4.1: THE CONGRUENCE OF PAPER ONE ITEMS WITH THE CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES

Paper	No Topic	Fail at step 5	Mod at step 5	Fail at step 7	Mod at step 7	Useful	TOTAL
Nov. 1999	-	2	3	-	2	3	10
Nov. 2000	-	4	1	-	-	5	10
Jul. 2001	-	7	1	1	-	1	10
Nov. 2001	-	3	2	-	1	4	10
Jul. 2002	-	7	2	1	-	-	10
Nov. 2002	-	5	2	1	-	2	10
Jul. 2003	-	7	-	1	2	-	10
Nov. 2003	1	3	1	1	2	2	10
Jul. 2004	-	4	2	2	-	2	10
Nov. 2004	1	6	1	-	1	1	10
TOTAL	2	48	15	7	8	20	100

NB:

- I. No Topic means that none of the curriculum topics could possibly relate to the item and its objective.
- II. Fail at 5, means that there was no match between the item objective and any of the curriculum objectives under the identified topic.
- III. Mod at 5 means that either the item's performance indicator or main intent, or both need some modifications to achieve a full match with that of the curriculum objective.
- IV. Fail at 7 mean that item do not meet other criteria for good assessment, as spelt out in the checklist for item analyses.
- V. Mod at 7 means that item could be modified or reviewed to include more of the criteria for good assessment, in order to pass as a good item.
- VI. Useful mean that item is potentially useful for assessing learning outcomes under the curriculum goals and objectives of the subject.

112 above) makes interesting findings. In this case it was reported that the SSSCE items in 'Clothing & Textiles' for the years 1997, 1998 and 2000 did not adequately cover the teaching syllabus (WAEC, 2002). This thus calls into question the validity of these examinations.

The foregoing thus makes it important to find out whether these claims do actually hold, especially where the external assessment is supposed to assess students' attainments in the national curriculum (especially in the case of Ghana). However all the analyses, of the SSSCE Social Studies items in Ghana, were done with a proviso, clearly stated in the Social Studies syllabus (CRDD, 1998), that the assessment of attitudes and values should be the preserve of continuous/internal assessment. Therefore, whatever discussion that will follow the presentation of the results will be done with this recommendation in mind.

4.4.0 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.4.1a Compatibility/Congruence of the SSSCE Social Studies Paper One Items with the Curriculum Goals and Objectives.

As indicated earlier in the methodology chapter, WAEC's SSSCEs are divided into two papers; Paper One and Paper Two. Thus the results of the analyses of these two papers are presented in this section, starting with Paper One. The analysis of the 100 sampled items from the SSSCE Social Studies Paper One examinations, dating from 1999 to 2004, and as shown in Table 4.1 (page 163A), reveals that two (2) out of the 100 items analysed cannot, by any means, be classified as Social Studies assessment items, as it was difficult identifying any topic under which they can possibly fall.

An example of these is item number 5 of the November 2003 SSSCE. The item is as follows:

Item 5: Where the delivery of a baby by natural means poses a risk to the mother, the baby is delivered by

- A. genital mutilation
- B. caesarean section
- C. artificial insemination
- D. ovariectomy

A search through the twenty-seven (27) topics in the Social Studies syllabus for SSSs in Ghana reveals that none of the topics could possibly match the above item, either in content or main intent. This is because none of the said topics deal with pregnancy, child birth and maternal safety as a main objective, as the item seems to imply. Even the second year topic, 'Adolescent Reproductive Health', which might be seen to deal with such issues, does not consider the main intent of the item as part of its objectives. Thus these two items, as identified in the analyses, are clearly inappropriate and invalid for assessing learner outcomes in SSS Social Studies in Ghana.

The table also reveals that forty-eight (48) items (i.e. 48% of the items evaluated) did not match the curriculum objectives in respect of their performance indicators and main intents. The following item of the July 2001 SSSCE Social Studies Paper One gives a vivid example of these mismatched items:

Item 43: Which of the following is not an important purpose of a population census?

- A. Determining the number of people in an area
- B. Assessing the standard of living of the people
- C. Providing information for drawing up development plans
- D. Determining how much taxes to impose on citizens

Analysis of this item, using the checklist model (Appendix-D), indicates that although the item could probably come under the third year topic, 'Population Issues', none of the objectives under this topic deals with the purpose of population census. The closest objective expects learners to map out the structure of Ghana's population, using current population census figures. Thus it is clear from the foregoing that this item does not match any of the curriculum objectives of SSS Social Studies in Ghana, and thus this item and the like are inappropriate and invalid for the assessment of learning outcomes in the subject.

The analysis of the assessment items also shows that fifteen (15) of them will need modifications in respect of either their performance indicators, main intents or both, in order to fully match those of the curriculum objectives. This is clearly captured in an item in the SSSCE Social Studies Paper One of November 1999 as follows:

Item 26: One of the mechanisms for social control in Ghana is the

- A. Education Service
- B. Police Service
- C. Fire Service
- D. Audit Service

In the case above, the topic, which is a first year topic, is clearly identified as 'Our Social Environment'. However, the closest curriculum objective to that of the item expects learners to examine the mechanisms for social control and their effectiveness in the Ghanaian society, while the item is apparently requiring learners to identify or state a mechanism for social control in Ghana. Although there seems to be a match between these two objectives/intents, the match is clearly not perfect, as the performance indicators 'examine' and 'identify/state' are not the same thing and thus changes the main intents of the curriculum objective and the item. Thus in order for the item to match the curriculum objective there will be the need to modify the indicator and thus the main intent of the item.

Seven (7) of the items analysed, even though they match the curriculum objectives to some extent, did not match any of the criteria for good assessment as spelt out in the model for analyses. In the above case, the following item of November 2003 is a clear example:

Item 13: Which of the following agents and agencies of socialization are wrongly paired?

- A. Chief and the Community
- B. Pastor and the Church
- C. Father and the Family
- D. Teacher and the media

The topic under which this item falls is identified as 'Socialisation', a first year topic. The curriculum objective in this case expects learners to differentiate between agencies and agents of socialisation while the item requires them to match agents of socialisation to their appropriate agencies. Whereas the performance indicators 'differentiate' and 'pair'/'match' cannot be said to wholly match, the main intents seem to match to some extent. That is, just as learners will be able to ultimately identify what agents and agencies of socialisation are in differentiating between the two, they will also be able to do the same in pairing these agents of socialisation to

their respective agencies. However, further analysis of the item shows that it does not have complexity; neither is it contextualised in real-world application nor engages learners in meaningful problems. That is, the pairing of agents of socialisation to their respective agencies will not result in any meaningful and applicable learning for learners and thus lacks positive consequences. Since the foregoing description indicates the item failing all the important criteria of good assessment, it can therefore be said that it does not qualify as an appropriate assessment item in Social Studies and thus must be rejected.

Eight (8) more items will need some modification in order to qualify as good assessment items. In this case, there will have to be more complexity in the assessment performance being called for, and tasks being contextualised in real-world application to reflect the problem solving nature of the curriculum. Tasks should also be couched in such a way as to have more positive consequences, engage learners in meaningful problems and be fair to all learners, irrespective of their cultural and socio-economic background. Here is an example of such items, as depicted by the following item in the July 2003 Paper One:

Item 16: The scientific principles underlying the invention of the aeroplane are...

- I. Law of floatation
 - II. Principles of air-lift
 - III. Aerodynamics
 - IV. Hydrolysis
- A. I and II only
 - B. II and III only
 - C. I, II and IV only
 - D. II, III and IV only

The item, as shown above, is identified as belonging to the second year topic; 'Science and Technology'. The curriculum objective in question is expecting learners to relate scientific knowledge to technological output, which is, to some extent, similar to the intent of the item which is also requiring students to identify the scientific principles behind the invention of the aeroplane. Since a major goal of Social Studies is to make learners creative thinkers and problem solvers, it would be expected that any item used to assess learning outcomes in this subject will bring these goals to bear on the task. However this does not seem to be the case with this

item and its like, as it does not engage students in meaningful problems and is not contextualised in students' real-world to enable them apply the concepts in life. That is, the choice of the aeroplane in the socio-cultural context of many places in the country is a bit out of place. It would have rather been better if the technology cited finds expression in the socio-cultural context of the country and engages students in complex analysis to arrive at a relation between a technological output and scientific knowledge. Thus, as indicated earlier, this item and its like will need some modifications in order to meet the majority, if not all, of the characteristics of good assessment.

In all, only twenty (20) of the items (i.e. 20%) fully match the performances, in both indicators and main intents, as given in the curriculum, and also most of the criteria for good assessment. They thus qualify to be potentially useful for the assessment of learner outcomes in Social Studies. For example, it is obvious that the following item of November 2000 is potentially useful for assessing learning outcomes under the identified topic and the curriculum as a whole:

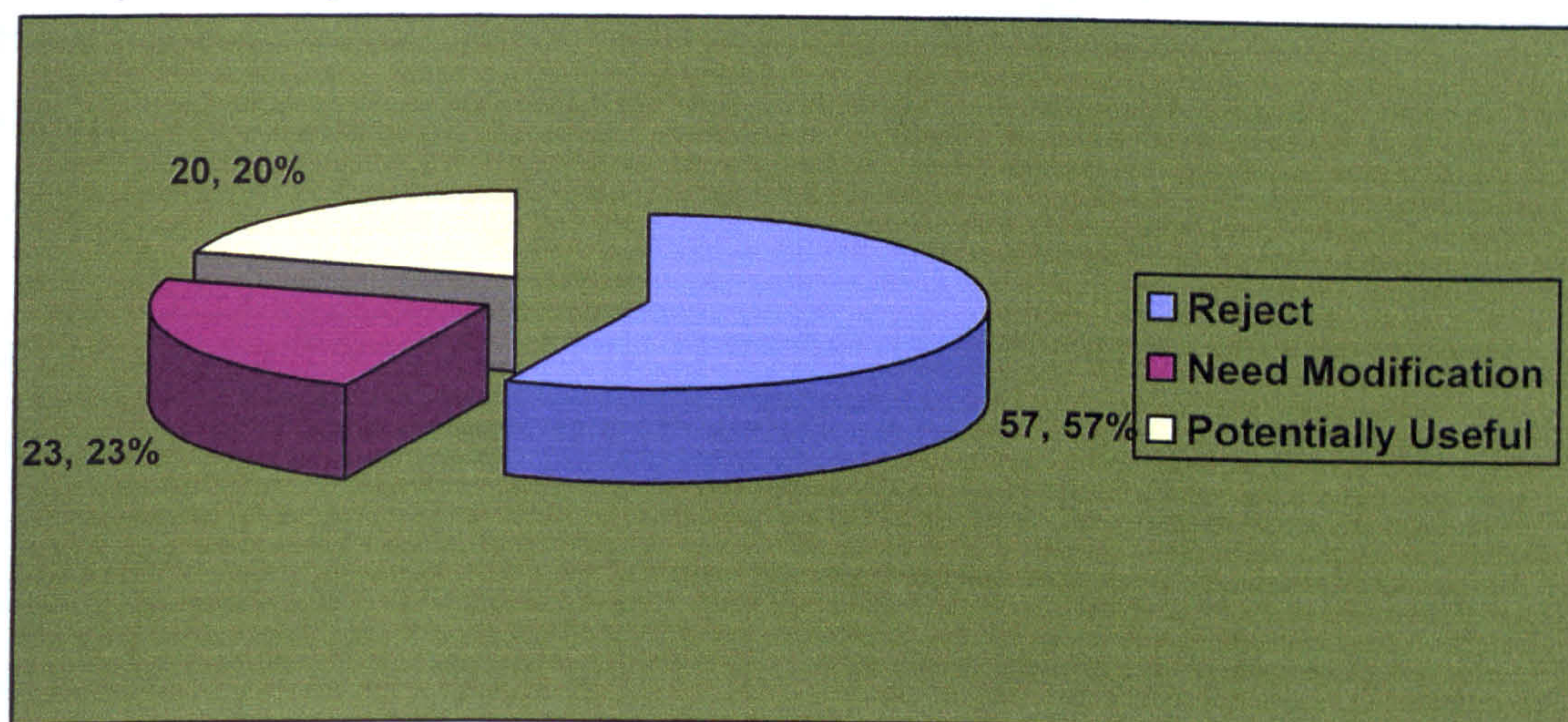
Item 33: Under the 1999 Constitution of Ghana, every person has the right to

- A. personal liberty
- B. pay taxes
- C. enlist in the Armed Forces
- D. protect State property

The item, as stated above, comes under 'Rights and Responsibilities of the Individual', which is a first year topic. One of the objectives under this topic expects students to identify examples of rights, as enshrined in the Ghanaian Constitution, to which they have an inalienable claim. The item is also asking students to identify a right, which has been guaranteed them by the Constitution of Ghana, thus making it match the curriculum objective completely. There are also indications that this item has positive consequences, as it enables people to know what rights to claim, has real-world application and engages students in a meaningful problem. Thus by meeting most of the characteristics of good assessment, this item and the like qualify as potentially useful for assessing learning outcomes in the subject.

The chart below gives a concise picture of the findings after being summarised under three categories. That is whether items, as analysed, should be rejected outright, modified or accepted as potentially useful for the assessment of learning outcomes in SSS Social Studies in Ghana.

Figure 4.1: SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF THE SSSCE SOCIAL STUDIES PAPER ONE (1999 - 2004)



As can be seen from the pie chart above, 57 items out of the 100 evaluated (i.e. 57%) face outright rejection, as invalid and inappropriate for the assessment of learner outcomes under the Social Studies curriculum of Ghana. The 57 items as indicated have one, two or all of the following characteristics:

- I. They do not fall under any of the topics in the curriculum.
- II. Their performance indicators and main intents or both do not match those of the curriculum objectives.
- III. They do not meet the requirement for good assessment items.

Since the 57 items (i.e. 57%) represents the majority of the items sampled and analysed, under items for the SSSCE Social Studies Paper One (1999 – 2004), it can be said, with a high degree of certainty, that the Paper One items in SSSCE Social Studies are largely incongruent/incompatible with the curriculum goals and objectives of the subject. This examination paper in Social Studies should therefore be seen as largely invalid and thus inappropriate for the assessment of learning outcomes in the subject.

Table 4.2: THE CONGRUENCE OF PAPER TWO ITEMS WITH THE CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES

	No Topic	Fail at step 5	Mod at step 5	Fail at step 7	Mod at step 7	Useful	TOTAL
Nov. 1999	1	-	1	-	-	1	3
Nov. 2000	-	2	-	-	1	-	3
Jul. 2001	-	2	1	-	-	-	3
Nov. 2001	-	1	1	-	-	1	3
Jul. 2002	-	3	-	-	-	-	3
Nov. 2002	-	1	-	-	-	2	3
Jul. 2003	-	1	1	-	-	1	3
Nov. 2003	-	1	1	-	-	1	3
Jul. 2004	-	2	1	-	-	-	3
Nov. 2004	-	3	-	-	-	-	3
TOTAL	1	16	6	0	1	6	30

NB: Explanations of column headings are the same as that of Table 4.1 (Page 163A)

The chart also reveals that a further 23 items, out of those evaluated, will need some modifications to fully qualify them as potentially useful for the assessment of learner outcomes in the Social Studies curriculum of Ghana. These modifications, as stated earlier, will have to do with either their performance indicators, main intents or both, or made to meet most of the criteria for good assessment items. Considering the fact that these items are yet to be wholly accepted, it means that as much as 80 items (i.e. 80%) are inappropriate for the assessment of learning outcomes in Social Studies in Ghana. This means that majority of the SSSCE items in Social Studies are not congruent with its curriculum goals and objectives.

4.4.1b Compatibility/Congruence of the SSSCE Social Studies Paper Two Items with the Curriculum Goals and Objectives.

As initially indicated, the SSSCE Social Studies Paper Two Items were the next set of items to be analysed. In this case thirty (30) items which were sampled from the one hundred (100) items, set and administered on students from November, 1999 to November, 2004, were analysed to establish the extent to which they are compatible or congruent with the curriculum goals and objectives of Social Studies in Ghana. Results of the analysis of the Paper Two items, as shown in Table 4.2 (page 169A), reveal that one out of the thirty (30) items analysed did not fall under any of the Topics in the Syllabus. The item in question was in the November 1999 Paper Two, and is as follows:

Item 10: Discuss the factors that hinder the production of food crops in Ghana.

A search through the 27 SSS Social Studies topics reveals that none of the topics come anywhere near treating the production of food crops in Ghana as one of its objectives. This item is thus completely invalid and inappropriate for the assessment of learning outcomes in SSS Social Studies in Ghana.

The analysis also revealed that sixteen items (16), representing 53.3% of items analysed, completely mismatched their respective curriculum objectives in relation to their performance indicators, main intents or both. The following item of July 2002 vividly depicts the above situation:

Item 2: Why do countries conduct periodic population census?

This item is identified to fall under 'Population Issues', which is a third year topic in the SSS Social Studies curriculum. In this case, the closest curriculum objective, to the intent of the item, expects students to map out the structure of Ghana's population, using a current census report, while the main intent/objective of the item requires students to explain the reason (s) behind periodic population census usually carried out by countries. It is clear from the foregoing that the item objective does not match that of the curriculum, and thus this particular item and the like in the SSSCE Social Studies papers should be rejected, as they are invalid and thus inappropriate for the assessment of learning outcomes in the subject.

Six (6) of the items analysed (i.e. 20%) will need modifications in order for their performance indicators or main intents to match that of the curriculum objective. An example of such items is found in the July 2001 paper, and is as follows:

Item 3: What factors account for the low productivity in the public sector in Ghana?

The item stated above relates to the topic, 'Productivity in Ghana', found in the year three Social Studies curriculum for the SSS in Ghana. The curriculum objective, which comes nearest to the main intent of the item, expects students to be able to examine the reasons behind low productivity levels in Ghana. The main intent of the item, on the other hand, is requiring students to state or mention the factors that account for low productivity in the public sector of Ghana. It is apparent in this case that to examine something is very different from stating or at best explaining it. This therefore implies that the indicator of the item makes the intent of the item quite different from the curriculum objective. In this situation, items of such characteristics, including this particular item, need to be modified in order to completely match their respective curriculum objectives.

The analysis further revealed that one (1) more item will also need some modification in order to fully meet the criteria for good assessment. This item, shown below, was sampled from the November 2000 SSSCE Social Studies Paper Two.

Item 9: Discuss four effects of mining activities on the physical environment in Ghana.

The above item falls under a first year topic known as 'Our Physical Environment'. In this particular instance, the curriculum objective, which is the closest to the main intent of the item, expects students to examine human activities that upset the ecological balance in Ghana. The item's intent is also for students to discuss the effect of mining (a specific human activity) on the environment in Ghana. Even though the intents and indicators of the curriculum objectives and the item match to a large extent, the item does not fully match the goals of the subject by not contextualising the task in real-world for the students and thus not engaging them in meaningful problem solving activities. This item will therefore need to be modified a little to capture all the necessary ingredients of good assessment.

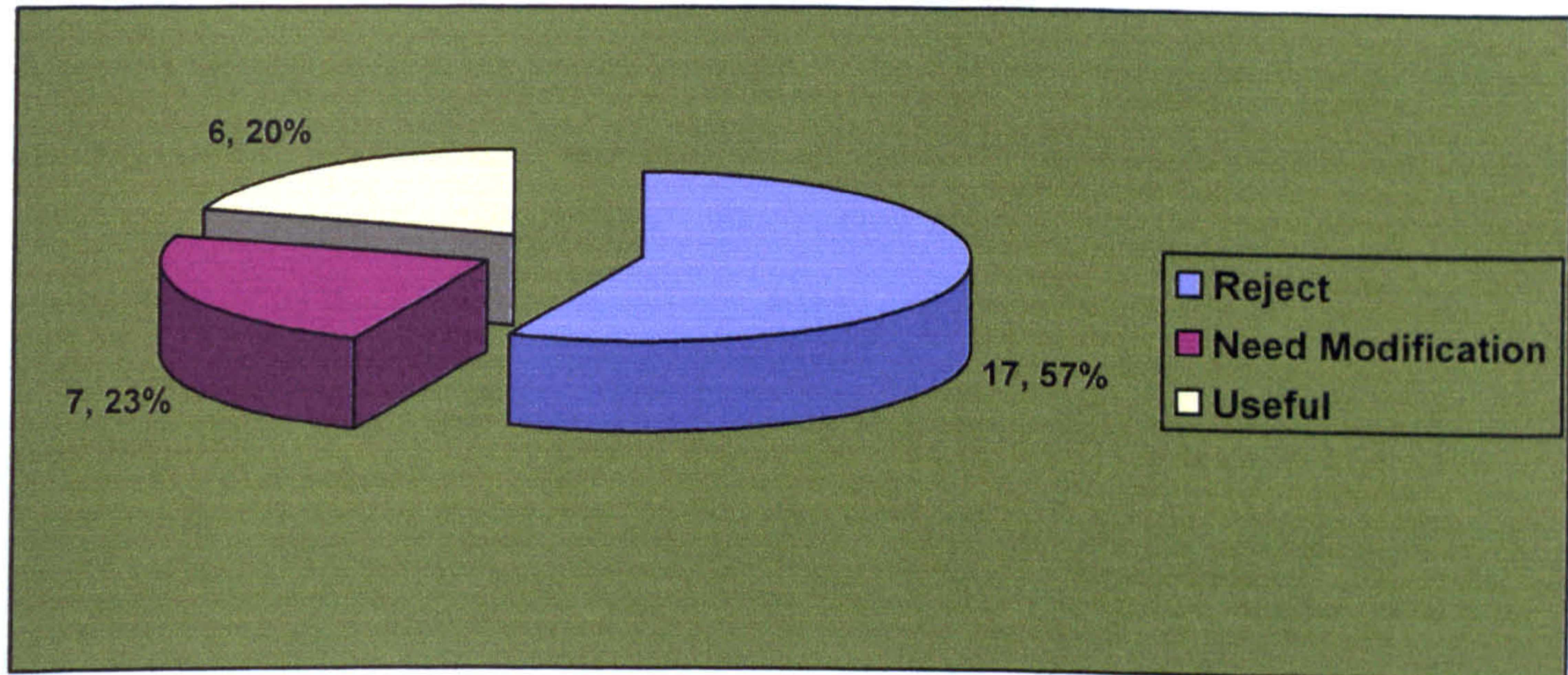
The analysis of the thirty items sampled from the SSSCE Social Studies Paper Two show that only six (6) of the items, representing 20% of the total number of items analysed, could fully pass as potentially useful for the assessment of learning outcomes in Social Studies. The following item of November 2002 fully depicts this case:

Item 7: Discuss the importance of national symbols in the development of your country.

The topic under which this item falls is identified as 'Our Culture and National Identity', which belongs to the year one curriculum. The curriculum objective, in this case, expects students to assess the importance of national symbols in Ghana's national life. The item's intent also requires students to discuss the importance of national symbols in the development of the country. A comparison of the two objectives indicates their similarity and thus making the intent of the item matching, to a large extent, the curriculum objective. It can also be said that the task in the item, even though is not contextualised in real-world application, engages students in meaningful problem and also has complexity. This item and all those items that have similar characteristics can therefore be said to be potentially useful for assessing learning outcomes in SSS Social Studies in Ghana.

The chart below presents a concise picture of the results of the analysis of the Paper Two items, as to whether they should be rejected, modified or accepted as potentially useful for the assessment of learning outcomes in Social Studies.

Figure 4.2: SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF SSSCE SOCIAL STUDIES PAPER TWO (1999 - 2004)



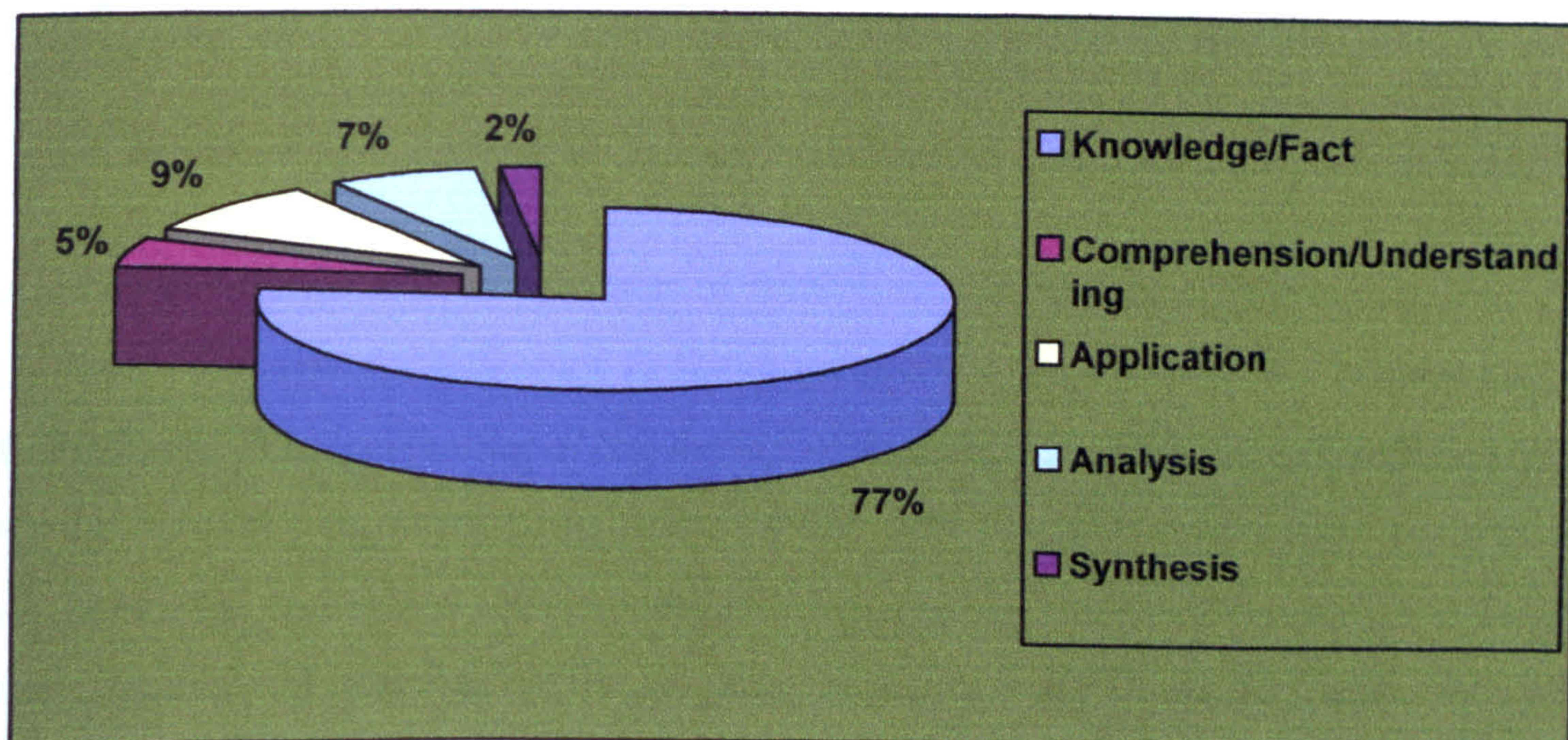
The chart, above, shows that 17 items or 57% of the Paper Two items analysed have very little relation with the SSS Social Studies curriculum in Ghana. That is, the items either have no relation with the topics in the syllabus or have indicators and main intents that do not match the curriculum goals and objectives. With the majority of the items that were analysed not matching the goals and objectives of Social Studies in Ghana, it can therefore be said that the SSSCE Social Studies Paper Two items are largely incompatible or incongruent with these goals and objective. The items are thus invalid and inappropriate to use in assessing learning outcomes in the subject.

Seven (7) of the items analysed, representing 23% of the total, will need further modifications in order to qualify as potentially useful assessment items in Social Studies. The modifications will be in the area of performance indicators and main intents for 6 of the items and meeting the criteria for good assessment for the other item in this category. Thus, as already stated above, only 7 of items analysed under Paper Two did pass as potentially useful for assessing learning outcomes in the subject.

4.4.2a Coverage of the SSSCE Social Studies Paper One Items over the Curriculum/Learning Domains

Further analysis of the curriculum/learning domains of the 100 'Paper One' items revealed that all of them are under the cognitive domain, with about 3 of them having some characteristics that may qualify them to be under the affective domain. Of the 100 items analysed, 77 of them (i.e. 77%) are Knowledge/Fact based and 5 testing Comprehension/Understanding of learners. Nine (9) items can be said to testing at the Application level, 7 within the level of Analysis and 2 assessing for learners ability to synthesize knowledge. The chart below gives a vivid pictorial representation of the aforementioned statistics.

Figure 4.3: SUMMARY OF THE SPREAD OF THE PAPER ONE ITEMS OVER THE COGNITIVE DOMAIN

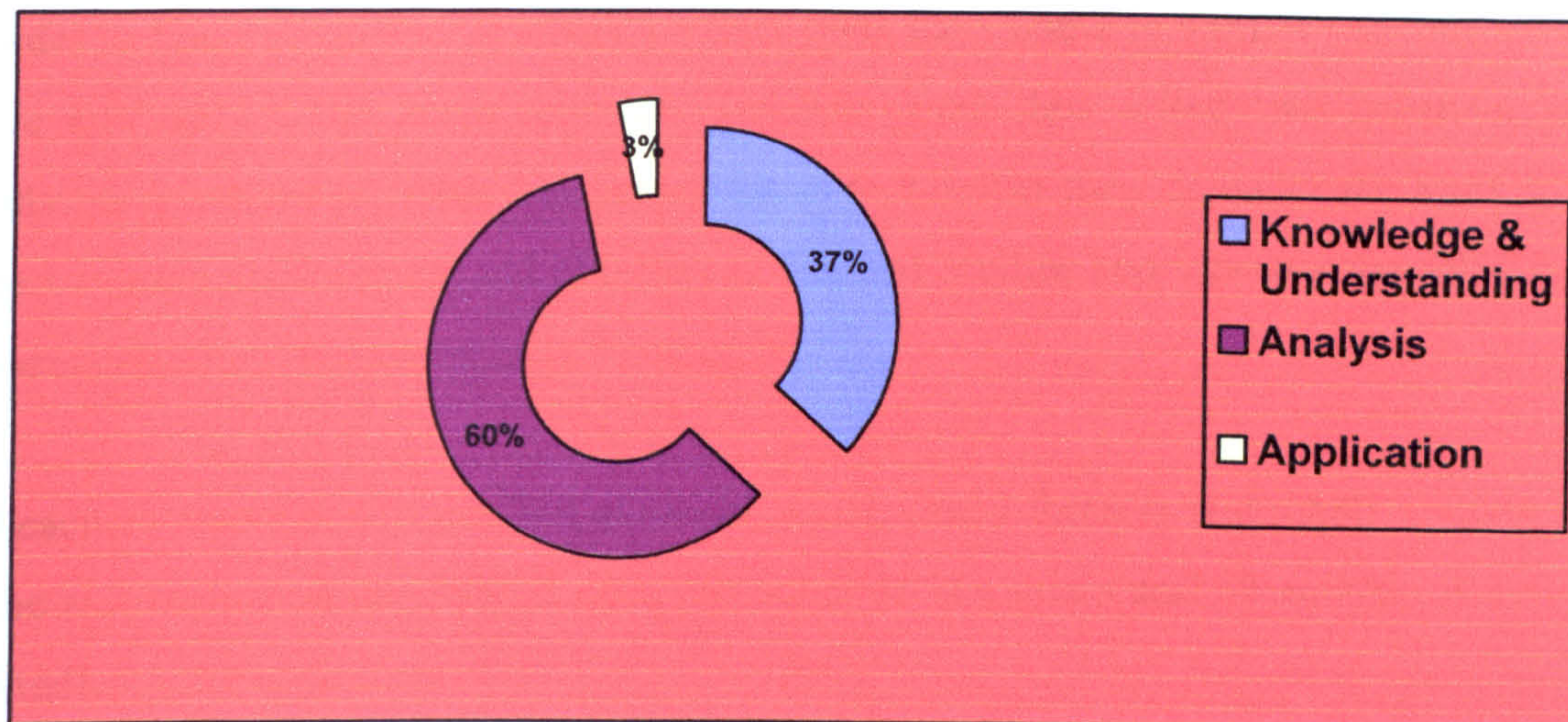


4.4.2b Coverage of the SSSCE Social Studies Paper Two Items over the Curriculum/Learning Domains

Analyses of the curriculum/learning domain of each of the items sampled show that all of the items analysed were under the Cognitive Domain. Of these, Seven (7) were at the knowledge/fact level; four (4) at the comprehension/understanding level and one at the application level. Eighteen (18) items, representing 60% of the items analysed, were assessing students at the analysis level of the cognitive domain. The chart below captures vividly the summary of the spread of the Paper Two items analysed on the level of the cognitive domain. In this case the categories Knowledge

and Comprehension have been collapsed into one category; Knowledge and Understanding, as these two levels are deemed as the lowest levels of learning under the cognitive domain.

Figure 4.4: SUMMARY OF THE SPREAD OF THE PAPER TWO ITEMS OVER THE COGNITIVE DOMAIN



Analyses of items from the two sets of SSSCE Social Studies Papers reveal that all the items assessed for outcomes in the cognitive domain of students' attainment in the subject. The aggregation of the spread of the items, in both sets of papers, over the levels of the cognitive domain, shows that 57% of them assessed for mere facts or knowledge and at best comprehension. It was also indicative that most of the items that assessed for students' ability to analyse issues were from the Paper Two or Essay type assessments. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that none of the items was designed to assess for learning outcomes in the skills and affective domains of the Social Studies curriculum. The findings, as presented above, show that the SSSCE in Social Studies in Ghana is not adequately assessing all the curriculum goals and objectives of the subject. This inadequacy is to the extent that the assessment of two very important learning domains in the Social Studies curriculum, Skills and Affective, are completely neglected in the SSSCE.

4.4.2c Teachers' Views on the Coverage of the SSSCE Social Studies Items over the Curriculum/Learning Domain

Although the analyses of the SSSCE items were enough to show the extent to which they adequately cover the curriculum goals and objectives of Social Studies, teachers' views, on this, were elicited through the questionnaire. This was done in order to find out whether teachers, on their own, have come to similar conclusions as the analyses of the items revealed. Teachers were thus asked two separate, but related, questions eliciting their responses as to whether they consider the SSSCE to be covering all the goals and objectives of Social Studies and whether the SSSCE is assessing affective outcomes in the subject.

Teachers responded to the first question, which asked them to state their opinion on the statement that the SSSCE does not cover all the goals and objectives of Social Studies, were as follows:

Table 4.3: The SSSCE does not cover all the goals and objectives of Social Studies

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Agree	57	77.0	77.0
Disagree	17	23.0	100.0
Total	74	100.0	

The table above, clearly, shows that majority of the respondents (77%) did agree to the statement that the SSSCE items in Social Studies do not cover all the goals and objectives of the curriculum, as spelt out in the syllabus. Seventeen (17) other respondents, comprising 23% of the total, however disagree with the statement. The majority's view is what has, strongly, been confirmed by the results of the analyses of the SSSCE items, as presented above.

On the second question, which sought to find out about teachers' views as to the statement that the SSSCE does not assess for affective outcomes in Social Studies, they responded as follows:

Table 4.4: The SSSCE does not assess Affective outcomes in Social Studies

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	44	59.5	59.5
	Disagree	30	40.5	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	

In this instance the analysis showed that the majority of respondents, 44 out of 74, and thus representing 59.5% of the total, are of the view that WAEC's SSSCE items in Social Studies do not assess for Affective outcomes of the curriculum. The rest of the respondents (30), representing 40.5% of the total, held the contrary view. On the whole, the results of the two analyses revealed that WAEC's SSSCE in Social Studies is not adequately assessing all the curriculum goals and objectives of the subject.

It is also important to state that though the percentage of respondents who agreed that the SSSCE does not cover all the goals and objectives of the Social Studies curriculum are more than those who agreed that the SSSCE does not assess for affective outcomes (77% as against 59.5%), a crosstabulation of the two variables indicates that these responses are significantly related. The table below illustrates this point.

Table 4.5: The SSSCE does not cover all the goals and objectives of Social Studies * SSSCE does not assess Affective outcomes Crosstabulation

		SSSCE does not assess Affective outcomes		Total
		Agree	Disagree	
SSSCE does not cover all goals and objectives	Agree	38	19	57
	Disagree	6	11	17
Total		44	30	74

Since $P: .021 < .05$, we can conclude that there is a statistically significant relationship between the view of teachers that the SSSCE does not cover all the curriculum goals and objectives of Social Studies and their view that the SSSCE does not assess for affective outcomes in the subject.

A further analysis of the views expressed by the teachers on these two statements in the questionnaire revealed differences, in the relationships between the responses to the two statements, among the teachers on the basis of their subject of specialisation. Specifically, teachers who specialised in Social Studies had the relationship between their responses being statistically significant while those who specialised in other subjects had the relationship between their responses being of no statistical significance. The following table gives a clear picture of the situation, as described above:

Table 4.6: The SSSCE does not cover all goals and objectives of Social Studies * SSSCE does not assess Affective outcomes Crosstabulation

Subject Specialization			SSSCE does not assess Affective outcomes		Total
			Agree	Disagree	
Social Studies	The SSSCE does not cover all goals and objectives	Agree	23	6	29
		Disagree	3	6	9
	Total		26	12	38
Other Subjects	The SSSCE does not cover all goals and objectives	Agree	15	13	28
		Disagree	3	5	8
	Total		18	18	36

With $P: .01 < .05$, we can conclude that teachers who specialised in Social Studies are more likely to agree to the two statements, indicated above, than teachers who specialised in other subjects ($P: .423 > .05$). However, since it was not possible to find the probable reason(s) behind the difference in the responses of these two different groups of teachers, we can only assume that teachers who specialised in other subjects do not know much about what affective outcomes in Social Studies entail. It could also be possible that they did not deal with affective outcomes as identifiable outcomes in their respective areas of specialisation and thus naturally assume that many cognitive questions, by extension or implication, also assess for affective outcomes.

4.4.3 Coverage of the SSSCE Social Studies Items over the Curriculum Content
Analysis of the spread of the 100 Paper One items, sampled, indicates that they were not fairly distributed over the curriculum, in terms of the levels or years into which the curriculum has been divided (see Appendix-I). The following indicates how the 100 Paper One items that were analysed spread over the curriculum years/levels of the subject:

1. Year One – 40 items
2. Year Two – 32 items
3. Year Three – 26 items

As previously indicated, it was not possible to identify any topic for 2 of the items that were analysed. However, considering the fact that Year One has 9 topics as compared with Year Two's 10 topics, one would expect that Year Two would have much of the items coming from its topics. Also, considering the fact that students have 27 topics to prepare on for the external assessment and coupled with the fact that the majority of the questions seem to come from topics they learnt two years ago, one can conclude that much stress was placed on the students by the nature of the assessment. That is, having to remember all that facts they learnt 2 years ago (as the analysis of the items suggest assessment of facts to be the major intent of the SSSCE Paper One) in addition to others will put psychological strains on the students.

Further analysis of these items also revealed that they are, to some extent, fairly distributed over the topics in each year. In the first year curriculum, for instance, it was revealed that two out of the nine topics had 7 items each being identified with them. Another two topics had 5 items each being identified with them and one topic having 6 items coming from it. Of the rest of the topics, three had 2 items each being identified with them and one had 4 items being identified with it. Statistically, it was expected that each topic will have at least 4 items within the 100 items that were analysed, however with majority of the topics (5 out of 9) getting 4 and more items indicates that the items were, to some extent, fairly distributed over the Year One topics in the SSS Social Studies curriculum.

In the case of Years Two and Three, it was clear that the items selected were skewed in favour of certain particular topics at the expense of the others. For instance 'Challenges of Democracy in Ghana', a Year Two topic, had 8 out of the 32 items (i.e. 25%) that were matched with the Year Two topics and another topic; 'The World of Work' was matched with only one item. In Year Three, 'Population Issues' and 'Entrepreneurship' were matched with 8 and 7 items respectively, thus resulting in the two topics getting about 58% of the total items (26) identified with the Year Three topics.

The analysis of the spread of the SSSCE Social Studies Paper Two items over the curriculum years/level involved all the one hundred (100) items that had been set for the period ranging from November, 1999 to November, 2004 and not only the 30 items that were initially analysed for their congruence with the curriculum. This was because the total number of items came up to the same number that was selected for analysis from the Paper One items, coupled with the fact that this particular analysis was not as time consuming and tedious as the analysis done under sections 4.3.1a and 4.3.1b. Furthermore it was seen as an opportunity to present more precise and conclusive findings for this Paper.

The results of the analysis did show the following, which also compares very much with that of the Paper One result, as stated above (see Appendix-J).

1. Year One – 44
2. Year Two – 26
3. Year Three – 26

In this case 4 of the items could not be matched with any of the 27 topics. It can be said with much more certainty at this point that the Paper Two items in the SSSCE Social Studies are unfavourably skewed towards Year One topics, since Year Two, with even 10 topics, had 26 items being matched to it. A further statistical analysis of the results, as presented above, shows that Year One topics have an average of 4.9 items each as against Year Two topics with 2.6 items average and 3.25 items as average for Year Three topics. Comparing these averages with the ideal overall

average of 3.7 items to a topic, indicates the extent to which the items are skewed in favour of Year One topics.

Overall, it can be said that the SSSCE Social Studies items (in both Papers One and Two) are unfavourably skewed towards the Year One curriculum and thus unfairly distributed over the curriculum content. That is, few of the topics had most of the items being identified with them, while many more of these topics only had below average representation of items coming from them.

4.5.1 DISCUSSIONS

It is important to state at this point that the item analyses, above, were done qualitatively, and no attempt was made to subject the analyses or the findings to any inferential statistical test. However, due to random sampling it can be said with a high degree of certainty that majority of WAEC's SSSCE assessment items in Social Studies, especially in Paper One (Multiple Choice/Objectives), are inappropriate and cannot validly assess for any meaningful learning outcomes under the curriculum. The inappropriateness, as has been revealed by the analyses above, is in relation with the items' comparability or congruence with the curriculum goals and objectives of Social Studies in Ghana. The fact that 77% of the Paper One items analysed were only assessing mere facts in the cognitive domain goes to give empirical evidence, and thus much credence to the claim made in the literature, that many of these external assessments are plagued by elemental questions (Bennett, et al, op cit).

Even with the Paper Two items seemingly assessing higher order learning outcomes such as Analysis (60%), one can still conclude that all the SSSCEs in Social Studies are base and narrow. This is because many of the Paper Two items assess mere knowledge and at best comprehension or understanding (37%). Since each paper carries a weight of 50% for the final grading it brings the proportion of these 'base' questions in all the assessment papers to 57%, thus also making them narrow. They are also narrow in the sense that many other important educational goals and learnings, such as synthesis or creativity and decision-making in the cognitive

domain, and all learning outcomes in the skills and affective domains are neglected in this assessment.

The foregoing also implies that the Social Studies SSSCE items, as the analyses revealed, lack balance in respect of the major learning domains as represented in the curriculum and thus the syllabus. This goes to confirm what has been said in the literature that external assessments, by their traditional nature, only assesses knowledge to the exclusion and neglect of higher-order intellectual skills, personal and social competencies and attitudes (see Torrance, 1995; Wilson, 1992). The fact that many of the assessment items in both Papers One and Two, in all the examinations, were related to topics from the first year curriculum also gives an indication as to how imbalanced these assessments are, in respect of their coverage over the curriculum content. The above also goes to confirm WAEC's own assertion that some of their assessment papers did not adequately cover the teaching syllabus (see page 112). Even though this finding was in relation with another subject, the fact that the analyses of the Social Studies items have gone to support it calls these assessment items, the results of students' performances on them, the interpretations given to the results and the decisions made therefrom, into serious question. That is, the validity of the Social Studies SSSCE cannot be assured and thus its results and decisions made from them stand challenged in the face of the above evidence.

The situation where some items (in both Papers One and Two) had no relations with any of the topics or curriculum content, and even where they have, were still found to mismatch the curriculum goals and objectives, gives an indication as to what view informed their inclusion in the SSSCE. To Mager (op cit), the tendency to expand items to cover enough grounds often results in many such items having little or no relation to the objectives being assessed. However, considering the fact that many of the curriculum objectives, as at November 2004, have still not been assessed in the SSSCE Social Studies papers makes this kind of practice illegitimate and thus unacceptable, as it becomes an abuse of the principles of assessment.

This therefore questions the fairness of the Social Studies SSSCE to all students who take it. As already explained, above, the stress and thus the negative consequence such items will bring to the students, having to remember most of the facts the assessment requires them to remember from their first year of study, cannot be disputed. The issue of fairness of the SSSCE becomes even worse when the above is juxtaposed against the fact that many of the items (57% in both Papers) are not asking students to do, exactly, what the curriculum objectives say they should be able to do (Mager, op cit) and also against the fact that they do not cover all outcomes to the appropriate level of demand, as described by the performance criteria or objectives (SQA, 2001). The fact that many of the items are not asking students to do exactly what the curriculum objectives expects them to attain means that they might not be instructed in what the item is demanding. In this case, such an item is said to lose its validity (Haydn, Arthur & Hunt, 2001) and thus becomes inappropriate for assessing learning outcomes.

It must be stressed, at this point, that none of the items analysed could be said to assess students' learning outcomes in the Affective and Skills domains, very important aspects of the Social Studies Curriculum in Ghana. Therefore, since Paper One and Two (multiple choice and essay test respectively) are the only forms of assessment employed by the WAEC in the SSSCE, it can also be said that WAEC do not assess learning outcomes in the affective and skills domain of Social Studies. However this claim is made advisedly, since the SSS Social Studies syllabus itself makes the assessments of these learning outcomes the prerogative of continuous/internal assessment. The questions therefore to ask are upon what consideration was this proposition made in the syllabus and whether the WAEC supports this proposition.

If the consideration of the proposition on the assessment of affective and skills outcomes in Social Studies at the SSSCE was based on the claim that these outcomes are difficult to assess, then why was it shifted to the classroom. Is it, therefore, being said that teachers are better placed to assess these outcomes? If so, will teachers feel obliged to assess and thus teach these objectives/outcomes when the SSSCE, which

only assesses some aspects of the cognitive domain (as revealed by the analysis) contributes 70% to the overall marks and thus grade of students? This question becomes relevant and critical in the face of the claim in the literature that teachers invariably teach-to-the-test. The foregoing brings us to the issue of the impact that external assessments, potentially, have on teachers' classroom practices and thus the curriculum as a whole, which will be dealt with in the next chapter.

Before then, it must be stressed that there is much evidence, as was revealed by the analyses of the assessment items, for one to come to the conclusion that the SSSCE in Social Studies is not adequately assessing all the goals and objectives of the curriculum. This makes the items largely invalid and thus unfair and inappropriate, which mean that they cannot be effectively used to assess students' learning outcomes in SSS Social Studies in Ghana. Thus it can be said, in response to the main research question, that evidence gathered from the analyses of the Social Studies' SSSCE items revealed that they are largely incongruent or incompatible with the curriculum goals and objectives of the subject. In respect of the subsidiary research question, evidence was shown, from the results of the analyses, to the effect that the SSSCE items in Social Studies in Ghana do not measure all the major learning outcomes of the subject, as specified in the official syllabus (CRDD, 1998). Since the findings, as reported in section 4.4.2c above, indicate that the facts above are not lost on SSS Social Studies teachers in Ghana, it will be significant to know the kind of impact the SSSCE does then have on their classroom practices.

5.0.0 IMPACT OF THE SSSCE ON THE CLASSROOM PRACTICES OF SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS IN GHANA.

5.1.0 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to present findings of the study, in relation to three research questions (one major and two subsidiary research questions), and subsequently discuss them within the context of the impact of external assessment on teachers' classroom practices. All the findings, presented in this chapter, resulted from the analyses of data gathered through the study questionnaire and interviews. The chapter also includes findings about whether the SSS Social Studies teachers in Ghana teach-to-the-test, and also whether other factors, apart from the demands of the SSSCE, make them teach-to-the-test. The presentation of the results, in the case of the research questions stated below, is followed by the discussion of the findings.

In order to analyse the data, regarding the kind of impact the SSSCE in Social Studies is having on the classroom practices of teachers of this subject, each of the three research questions under consideration were subdivided to clearly bring out the characteristics or phenomena being verified by the research questions. Thus some of the characteristics of the impact of external assessment on teachers' classroom practices, on which findings are presented, include teachers' selection of instructional objectives and contents, the forms of assessment they employ in the classroom, the curriculum intents/objectives they focus their assessments on, reasons behind teachers' instructional and assessment decisions, whether they think the SSSCE is influencing their instructional and assessment practices and what they perceive to be the level or extent of this influence. These characteristics or elements thus form the themes under which findings of the study, in this particular chapter, are presented and discussed.

It is important to remind readers that the analyses of the data gathered through the questionnaire was done quantitatively, using the SPSS computer software, while the analysis of the interview data was done qualitatively by focusing on content analysis. Thus the findings, resulting from these analyses, are presented in the quantitative

form, using both descriptive and inferential statistics, and qualitatively, by describing and explaining the characteristics of the findings and also using direct quotes of responses to support the main findings. The descriptive statistical representations of the findings are all presented in tabular form. The inferential statistical representation of results, which were used to support inferences made from some of the findings, are crosstabulation counts and the chi-square test results thereof, establishing relationships between two or more of these phenomena/characteristics.

On the whole, major and significant findings are highlighted and inferences drawn from them. These findings thus form the basis of the discussions that follow the presentation of the results. The discussions are done within the context of the literature on the impact of external/high-stakes assessment on teachers and the curriculum. The discussions also try to draw linkages between the findings in this chapter and others, relating to the other research questions.

5.2.0 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

5.2.1 Major Research Question

- ❖ What impact do WAEC's assessment practices have on the classroom practices of Social Studies teachers in Ghana's SSSs?

5.2.2 Subsidiary Research Questions

- Are teachers of Social Studies in Ghana's Senior Secondary Schools teaching to the test?
- If the answer to the question above is positive, are there other factors that make teachers teach to the test?

5.3.1 WHAT THE LITERATURE SAYS

Although the literature on the impact of external/high-stakes assessments on teachers' classroom practices and the curriculum as a whole seems inconclusive, in that little evidence has been presented in support of the claims made (Grant, 2000; Mehrens, 1998), the discourse is still very critical about such impact. Many

professionals and researchers are of the view that there is some evidence and compelling logic that gives an indication about how external assessments influence the curriculum and instruction. It is, for instance, argued that the high-stakes nature of external assessments has universally been found to compel teachers to teach to the test, by administering repeated practice tests, resorting to past assessment papers and coaching students in how to answer specific or types of questions (see page 107 above). In this direction, it is argued that irrespective of teachers' personal opinions about the nature of the external assessment they will still teach-to-the-test if they know that very important decisions are going to be made out of the assessment results.

It is also argued in the literature that teachers' instructional objectives, contents and strategies are made to reflect the contents and objectives of the external assessment, because of other factors that go to aggravate the impact of the high-stakes nature of the assessment. One of such factors is said to be what has been defined as learning by the prevailing assessment culture which thus makes students and other stakeholders, in the educational sector, put pressure on teachers to emphasis the content and objectives of the assessment (Havnes, 2004; Wilhelms, 1971).

Directly related to the foregoing is the issue of accountability, where teachers are, officially or perceptually, held accountable for the performance of their students on the assessment. Teachers' personal dispositions to the performance of their students on the external assessment are also identified as one of the factors that contribute to them teaching to the test. For instance, a study conducted by Rottenberg & Smith (1990) revealed that teachers do feel embarrassed or ashamed when their students perform poorly on the external assessment. This may be due to the fact that teachers experience/assume responsibility for this performance and use it to judge the meaningfulness of their work in the classroom (Cockburn & Haydn, 2004).

Another indication of how external assessments influence the curriculum and instruction is said to be the impact these assessments have on teachers' internal assessment practices. That is, teachers are believed to replicate the external

assessment in their internal assessment practices, by the use of past questions as their guides and practice for students to prepare for the external assessment. In this case it is stated that teachers are unwilling to use the full range of assessment methods available to them (Gross McPhie & Fraenkel, 1970) and thus eventually neglect the other forms of assessment in favour of the traditional form employed in the external assessment.

One of the factors found to have impacted on teachers' assessment practices is the inconsistency in their conception of assessment (Gross, McPhie & Fraenkel, op cit). Other reasons adduced for the unwillingness of teachers to use the full range of assessment methods available to them are that many Social Studies objectives do not readily lend themselves to precise measurement and that many teachers are not familiar with many of the assessment methods and thus do not understand their purpose and use sufficiently well to enable them to comfortably apply these methods. It is also argued that teachers regard assessment as an unfortunate appendage to teaching.

It is further argued in the literature that the influence of external assessment on the classroom practices of teachers impacts negatively on the curriculum, as a whole (see pages 110-112 above). The major argument, in this case, is that since many external assessments, by their traditional methods, do not adequately assess the content and goals and objectives of the curriculum their influence on teachers leads to the narrowing of the curriculum. In other words the structure and intents of external assessment are said to contribute towards the establishment of a teaching/learning context, which is contrary to the declared content, goals and objectives of the curriculum.

As indicated earlier on, many of the claims about the negative impact of external assessment on the curriculum and classroom practices have been made with little or no empirical evidence to support them. Where evidences have been reported, they have been inconclusive, in the sense that some of the reports contradict each other. Whereas some have reported an influence and thus a negative impact of external

assessment on the curriculum and classroom practices, others have reported that there is no such influence (see pages 106-113 above). The differences in the reported findings, though not explained, could have resulted from the differences in the focus of the researches, their context and the particular phenomenon studied. This thus makes it imperative to systemically and critically evaluate whatever relationships exist between external assessment and the curriculum, in order to establish, more conclusively, the kind and extent of impact the former has on the latter.

It even becomes more imperative when findings, reported in chapter four, indicate that external assessment, by its nature, assesses only a narrow part of the curriculum. The findings also indicated that external assessment is plagued by many elemental and base items and sometimes include items that have no relation with the curriculum at all. An assessment of this nature (i.e. assessing students on content, skills or concepts that have not been taught nor have no relation with the curriculum) is said to lose validity (Haydn, Arthur & Hunt, 2001). Furthermore, it will be very significant to establish what impact the external assessment has on the curriculum and classroom practices, especially where teachers have acknowledged the narrowness and thus invalidity of the SSSCE in Social Studies in Ghana (see page 175 above).

5.4.0 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

5.4.1 Assessment Techniques Employed by SSS Social Studies Teachers in Ghana.

The purpose of this section was to find out the extent to which Social Studies teachers in the Senior Secondary Schools in Ghana use all the assessment techniques recommended by syllabus of the subject (CRDD, 1998). In this respect two items were placed in the questionnaire to gather this information from the respondents. The first item elicited from the respondents whether they are actually familiar with the methods/techniques of assessment that have been recommended to them in the syllabus. Their response to this question is as follows:

Table 5.1: Are you familiar with the Assessment Methods in the Syllabus?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very	63	85.1	85.1
	Barely	10	13.5	98.6
	No	1	1.4	100.0
Total		74	100.0	

The above table reveals that the majority (about 85%) of teachers surveyed indicated that they were very familiar with the all the assessment methods that have been recommended for assessment of learning outcomes in the syllabus. When this researcher sought to find out from the teachers the extent to which they use some of the recommended assessment methods their responses were indicated as follows:

Table 5.2: Do you use Essay Test in Assessing Learners?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Many Occasions	55	74.3	74.3
	Few Occasions	17	23.0	97.3
	Total	72	97.3	
Missing	0	2	2.7	100.0
Total		74	100.0	

Table 5.3: Do you use Multiple Choice Items in Assessing Learners?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Many Occasions	54	73.0	73.0
	Few Occasions	18	24.3	97.3
	Total	72	97.3	
Missing	0	2	2.7	100.0
Total		74	100.0	

Table 5.4: Do you use Projects in Assessing Learners?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Many Occasions	15	20.3	20.3
	Few Occasions	49	66.2	86.5
	Not at all	5	6.8	93.2
	Total	69	93.2	
Missing	0	5	6.8	100.0
Total		74	100.0	

Table 5.5: Do you use Observations in Assessing Learners?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Many Occasions	28	37.8	37.8
	Few Occasions	31	41.9	79.7
	Not at all	8	10.8	90.5
	Total	67	90.5	
Missing	0	7	9.5	100.0
Total		74	100.0	

Table 5.6: Do you use Attitudinal Scales in Assessing Learners?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Many Occasions	18	24.3	24.3
	Few Occasions	27	36.5	60.8
	Not at all	16	21.6	82.4
	Total	61	82.4	
Missing	0	13	17.6	100.0
Total		74	100.0	

Table 5.7: Do you use Interviews in Assessing Learners?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Many Occasions	21	28.4	28.4
	Few Occasions	33	44.6	73.0
	Not at all	14	18.9	91.9
	Total	68	91.9	
Missing	0	6	8.1	100.0
Total		74	100.0	

The findings, as presented in tables 5.2 to 5.7, indicate that the majority of respondents claimed they, on many occasions, employ essay and multiple choice items (74.3% and 73% respectively) whenever they are assessing their students. The opposite was rather the case for the other/alternative forms of assessments (Projects, Observations, Attitudinal Scales and Interviews) where only a few of the respondents claimed they often use them. Many of the respondents rather indicated that they use these kinds of assessment on few occasions. The foregoing reveals that even though most of the teachers, in the study, claimed awareness of and familiarity with all the assessment techniques recommended in the syllabus, they more often employ the traditional forms of assessment (Essay and Multiple Choice) than they do use the alternative forms of assessment in assessing their students.

The responses captured above were largely confirmed by the responses given by a group of these teachers who were interviewed. In this case the teacher interviewees were asked to mention the methods of assessment they employ in assessing learning outcomes of their students in Social Studies. The responses gathered could be placed in three (3) broad categories, which were so done in order to clarify the analysis. The categories are as follows:

- i. **Traditional Methods:** This includes Multiple Choice only, Essay only or both.
- ii. **Traditional plus Non Recorded Alternative Methods:** These, in addition to the traditional form, include other alternative methods of assessment like Observation, Interview, Project, Oral Reporting and Dramatisation, but which, according to the teachers, are not included in the final grading of students' performances.
- iii. **Traditional plus Alternative Methods:** In this case, teachers involved insisted that they award marks and include them in the final end-of-term grades of the students.

In respect of the above categorisations, 12 out of the 20 interviewees (60%) said they always employ the traditional methods only. For instance, one teacher states categorically, "I use the essay and multiple choice questions". Another teacher also

said, "... the methods I use are actually based on the methods of assessment by the West African Examinations Council".

Five (i.e. 25%) of the interviewees stated that though they sometimes use other methods apart from the traditional methods of assessment, they do not award marks or scores for such assessments and thus do not include them in the end-of-term grading of the students. Typically, an interviewee in this category states,

"A few observations, which might not be recorded because the assessment portfolio does not give room for such kind of assessment. Essays are given occasionally, but you cannot do much because of the size of the classes. However, with the objective test... the setting is difficult but the marking is easier, so considering the number, most of the assessment..."

Another interviewee, when asked about the methods she uses in assessing her students said, "We apply as many as we can. We do multiple choice, we do oral. We do observation" However, when she was asked whether marks are awarded for students' performances on the alternative forms of assessment and incorporated into their final grades, her response was an emphatic 'No'.

"In assessing the students, we use the essay type, the multiple choice...at times we ask them to dramatise. After you've taught something, you ask them to dramatise and if they are able to do that you award marks for their efforts". The above statement was made by one of the interviewees and typifies the responses of the three (3) interviewees who insisted that they use other methods of assessment, apart from the traditional ones, and subsequently award marks for the performances exhibited by the students.

The findings described above (from both the questionnaire and the interview) reveal that majority of teachers (i.e. those sampled) of Social Studies, in the SSS in Ghana, either do not use any of the alternative/authentic forms of assessment at all or rarely use them. Even for the majority of those who claimed to be using these methods, students' performances on these assessments are of no consequence as they do not award any mark for such performances. This clearly shows that they do not attach any importance to such methods of assessment, so far as students' academic records

are concerned. On the other hand, responses of teachers, on both the questionnaire and the interview, did reveal that for most teachers the only form of assessment of importance to them in assessing and grading students' learning outcomes is the traditional form of assessment (Essay and Multiple Choice Items).

5.4.2 The Congruence/Compatibility of SSS Social Studies Teachers' Assessment Practices with the Curriculum Goals and Objectives.

As part of the aim of establishing the classroom practices of SSS Social Studies teachers in Ghana, the study sought to find out whether the objectives/intents they claim to be assessing are congruent with and adequately cover the goals and objectives of the curriculum. Teachers in the study were thus asked to indicate the extent to which they make some of the learning outcomes of the subject the focus or emphasis of their assessments of students. The following tables reveal how they responded to some of the questions in this direction:

Table 5.8: Do you emphasise Knowledge Recall in Assessment Tasks?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Mostly	50	67.6	67.6
	Sometimes	16	21.6	89.2
	Not at all	2	2.7	91.9
	Total	68	91.9	
Missing	0	6	8.1	100.0
Total		74	100.0	

Table 5.9: Do you emphasise Application of Knowledge in Assessment Tasks?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Mostly	64	86.5	86.5
	Sometimes	9	12.2	98.6
	Total	73	98.6	
Missing	0	1	1.4	100.0
Total		74	100.0	

Table 5.10: Do you emphasise the Ability to Analyse Issues in Assessment Tasks?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Mostly	63	85.1	87.5
	Sometimes	9	12.2	100.0
	Total	72	97.3	
Missing	0	2	2.7	
Total		74	100.0	

Table 5.11: Do you emphasise Problem-Solving Skills in Assessment Tasks?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Mostly	62	83.8	83.8
	Sometimes	10	13.5	97.3
	Total	72	97.3	
Missing	0	2	2.7	100.0
Total		74	100.0	

Table 5.12: Do you emphasise Thinking Skills in Assessment Tasks?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Mostly	62	83.8	83.8
	Sometimes	10	13.5	97.3
	Total	72	97.3	
Missing	0	2	2.7	100.0
Total		74	100.0	

Table 5.13: Do you emphasise Decision-Making Skills in Assessment Tasks?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Mostly	45	60.8	60.8
	Sometimes	21	28.4	89.2
	Not at all	3	4.1	93.2
	Total	69	93.2	
Missing	0	5	6.8	100.0
Total		74	100.0	

Table 5.14: Do you emphasise Attitudinal Dispositions in Assessment Tasks?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Mostly	34	45.9	45.9
	Sometimes	29	39.2	85.1
	Not at all	3	4.1	89.2
	Total	66	89.2	
Missing	0	8	10.8	100.0
Total		74	100.0	

Table 5.15: Do you emphasise Disposition to Action in Assessment Tasks?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Mostly	23	31.1	31.1
	Sometimes	29	39.2	70.3
	Not at all	7	9.5	79.7
	Total	59	79.7	
Missing	0	15	20.3	100.0
Total		74	100.0	

The tables above reveal that the majority of teachers mostly emphasise knowledge recall, knowledge application, ability to analyse issues, problem-solving, thinking skills and decision-making skills in their internal assessment tasks. However few of the teachers indicated that they mostly emphasise attitudinal dispositions and disposition to action of students in their internal assessment tasks. This does not mean that the majority of the teachers do not emphasise these outcomes at all, as they did indicate that they sometimes emphasise them in their assessment tasks. On the whole, the findings above do suggest that teachers of Social Studies in the SSS in Ghana use assessment items that adequately cover the gamut of the goals and objectives of the subject. This is confirmed by the responses of teachers to two other questions which were asked in the questionnaire, in relation to their assessment practices. The tables below show how the teachers responded to the aforementioned questions.

Table 5.16: Do your Assessments Items adequately cover all the goals and objectives of Social Studies?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	45	60.8	60.8
No	29	39.2	100.0
Total	74	100.0	

Table 5.17: Do you assess for Affective Outcomes?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	57	77.0	77.0
No	17	23.0	100.0
Total	74	100.0	

Tables 5.16 and 5.17, above, indicate that majority of teachers of Social Studies in Ghanaian SSSs claim they assess for affective outcomes in their students and that their assessments adequately cover all the goals and objectives of the subject. However, a Crosstabulation of the two sets of responses revealed that there is no statistically significant relationship between them ($P: .06 > .05$). That is, the findings do not mean that a teacher who claims s/he assesses all goals and objectives necessarily assesses affective outcomes also and vice versa. The table below depicts this finding.

Table 5.18: Do your Assessment Items adequately cover all the goals and objectives? * Do you assess for affective outcomes? Crosstabulation

		Do you assess for affective outcomes?		Total
		Yes	No	
Do your assessments adequately cover all goals and objectives?	Yes	38	7	45
	No	19	10	29
Total		57	17	74

It is important to note that the responses of teachers to, especially, the last two questions above indicate congruence between teachers' assessment practices and the

curriculum goals and objectives of Social Studies. However, analysis of their responses to a similar question during the interview did not reveal any evidence to suggest congruence between teachers' assessment practices and the curriculum goals and objectives.

Specifically, 10 out of the 20 interview respondents (i.e. 50%) said they only assess for Cognitive outcomes in their students, while two (2) interviewees said they do focus their assessment intents only on the Affective domain and one person claimed that the focus of his assessments of students are on the Skills domain only. Three (3) of the interviewees said they assess for Cognitive and Affective outcomes only; two (2) interviewees stated that they assess for Cognitive, Affective and Skills outcomes, and one interviewee each claimed to be emphasising Affective and Skills domains and Cognitive and Skills domains respectively.

For instance, one of the 10 interviewees who stated that they assess for outcomes in the Cognitive domain only said,

“I expect my students to be able to recall the information given. They should be able to play back something. Then they are also expected to apply the concepts, or the topics treated in some situations. They are also supposed to organise... So these are the behaviours I expect: they should be able to recall and they should be able to apply all that they have learnt.”

That is, he expects his students to exhibit the ability to remember whatever knowledge they acquired during the instructional process, recall and apply them to the demands of the assessment item. Most of them were rather straightforward by saying that their main focus in assessing students lies in the cognitive domain.

The respondent who said he focuses only on the skills domain said, “In fact, we are after the skills, especially”. On the other hand, one of the respondents who claimed that their assessment intent is mostly to look out for affective outcomes in students stated, “I most of the time look at the affective side of things”. He went on to elaborate by saying “Well, if after my lesson I do not see any change in them then it means what I have done is a waste; I have wasted my time. So definitely, I should see some changes in their lifestyle”. The other interviewee put his opinion thus,

“Personally, I look out for attitudinal change. That is going to have a telling effect on their future”.

The teacher who claimed that his assessments emphasise the affective and skills domains stated,

“I look out for things like having values, for things like whether they have acquired the ability to think: not to give answers, straight forward answers, but to think and give answers and explain why they feel their answers can work if even the answer is wrong, so that I can see the ability of the student thinking to solve problems”.

Further quantitative analysis of the above response categories indicates that 16 or 80% of the respondents emphasise cognitive outcomes only or cognitive outcomes in combination with either the affective outcomes, skills outcomes or both. Eight or 40% of the respondents focus their assessment intents on affective outcomes or in various combinations with the other outcomes, while 5 of them indicated that they emphasise the skills outcomes or in various combinations with the other outcomes. The analysis also revealed that only 2 of the teachers interviewed (10%) employ assessment practices that could be said to be congruent with the curriculum goals and objectives of Social Studies in Ghana. The other 18 interviewees (90%) employ assessment practices that by their own admission do not cover the whole breadth of learning outcomes under the Social Studies curriculum, and thus can not be said to be congruent with the curriculum goals and objectives of the subject.

The above analysis of the interview responses clearly indicates that what teachers claimed to be their outcomes of emphasis, in assessment, in the interview contradicts what they had indicated in the questionnaire. That is whereas only 2 out of the 20 interviewees indicated that their assessment practices cover the gamut of the curriculum goals and objectives, the majority of them (about 61%) had claimed in the questionnaire that their assessment items adequately cover all the goals and objectives of Social Studies. In this case, it could safely be said that the findings, relating to whether SSS Social Studies teachers in Ghana are assessing to adequately cover all curriculum goals and objectives, are inconclusive.

This issue would have best been resolved if samples of teachers' assessment items were collected for independent evaluation to verify whether they truly assess for the outcomes they claimed to be assessing for. However this was not the case, as most of the teachers were reluctant in handing over their past assessment papers for this purpose. The reason for the reluctance of teachers to hand over samples of their assessment items for evaluation can also be placed within the context of accountability. That is, these teachers perhaps feared that the results of the evaluation will be used to judge their professional competence. They were therefore not confident about these assessment items to allow them to be used in evaluating their competence. This also relates to teachers' claim that they believe their professional colleagues are using the performance of their students at the SSSCE to evaluate their competence since the researcher is also a professional colleague who is known to many of the teachers sampled. They therefore might have felt that an unfavourable report resulting from the evaluation of their assessment items, coming from a PhD thesis, would cast a slur on their professional competence.

Despite the impediment to verify teachers' claims, certain factors may allow the acceptance of the findings from the interview, as better representing the views of the teachers in this case, over the findings from the questionnaire. First, the conditions attached to each of the data elicitation methods might have influenced how the teachers responded. It is possible that these teachers might have been 'forced' to select the responses in the questionnaire, because they were provided (see Burns, 2000) and thus the responses may not represent an accurate reflection of their assessment practices. In fact, it could rather be a reflection of what they believe assessments to entail since what people believe in is not necessarily what they practice (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The interview responses, on the other hand, could be a truer reflection of their assessment practices, because they had the opportunity of the question being further explained and were able to construct the responses themselves (see Schober & Conrad, 1997).

Secondly, some of the teachers who had indicated earlier in the questionnaire that they were assessing for affective outcomes had subsequently stated in the interview

that they assess for only cognitive outcomes. Last but not the least is the assessment techniques teachers claimed to employ to assess their students in the classroom. It was established through the analysis of the interview responses (see pages 197 to 198 above) that the majority of the teachers only use the traditional form of assessment, which most often focuses on cognitive outcomes only. The majority of the few teachers, who claimed that they have been assessing for the affective outcomes in Social Studies also added that they do not award marks for them and thus do not include them in grading students. This therefore suggest that even where teachers have indicated that they assess for affective outcomes, as their questionnaire responses indicated, they still do not make use of students' performance on these outcomes in awarding final grades thus reinforcing the evidence that teachers only emphasise cognitive outcomes in their internal assessment tasks.

5.4.3 The Impact of the SSSCE on Social Studies Teachers' Classroom Practices

To enable us arrive at a comprehensive picture of how the above phenomenon exist in the field, at least in Ghana, two direct items were placed in the questionnaire to elicit teachers' responses as to the extent of influence of the SSSCE on their instructional and assessment practices in the schools. Other indirect, but related, items were also included, in order to support the findings revealed by responses to the first two questions. The results from the analysis of teachers' responses to these questions are presented as follows:

Table 5.19: Is your Teaching Influenced by the SSSCE?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Many Occasions	57	77.0	77.0
Few Occasions	14	18.9	95.9
Not at all	3	4.1	100.0
Total	74	100.0	

The results of the analysis of teachers' responses, as indicated in the table above, reveal that an overwhelming majority (about 96%) of the respondents indicated that

WAEC's SSSCEs in Social Studies do have an influence on their teaching, with 77% of them indicating that such influence does occur on many occasions or most of the time. Only about 4% of the respondents held that they are not, in any way, influenced by the nature of the SSSCE.

Table 5.20: Do the SSSCE Items Influence your own Assessment Items?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid All the time	22	29.7	29.7
Occasionally	47	63.5	93.2
Not at all	5	6.8	100.0
Total	74	100.0	

Here again, almost all the teachers in the survey (about 93%) indicated that the SSSCE items have an influence on the construction or selection of their own internal assessment items. However, only about 30% of the respondents claimed that the influence of the SSSCE items on their internal assessment items occur all the time and the majority (63.5%) claimed rather that they are influenced occasionally. The findings above do clearly reveal that the nature of the SSSCE items, in Social Studies, do have an influence on the nature of teachers' own internal assessments items, one way or the other.

A comparison of the statistics for the two questions shows that the number of respondents who said the SSSCE is, on many occasions, having an influence on their teaching (57 in all) are much more than those who said this assessment is having an influence, all the time, on the way they assess their students (22 in number). It may therefore appear that the way these teachers teach has no relationship with the way they assess. However that is not the case, as a Crosstabulation of the two set of responses revealed a strong relationship between them. This fact is underscored by the table below.

Table 5.21: Is your teaching influenced by the SSSCE? * Do the SSSCE Items influence your own assessment Items? Crosstabulation

		Does WAEC/SSSCE Items influence your own assessment Items?			Total
		All the time	Occasionally	Not at all	
Is your teaching influenced by the SSSCE?	Many Occasions	20	36	1	57
	Few Occasions	1	10	3	14
	Not at all	1	1	1	3
Total		22	47	5	74

Since the chi-square tests of the above crosstabulation indicated $P: .01 < .05$, we can safely conclude that there is a statistically significant relationship between the influence of the SSSCE on the instructional practices and the influence of the SSSCE on the assessment practices of SSS Social Studies teachers in Ghana. In other words, the extent to which the SSSCE influences teachers' instructional practices is strongly related to the extent to which it influences their assessment practices. The above also suggests that teachers' assessment practices or intents are strongly related to their instructional practices or intents, as they are both influenced by the SSSCE.

The above findings compared accurately with the responses of the teachers to other related items on the questionnaire. For instance when teachers were asked to indicate their views on what the main purpose(s) of classroom instruction should be, the majority of them (about 64%) strongly agreed that the main purpose of their instructions is to ensure that students do well at the SSSCE. Although the respondents also did agree to the importance of other instructional purposes, the percentage that strongly agreed to the students doing well at the SSSCE was clearly higher than the percentages that strongly agreed to the other purposes. The following tables give a clear picture of the foregoing.

Table 5.22: Instructional Focus: Students should be able to do well at the SSSCE

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	47	63.5	63.5
	Agree	27	36.5	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	

Table 5.23: Instructional Focus: Students should be able to Acquire Facts

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	34	45.9	45.9
	Agree	37	50.0	95.9
	Disagree	1	1.4	97.3
	Total	72	97.3	
Missing	0	2	2.7	100.0
Total		74	100.0	

These responses notwithstanding, when teachers' views were elicited as to the ideal instructional practice, their responses were markedly different from what they have intimated earlier as their instructional practices. The tables below illustrate this finding.

Table 5.24: No need to focus on goals and objectives that are not assessed at the SSSCE

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	14	18.9	18.9
	Disagree	60	81.1	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	

Table 5.25: Limit teaching to only assessed goals and objectives

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	8	10.8	10.8
	Disagree	66	89.2	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	

Tables 5.24 and 5.25 show that majority of the respondents disagreed with the views that there is no need to focus one’s instructional practices on curriculum goals and objectives that are not usually assessed in the SSSCE which would limit teaching to only goals and objectives that are assessed (81% and 89% respectively). Instead, about 99% of them were of the opinion that all goals and objectives should be covered under Social Studies instruction (see Table 5.26, below).

Table 5.26: Social Studies instruction should cover all goals and objectives

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	73	98.6	98.6
	Disagree	1	1.4	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	

The findings from Tables 5.24 to 5.26 suggest that teachers’ classroom practices are influenced by the nature of the SSSCE not because they feel it is the natural and best thing to do, but because such influence seems to be a powerful and constraining one and thus they have no option than to allow that to happen. This fact is further supported by teachers’ responses to similar questions in the interview.

When teachers were asked about the extent of influence or impact the SSSCE in Social Studies was having on their choice of assessment methods or items, 15 out of the 20 teachers interviewed (i.e. 75%) said it was having a “great” or “significant” impact on the way they assess their students. One interviewee mentioned that though the nature of the SSSCE does affect the way he assesses his students, the influence is not significant. On the other hand, 4 of the interviewees claimed there was no such influence or impact of the SSSCE on the way they conduct their assessments.

In relation to the above findings, one of the interviewees, who said that WAEC’s mode of assessment has a great impact on the way he assesses his students, states,

“Invariably it has a great impact, because you would want to assess the children, but the interest in the final analysis lies on whether they were able to pass... and even now that they are having this grading system of schools, where the emphasis is on the number of students that have passed, it is not how well you have assessed

them, using other methods, but how they could pass. So, you are sometimes forced to tailor it along the WAEC assessment”.

Another respondent in the same group as the above states,

“The influence of WAEC comes in where at the end of the day the public is expecting good output from you. The school, public opinion, politicians... so at times the method of assessing from WAEC influence ours, so that you don't have problems with society”.

And a third respondent in this group states,

“In view of the fact that they issue certificate to students at the end of the programme, we are compelled to go according to their assessment methods. So that's how we are influenced, because sometimes we measure our efficiency or capabilities of the teacher by the success of the students. When it comes to that then we have to tow the procedures being affected by WAEC”.

It is important to note that all the respondents quoted above placed emphasis on the influence WAEC's assessment mode is having on their own assessments, and on the ability of their students to do well at the SSSCE. This suggests that teachers tend to coach or prepare their students towards the SSSCE; by designing their assessments in line with it to enable their students to have a feel of its nature. However, words like “forced” and “compelled”, among others, that were used by these teachers in their responses indicate that they might not have naturally been influenced in such a way, and also suggest that the impact of WAEC's assessment modes is a constraining one.

It follows from the above inference that given the chance, teachers may use other methods of assessment to assess comprehensively their students' learning outcomes. Indication of the foregoing is given in some of the responses of both those who said there were no such influences and those who said that they are being influenced. For instance one of the interviewees, who said that the nature of WAEC's assessment has no influence on the way he assesses his students stated, “No, because... most of the time I keep on telling them I am not training them to pass examinations alone, but I am preparing them for the future”.

Significantly, a respondent who had said that the nature of WAEC's assessment has an influence on the way he also assesses, went on further to say that,

“sometimes we go beyond that because where we realise that there are some issues that need to be catalogued or maybe certain information that we need to get from the students, we use other methods that are not necessarily used by the WAEC, and that also elicit the students’ responses”.

Another respondent also said that though the basic goal to him is for students to pass the SSSCE, he believes that teachers must use other means to get extra information about students’ learning outcomes despite the fact that these are not considered by the WAEC.

On the question of whether the nature or demands of the SSSCE is determining what teachers should or should not teach in the classroom, the responses given by the interviewees are very reminiscent of teachers’ responses on the questionnaire. Specifically, 16 of the 20 interviewees (representing 80% of the total) affirmed that the nature of the SSSCE is determining what they, as Social Studies teachers, should or should not teach in the classroom. Four (4) of the interviewees (i.e. 20% of the total) on the other hand said the nature of the SSSCE was not a determinant in what they do or do not teach in the classroom.

One of the interviewees among the 80% indicated above, specifically, stated that “It does, it does for most teachers; including myself”. To show the extent of influence that the SSSCE has on teachers’ instructional decisions, another teacher in the above group responded thus, “Yes, to a very great extent. However I try to inculcate the other goals; the attitudinal change and the rest, which WAEC does not assess, in my teaching”. Yet another puts his succinctly as “That determines. It should not be so, but it is”.

Of the four (4) interviewees who claimed that the SSSCE is not determining what they teach in the classroom, one stated clearly as follows: “No, I will not say so, because in most cases my teaching has been guided by the syllabus... my teaching over the years has not been geared towards WAEC. I make sure that everything I do is in the syllabus”. Perhaps what more explains the position of these four (4) interviewees is captured by this response, “You know, we are preparing students for

life and not for examinations, so that is my main aim. So whether there is WAEC or no WAEC, I go by the Social Studies syllabus”.

Further in the interview, teachers were asked to state which of the two WAEC’s assessment demands and the Goals and Objectives of the Social Studies curriculum has the most influence or impact on their instructional decisions. In response, 12 interviewees (i.e. 60%) said it was WAEC’s assessment demands, 6 (representing 30%) said it was the curriculum goals and objectives of the subject and the 2 others said it was both the curriculum goals and objectives and WAEC’s assessment demands that are influencing their instructional practices.

The above findings show that the majority of teachers interviewed hold the view that the way WAEC assesses SSS students in Social Studies has a significant influence on the way they teach the subject in the classroom. The findings, as revealed above, confirm the findings from the analysis of the questionnaire data on a similar question (see figures in Table 5.18 above) and thus also confirm the view that in an environment of high-stakes external assessment, teachers mostly teach-to-the-test.

On the whole, the findings from the interview questions confirm those of the questionnaire in relation to the major research question. That is, the method and scope of WAEC’s assessments in Social Studies at the SSS have a significant influence or impact on teachers’ classroom practices. The analysis also revealed that at least in respect of teachers’ assessment practices, the impact of the SSSCE on teachers is a constraining one.

5.4.4 Other Reasons/Factors behind Teachers’ Instructional and Assessment Decisions.

The aim of this section is to find out whether the impact of the SSSCE on the classroom practices of teachers is solely as a result of its high-stakes nature or whether other factors exist to aggravate or mitigate this impact. In other words what other circumstances or situations exist to either aggravate or mitigate teachers’ instructional and assessment practices as a result of the influence of the SSSCE? In

order to find answers to the above questions certain assumptions (some based on findings from previous researches) were put forward, as possible factors that may influence teachers' classroom practices. These include issues of accountability (however real or perceived) and teachers' own disposition and belief in their capabilities to understand and translate curriculum goals and objectives into instructional and assessment strategies in the classroom.

With particular reference to the questionnaire, items were included to elicit from teachers whether their classroom decisions are predicated on their perceived capability to design assessment tools for affective outcomes and their opinion about the possibility of assessing affective outcomes in Social Studies. Some of the items were also designed to find out whether teachers perceive any form of pressure to teach according to a particular way, where that pressure may be coming from, whether they feel their effectiveness as teachers is being evaluated according to their students' performance, and who might be doing that kind of evaluation. Last but not the least, an item was also added to verify whether they feel constrained to teach in a particular direction because of the perceived pressure.

Thus on the question of whether it is possible to effectively assess affective outcomes or not, teachers responded in the questionnaire as follows:

Table 5.27: Not possible to assess Affective outcomes in Social Studies

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	21	28.4	28.4
	Disagree	51	68.9	97.3
	Total	72	97.3	
Missing	System	2	2.7	100.0
Total		74	100.0	

As revealed in the table above, the majority of teachers (about 69%) disagreed with the statement that it is not possible to assess for affective outcomes in Social Studies. This means that many of the teachers surveyed believe that it is possible to assess for affective outcomes in Social Studies and thus implies that the focus of teachers' assessments on the cognitive domain, as has been established above, is not due to

any belief that they might hold about the impossibility of assessing affective outcomes in Social Studies (at least as far as analysis in the above table tells us). In other words, the fact that teachers are not using the full range of assessment methods, recommended by the SSS Social Studies syllabus, is not due to a perception of the inability to assess affective outcomes. Other factors are rather at play.

When teachers were asked in the questionnaire whether they consider themselves capable of designing assessment tools to assess for all the learning outcomes in Social Studies, 61 teachers (about 82%) indicated that they consider themselves capable of designing or constructing items that can adequately assess all the curriculum goals and objectives of Social Studies in Ghana. Eleven (i.e. about 15%) thought they were barely capable of designing items that can adequately assess all the learning outcomes of Social Studies, whereas one person felt he or she did not have that capability. Thus teachers' inability to assess the full range of curriculum goals and objectives cannot be assigned to any notion that they are incapable of designing assessment items or techniques to assess all these goals and objectives. It can therefore be said at this point that the inability or reluctance of SSS Social Studies teachers in Ghana to teach and assess the gamut of the curriculum goals and objectives of the subject is still due to the influence/impact of the SSSCE on their classroom practices.

On the assumption that perceived or real issues of accountability can have an impact on the instructional and assessment decisions teachers make in the classroom, the following responses were provided by the respondents to some of the questions raised in the questionnaire:

Table 5.28: Any Pressure to devote more time on the Preparation of Students for the SSSCE?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	64	86.5	86.5
No	10	13.5	100.0
Total	74	100.0	

Table 5.29: Sources of Pressure: GES?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strong	51	68.9	68.9
	Weak	12	16.2	85.1
	None	1	1.4	86.5
	Total	64	86.5	
Missing	0	10	13.5	100.0
Total		74	100.0	

Table 5.30: Sources of Pressure: Parents?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strong	52	70.3	70.3
	Weak	10	13.5	83.8
	None	2	2.7	86.5
	Total	64	86.5	
Missing	0	10	13.5	100.0
Total		74	100.0	

Table 5.31: Sources of Pressure: Students?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strong	58	78.4	78.4
	Weak	4	5.4	83.8
	None	2	2.7	86.5
	Total	64	86.5	
Missing	0	10	13.5	100.0
Total		74	100.0	

Table 5.32: Sources of Pressure: Own Conscience?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strong	61	82.4	82.4
	None	4	5.4	87.8
	Total	65	87.8	
Missing	0	9	12.2	100.0
Total		74	100.0	

Table 5.28, above, revealed that the majority of teachers (about 87%) believe that there is pressure on them to devote much more of their instructional time to preparing students in order for them to do well at the SSSCE. The teachers then went on to identify the Ghana Education Service (GES), Parents, Students and their own conscience, as places where this pressure is strong (see Tables 5.29 to 5.32 above).

A related question to the issue of pressure was whether, as teachers, they feel their professional effectiveness/competence is evaluated according to the performance of their students at the SSSCE. The table below shows the responses given by the teachers surveyed.

Table 5.33: Are Students' Performances used to evaluate you?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	71	95.9	95.9
	No	3	4.1	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	

As revealed in the table above, the overwhelming majority of teachers surveyed (96%) believed that the performances of their students at the SSSCE are used to evaluate their effectiveness or competence as professionals. The majority, in each case, then went on to identify their School Heads and their own selves as engaging in this evaluation all the time. Tables 5.34 and 5.35, below, illustrate this point.

Table 5.34: Evaluator: Head of School?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	All the time	53	71.6	71.6
	Sometimes	17	23.0	94.6
	Total	70	94.6	
Missing	0	4	5.4	100.0
Total		74	100.0	

Table 5.35: Evaluator: Self?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	All the time	40	54.1	54.1
	Sometimes	21	28.4	82.5
	Not at all	4	5.4	87.8
	Total	65	87.8	
Missing	0	9	12.2	100.0
Total		74	100.0	

It is important to state that most of the respondents identified the GES, Heads of Schools, the Local Community, Parent, Students, Colleague and themselves to be those engaging in some kind of evaluation of their professional competence and effectiveness by using the performances of their students on the SSSCE (see pages 389-391 of Appendix-L). Whereas these teachers believed that school heads and themselves are engage in this kind of evaluation all the time, they are of the opinion that the other stakeholders identified above engage in the evaluation sometimes rather than always.

Teachers (those sampled) have made two claims in the findings reported above that are supported by the finding presented in the table below. First, is the claim that their conscience exerts much pressure on them, by making them devote more of their instructional time in preparing their students to do well at the SSSCE. Secondly, these teachers claim that they always resort to self evaluation of their competence and effectiveness, by using the performances of their students at the SSSCE.

Table 5.36: Do you feel Ashamed if your students perform poorly at the SSSCE?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	To a great extent	55	74.3	74.3
	To a less extent	15	20.3	94.6
	Not at all	2	2.7	97.3
	Total	72	97.3	
Missing	0	2	2.7	100.0
Total		74	100.0	

Many of the teachers (about 55%) also indicated that they are under great pressure to teach only those content areas covered by the SSSCE because of the shame they usually feel when their students perform poorly at the SSSCE. The tables below illustrate this point.

Table 5.37: Under pressure to teach only WAEC content?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	To a great extent	41	55.4	55.4
	To a less extent	15	20.3	75.7
	Not at all	16	21.6	97.3
	Total	72	97.3	
Missing	0	2	2.7	100.0
Total		74	100.0	

Table 5.38: Do you feel Ashamed if your Students perform poorly at the SSSCE?

*** Under pressure to teach only WAEC content? Crosstabulation**

		Under pressure to teach only WAEC content?		Total
		To a great extent	Minimal to Non-existent	
Do you feel ashamed if students perform poorly?	To a great extent	37	18	55
	Minimal to Non-existent	4	13	17
Total		41	31	72

Note: For the purpose of achieving greater cell counts for the crosstabulation, the 'Not at all' values were collapsed into that of the 'To a less extent values' to form the values for the 'Minimal to Non-existent'. This, however, did not detract from the findings revealed by the crosstabulation (see Appendix-L).

Since the chi-square tests of the crosstabulation above revealed that $P: .001 < .01$, we can conclude that there is a statistically significant relationship between teachers feeling ashamed of the poor performances of their students at the SSSCE and their being under pressure to teach only those content areas covered by the SSSCE. In other words, teachers of Social Studies in the SSSs in Ghana are under pressure to teach the curriculum contents covered by the SSSCE, because of the shame they will feel should their students perform poorly on this external examination.

Table 5.39: Constrained to match Classroom Practices to WAEC's Assessment?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	To a great extent	51	68.9	68.9
	To a less extent	10	13.5	82.4
	Not at all	12	16.2	98.6
	Total	73	98.6	
Missing	0	1	1.4	100.0
Total		74	100.0	

The table above reveals that the majority of respondents (about 69%) hold that they are much constrained to match their classroom practices to the SSSCE's coverage. Furthermore, this constraint is established to be resulting from the pressure brought to bear on teachers to teach only the curriculum content covered by the SSSCE. A crosstabulation of these two variables confirmed that there is a strong relationship between them ($P: .000 < .01$).

Table 5.40: Under pressure to teach only WAEC content? * Constrained to match Classroom Practices to WAEC's Assessment? Crosstabulation

		Constrained to match classroom practices to WAEC's assessment?		Total
		To a great extent	Minimal to Non-existent	
Under pressure to teach only WAEC content?	To a great extent	39	2	41
	Minimal to Non-existent	11	20	31
Total		50	22	72

Note: The 'Not at all' cells were collapsed into that of the 'To a less extent' to achieve greater cell counts. The recoding however did not affect the results of the crosstabulation in any way (see Appendix-L).

When other variables within the accountability assumptions were crosstabulated with the constraint faced by teachers to match their classroom practices to the coverage of the SSSCE, the subsequent chi-square tests revealed strong relationships between each of them. The following tables illustrate the aforementioned findings:

Table 5.41: Any Pressure to devote more time on the Preparation of Students for the SSSCE? * Constrained to match classroom practices to WAEC's assessment? Crosstabulation

		Constrained to match classroom practices to WAEC's assessment?		Total
		To a great extent	Minimal to Non-existent	
Any Pressure to devote more time on SSSCE prep?	Yes	48	15	63
	No	3	7	10
Total		51	22	73

The chi-squared tests of the above crosstabulation revealed a statistically significant relationship between the two variables ($P: .003 < .01$). We can, therefore, confidently say that SSS Social Studies teachers in Ghana are constrained to match their classroom practices to the coverage and demands of the SSSCE, because of the pressure put on them to devote much of their instructional time for the preparation of their students towards the SSSCE.

Table 5.42: Do you feel ashamed if your students perform poorly? * Constrained to match classroom practices to WAEC's assessment? Crosstabulation

		Constrained to match classroom practices to WAEC's assessment?		Total
		To a great extent	Minimal to Non-existent	
Do you feel ashamed if students perform poorly?	To a great extent	45	10	55
	Minimal to Non-existent	5	12	17
Total		50	22	72

Since $P: .000 < .01$, we can confidently conclude that there is a statistically significant relationship between how teachers' feel when their students perform poorly at the SSSCE and the constraint on them to match their classroom practices to the coverage and demands of the SSSCE. In other words, how teachers feel about the performances of their students on the SSSCE is directly related to how they respond to the pressure to match their classroom practices to this assessment.

It is important to state that the findings presented so far under this section indicate that teachers' perception of pressure from various quarters to devote more of their instructional time to the preparation of students for the SSSCE and the use of the performances of these students to evaluate their professional competence are some of the major reasons behind their instructional and assessment decisions. The sense of shame teachers feel when their students perform poorly at the external assessment and subsequent pressure that is placed on them to teach only those curriculum contents covered by the external assessment are also some of the major factors influencing teachers' instructional and assessment decisions. Moreover, it has also been established that these factors place severe constraints on teachers to match their classroom practices to the coverage and demands of the external assessment.

It has been reported and largely supported by findings presented above that Social Studies teachers, particularly, are reticent to use the full range of assessment techniques, which have been made available to them. This reticence is traced to various causes, namely, the inconsistency of teachers in their conception of assessment, the difficulty in precisely measuring some Social Studies objectives, teachers being unfamiliar with many assessment methods or not understanding their purpose and use well enough to employ them in the assessment of students and also teachers regarding assessment as an unfortunate appendage to the instructional process (see Goss, McPhie & Fraenkel, 1970). Some assumptions that can be deduced from the foregoing are that teachers' conception of the goals and objectives of the subject and whether they are attainable through classroom instruction may have influence on their assessment decisions. However, since the study that revealed these findings took place about four decades ago and within a different cultural context, it became imperative to find out whether they hold in the Ghanaian context.

In view of the above, teachers were asked during the interview about their conception of assessment, their views about the recommended assessment methods in the Social Studies syllabus and whether they think they can be effectively applied in the classroom. They were also asked to indicate how they think affective outcomes in Social Studies can adequately be assessed, their conception of the goals and

objectives of the subject and whether they perceive them to be attainable through classroom instruction.

When teachers were asked during the interview whether they are abreast with the development and introduction of Social Studies in the SSS, since it is relatively new in that context (see the introductory chapter), 15 (i.e. 75%) of them said "Yes", 4 (20%) said they were not much abreast and one person stated that she is not at all abreast with the development and introduction of the subject at the SSS level in Ghana. It was subsequently found that the interviewee who claimed not to be abreast with the development and introduction of the subject at the SSS level had specialised in Economics at the university and had only decided to teach Social Studies at that level, because there was no qualified person in her school to teach it and she also had some interest in the subject.

Four of the interviewees, who claimed they are not much abreast with the development and introduction of the subject, had also specialised in other subjects apart from Social Studies. And one of them, as a response to the question, typically stated, "Well, I wouldn't say so... even though I have read through the syllabus, and the objectives have been spelt out quite clearly, there wasn't any formal introduction of that to us".

Eight (8) of the 15 respondents, who said they were abreast with the development and introduction of the subject did actually specialise in it. They therefore stated that they are abreast with everything about the subject because that was what they specialised in. The other 7, even though had specialised in subjects apart from Social Studies, mentioned that they took time off to read through the syllabus to become conversant with its goals and objectives because of the interest they had in the subject. One such person actually captures the views of the rest when he states,

"Well, yes, because after I decided to teach it, you know, I have been trying to know more about the subject by reading. The syllabus itself is eh...the nature, the content, the requirement of the syllabus... So I try to find out more, and that really gives me the...more or less prepares me to teach the whole thing".

However, when these same interviewees were asked to state the goals and objectives of the subject, only 9 (45%) of them were able to state something that broadly matched those stated in the syllabus of the subject at the SSS. The statement of goals and objectives of 6 (30%) of the respondents were narrow and thus do not fully match those stated in the syllabus. The analysis of teachers' responses to the question mentioned above revealed that what 5 (25%) of them stated as the goals and objectives of the subject did not, in any way, match those stated in the syllabus.

For instance one of the interviewees, whose response was considered to be broad and fully matching those stated in the syllabus, said, "It is to develop critical thinking skills among students and also help students to develop positive attitudes towards social issues. And apart from that the subject is also helping students to solve their personal problems and societal problems of their times". The following observation epitomises the responses of those whose statement of goals and objectives were considered to be narrow: "the goals and objectives of the subject...the individual will be able to know what is going on in his or her society. At least the social environment; you will be conversant with the social environment". A clear example of statement of goals and objectives that do not match those of the subject, in the syllabus, in any way is captured as follows: "Our aim is to focus on what the children will need to pass the examination and also to help them live a very worthy life when they go out".

The above findings reveal that even though majority of teachers (at least those interviewed) claimed they are abreast with the development and introduction of the Social Studies at the SSS level, only a few of them could state something that broadly captures the goals and objectives of the subject. This gives a strong indication that the narrow knowledge or misconception many teachers have about the goals and objectives of the subject might be one of the reasons why the majority of them claim that their classroom practices are influenced by the SSSCE.

On whether they find the goals and objectives of Social Studies to be attainable through classroom instruction, 50% of the teachers interviewed said that they are

attainable. For instance one of the interviewees stated “Yes, certainly. In fact the syllabus contains such learning experiences to develop in the students all these goals”. The other 50% think that not all of the goals and objectives could be attained through classroom instructions. One of such said that “you can’t, because the time is really limited, so most of the time our attention is towards eh...gearing them towards passing the exams”. Perhaps to support this point, another interviewee in this group stated that “most of the work that is done in the classroom, eighty percent of the work, is towards helping students to pass his examination, but not to attain the goals that have been set, or the objectives that have been set by the subject”.

Thus in view of the fact that half of the teachers interviewed think that the goal of the students passing the external examination supersedes the goals and objectives of the subject, then it can be said that this, to some extent, affects their classroom decisions. In other words, the reason why many of the Social Studies teachers say they are influenced in their instruction and assessments by the nature of questions in the SSSCE is partly due to the interest they show in their students passing the external examination. This also confirms the finding (mentioned on page 203 above) where the majority of teachers claimed that the main purpose of instruction, to them, is for their students to do well at the SSSCE.

Analysis of the responses revealed that all of the interviewees, except one person, have a quite comprehensive and workable understanding about the requirements of assessment. For instance one of the interviewees stated in his response that “we have various forms of assessment...our assessment here relates to the students’ attitude, the academic work, the curriculum, so we factor all these things into the academic performance”. Another had answered thus,

“I believe it’s not only in written form, or in the classroom, but the general wellbeing of the students; the way the person interact with fellow students, interact with teachers...and then all these should be part of assessment, so that you will really know what the person is made up of or capable of doing”.

Many more are of the view that assessment is about finding out whether a teacher has achieved what s/he set out to do in the first place, and also all of them agreed that

assessment includes other methods apart from those being employed by WAEC. The interviewee who viewed assessment in narrow term said that it involved, "The class work we do, the class test we do and then the end-of-term exams". This answer suggests that she has a narrow conception of assessment.

These findings show that unlike the teachers in Gross's survey, teachers of Social Studies in Ghana are quite consistent in their conception of assessment. Although there are some inconsistencies, they are not to be found in their conception of assessment, but rather between their conception of assessment and their being reticent to use the full range of assessment methods available to them, as revealed by findings presented above. Thus their classroom behaviours or decisions are not due to any inconsistencies in their conception of assessment.

Again when teachers were asked about their views on the assessment methods provided for in the syllabus, 60% of them said those methods were sufficient and could be used to assess for all outcomes in the students. For instance one of the interviewees whose response falls under this category stated thus, "I think they are okay. They are able to let us know what the students know". Another interviewee also put his as, "The assessment methods prescribed in the Social Studies syllabus are quite detailed and comprehensive. They are trying to measure learning outcomes of all students".

"Well, to me they are not sufficient in measuring the learning outcomes of students. If it could be possible, they should add a few more of them". This response, stated by one of the interviews, captures the views of three interviewees who are of the opinion that the assessment methods prescribed in the syllabus are not adequate. They were therefore calling for the introduction of more methods of assessments to help them in comprehensively assessing their students even though they could not say what these new assessment methods should be.

Three other interviewees were rather of the view that some of the methods of assessment prescribed are difficult to use because of existing conditions in the

school. "It is difficult to assess" argued one person, "when you come to students' attitudes...in fact in this day and age that we have large classes...it is difficult to individually, you know, assess students when it comes to attitudes".

However two (2) of the interviewees said that they are not very much abreast with the assessment methods in the syllabus. In fact one of them clearly did say "Well, I am not that abreast with the methods, but I do use the assessment methods that my other colleagues in the teaching field of Social Studies have been using". Quite understandably this particular respondent did indicate that he had not had any professional training to become a teacher, and he also specialised in a discipline other than Social Studies. The other interviewee, who though is a professional teacher and had also specialised in another subject, just indicated that he is not very much aware of these assessment methods.

Overall, it could be said that the findings on the views of teachers about the assessment methods prescribed in the Social Studies syllabus do not show that their unwillingness or inability to use the full range of assessment methods available to them, and thus matching their assessment methods to that employed by the WAEC, is due to any misconceptions they have about such methods. If there is any such influence at all, it could be said for only the 3 interviewees who said that some of the methods are difficult to apply and the 2 who said that they are not very much conversant with these methods. That is these teachers and their like can be said to basing the assessment on what WAEC does in the SSSCE because of the misconceptions they have about the recommended assessment methods in the syllabus. However, the indication is that such teachers are in the minority and it could therefore be said that on the whole teachers' assessment decisions are not influenced by the views they hold about the methods prescribed in the syllabus.

When respondents were asked whether they think that the assessment methods prescribed in the syllabus can effectively be applied in the classroom, 16 of them believed they can effectively be applied even though some of them said their

application depends on certain other factors. However 4 of interviewees said that not all of them can effectively be applied in the classroom, as there are some difficulties.

One of those who believe that these methods can be applied said emphatically thus, “Yes, they can, they can be applied, because on the spot the teacher is there, he can observe the students. And sometimes in writing, you don’t really see those things that you see when you use other methods”. One other person was of the view that even though they can be applied, whether teachers are applying them is another issue altogether. He believes that some have the tendency to bring assessment in their respective subject specialisations to their assessment behaviour in Social Studies. He states,

“Emm... they can be applied, but as to teachers applying them is a different thing altogether, because what we realised is that most people are teaching the subject, who are not subject experts so to speak. They have had other qualification in other related subjects and so you realise that there is that transfer of knowledge from their previous subject areas, where they have mastered and it really does not weave well with what Social Studies is about”.

This view is supported by another teacher who said that “I think it depends on the teacher. If the teacher is very versed in the field, he should be able to apply them”. The views expressed by the two respondents, quoted above, introduce other variables or assumptions to the issue under discussion. That is, the subject specialisation of the teacher and experience in the field of assessment might be some of the reasons why most of the teachers were found not to be using the full range of assessment methods made available in the syllabus. However, no specific data was collected in this direction and the analysis of the other data revealed little evidence of any difference in the responses of the various group of teachers (see the description of the Social Studies teacher population in the methodology chapter) handling Social Studies in Ghana.

Of the 4 interviewees who are of the belief that these methods can be applied to some extent only, one makes it clear thus, “Observation for instance; I don’t see it as an effective way of assessing the students, because the student can pretend. If he sees

that you are observing him, he will not come out with the true this thing...maybe the true reflection of that fellow”. One other person in this category said, “Some can be done, but the moment you enter the classroom you forget about it. The system itself will force you to forget about the assessment procedures that have been set by the syllabus”.

Once again the findings as indicated above do not reveal any relationship between what teachers think of the assessment methods prescribed in the syllabus and the decisions they make on what and how to assess their students. In other words, whether teachers think these assessment methods can be applied in the classroom or not is not a reason for the kind of assessment choices or decisions they often make.

As indicated earlier on, teachers were also asked to state how affective outcomes in Social Studies can effectively be assessed in the classroom. To this 10 of the interviewees (50%) did mention various methods like Observations, Attitudinal Scales, Role Play, Essays and Interviews among others to strongly suggest that they are fully aware of how to assess affective outcomes. Five (5) respondents did say that it is very difficult to assess for affective outcomes in Social Studies, while two (2) of them said emphatically that it is not possible to assess for them. Two (2) other interviewees indicated that not much is being done by way of assessing affective outcomes, and one interviewee held the view that the assessment of affective outcomes depends on the teacher.

These findings do reveal that even though the majority of teachers (i.e. 65%) believe that affective outcomes in Social Studies can be assessed, some are of the opinion that such assessment depends on the teacher involved while others believed that not much is being done on the field in that direction. This therefore means that teachers' ability or inability to assess affective outcomes in Social Studies has no, or very little, relation with their assessment decisions, as previously established. The findings rather show that teachers, who might not be assessing for affective outcomes in their students because they deem such a process to be difficult or impossible, are in the minority (i.e. 35%).

When teachers were asked to explain why their classroom practices are being influenced by the demands and coverage of the SSSCE all of them responded that it is because they want their students to be performing very well at the SSSCE. One such interviewee made the following strong statement to justify his response:

“Definitely it is WAEC, because we ultimately are preparing the students to write an exams conducted by WAEC, and parents and even the students themselves don’t care much about what they acquire in terms of attitudes or whatever, but being able to pass and pass well”.

Thus to the majority of teachers one of the reasons behind their instructional and assessment decisions in the classroom is the pressure brought to bear on them, from certain quarters, to ensure that their students are successful at the SSSCE. This finding goes to confirm the findings revealed by Table 5.41.

Teachers were also asked during the interview to indicate whether they feel accountable to stakeholders in the educational sector for the performances of their students at the SSSCE. The overwhelming majority of them, 18 out of 20 interviewees (90%) said ‘Yes’, one person said ‘No’ and the other person said ‘Yes’ and ‘No’. A typical response given by those who said ‘Yes’ is captured thus,

“Yes, somewhat, because at the just recent school league, you know, individual teachers were called by the school authorities to answer why their students have not come out with good grades. In that sense you have the moral obligation to do everything possible to make sure your students will also come out with good grades”.

Another interviewee stated,

“Yes, I think so, because if you take the parents, especially, most parents believe that they send their children to school, because they want good results. And if at the end of the day the performance is not good, you don’t feel too fine about it. Sometimes your own conscience; you feel that you haven’t done enough work”.

The above finding reveals that the majority of teachers feel that they are accountable to stakeholders in the educational sector, so far the performance of their students at the SSSCE is concerned, and this becomes one of the compelling factors influencing their classroom decisions. This also confirms the earlier findings that teachers feel

they are under pressure to teach only content and objectives covered at the SSSCE and the finding that students' performances are being used to evaluate their effectiveness as professionals.

However since the issue of teacher accountability is not an open policy directive in Ghana, the feeling of being accountable could be said to be more of responding to one's own conscience or morality than official policy. This is indicated in the responses of the two interviewees whose responses have been quoted above. Further evidence comes in the responses of interviewees when they were asked to state how they feel if their students do not perform well at the SSSCE, and vice versa. Fifteen (15) of the 17 respondents in this case (about 88%) said they do feel sad, disturbed, ashamed or bad. This also confirms the finding on a similar question in the questionnaire (see Table 5.36 on page 212 above). The other 2 said they do not feel anything at all, since it is the duty of students to take their studies seriously, after they the teachers have done their job, in order to pass their final examination.

It has been established, within the External versus Internal assessments debates and by extension the accountability debate, that there is the tendency for the agencies responsible for the external assessment to use performances on the external assessment to scale down those on the internal assessment, where the two are to be integrated to arrive at final grades for students. An assumption can therefore be made that this practice may also compel teachers to teach-to-the-test as a measure of ensuring that their students are well prepared to take the external examination and do well in it.

In view of the foregoing teachers were asked in the interview whether they believe the WAEC uses the continuous (internal) assessment marks as given by teachers or whether it either neglects or scales their marks down. In response, only 5 (25%) of the interviewees said they believed that these marks are being used by WAEC. Another 25% of the interviewees said they do not believe that WAEC is making use of the marks, and the rest (50%) said they doubt whether the marks are being used by the WAEC.

For instance, one of the five respondents who were very sure that WAEC was not using these continuous assessment scores stated that “They are not using the marks”. When asked to explain why he believed so, he went on further to state,

“It is so, because eh... there are people who do perform very good and then they have very high marks... Yeah, in the course of the studies in school and then by dint of sickness, ill health or something they are not able to perform the way they are expected. So if they even should answer two questions, you could realise that it is the same two questions...the marks they got for the two questions that will give them the grade, so the assessment is not used”.

“I don’t know whether they are using it, I can’t tell... Yes, I have doubts about it, yes I have”. This response, given by one of the respondents to the interview, epitomises the responses of the teachers who said they have doubts about the use of the continuous assessment marks of students, by the WAEC, for their final grades at the SSSCE.

This finding thus reveals that majority of teachers either doubt or do not believe that WAEC is making use of the internal assessment marks of their students. There is therefore a greater likelihood that this belief may be one of the reasons why teachers’ classroom practices are greatly influenced by the nature and scope of the SSSCE. This provides further evidence that one of the reasons why teachers emphasise only the content and demands of the SSSCE in their instruction and assessment is because they do not believe that the WAEC uses students’ internal assessment scores in arriving at their final grades at the SSSCE. Thus they emphasise only the content and the demands of the SSSCE in order to prepare their students for better performance in this assessment.

5.5.1 DISCUSSIONS

The findings presented above revealed that WAEC’s SSSCE has a strong impact or influence on teachers’ classroom practices in Social Studies. They also revealed that the impact is such that it compels teachers to teach and assess to the external test, without adequate consideration given to the curriculum goals and objectives. A variety of evidence was also gathered to show that the impact the SSSCE has on

teachers' classroom practices is a constraining one, in that the classroom decisions teachers are made to take are mostly contrary to what they perceive to be the ideal situation. The study also revealed indications that other factors or reasons exist to aggravate the impact of the SSSCE on the classroom practices of teachers. In other words, there are factors existing in the field of education which provide teachers with the reasons or excuses to allow their classroom practices to be negatively affected by the SSSCE. Teachers therefore resort to teaching to the test without recourse to the curriculum goals and objectives.

This study supports key findings in the literature that external assessments, by their high-stakes nature, influence both the curriculum and instruction (Mehrens, 1998; Harlen, 2005; Havnes, 2004). Particularly, evidence gathered in this research revealed that the majority of teachers believed that their instructional and assessment decisions in the classroom are most often influenced by the SSSCE. In this case, the majority of teachers (77%) who responded to the questionnaire claimed that the SSSCE greatly impact on their instructional decisions. On the other hand, the majority, despite claiming that the SSSCE also has an influence on their assessment practices indicated that the influence is occasional rather than always. However, the majority of teachers in the interview (75%) did claim that the impact of the SSSCE on the assessment decisions/practices was great and this was confirmed by the strong relationship ($P: .01 < .05$) that was established between the impact of the SSSCE on teachers' instructional practices and the impact on their assessment practices.

Further verification of the above was provided by teachers' responses, as to the main purpose of their instruction in Social Studies. Analysis of these responses revealed that the majority of teachers either strongly agreed or agreed to students acquiring facts and passing the SSSCE as some of their major instructional purposes. Teachers' concentration on facts, which lies in the cognitive domain, confirms the arguments in the literature that external assessment drives classroom instruction (see Harlen, 2005; Havnes, 2004; Grant, 2000). This is because these facts, as findings in the previous chapter indicate, are the main construct of emphasis in external assessments and particularly the SSSCE in Social Studies.

Teachers did claim this strong impact of the external assessment on their classroom practices although they also claimed that teaching should adequately cover all curriculum goals and objectives irrespective of whether or not they are covered in the external assessment. This clearly suggests that the impact of the SSSCE on the classroom practices of SSS Social Studies teachers in Ghana is a constraining one in the sense that they are compelled to do what they might consider as professionally inappropriate. This is further confirmed by the majority (80%) of teachers interviewed who claimed that the SSSCE, to a great extent, determines what they should teach and what they should not teach in the classroom.

The analysis of the interview data also revealed that about 60% of the interviewees strongly intimated that between the demands of the SSSCE and the curriculum goals and objectives of Social Studies, their instructional decisions are mostly influenced by the former rather than the latter. The study revealed considerable evidence to confirm the notion that; in all environments of high-stakes external assessments teachers, invariably, teach-to-the-test. Not only are their instructional decisions and practices influenced by the demands of the external assessment, but also their internal assessment decisions and practices are informed by the nature of the external assessment.

For instance, although the majority of teachers (85%) said that they were familiar with all the methods of assessment provided in the SSS Social Studies syllabus, the majority of this group tend to use essay and multiple choice items in the assessment of their outcomes. It is important to note that these kinds of assessment tools are those employed by the WAEC at the SSSCE, and constitute what is known as the traditional form of assessment. Even in cases where teachers claim to be using the alternative forms of assessment made available to them, they indicated that these methods are used occasionally and students' performances on the constructs or outcomes for which they use the methods are never recognised in the award of the final grades during internal assessments. The study rather revealed that the majority of teachers, especially those interviewed, rarely use any of the alternative forms of assessment beside the traditional form of assessment.

The discussions above demonstrate that teachers' assessment intents or outcomes of emphasis are largely incongruent with the curriculum goals and objectives of Social Studies. That is, the majority of teachers, as revealed by the study, focus their assessment of students on outcomes that do not adequately match the gamut of the curriculum goals and objectives and also the curriculum content. It can therefore be said that the incongruence of teachers' classroom practices with the content and goals and objectives of the curriculum is as a result of the constraining impact the external assessment has on them. However, we may ask why teachers would, as it were, continue to allow their classroom practices to be influenced, in the negative sense, by the external assessment when they know that it is inappropriate and are aware of what the ideal case should be? The question was answered when the study revealed that other factors exist that compel teachers to teach and assess according to the content and demands of the external assessment. This therefore places teachers under the influence of the external assessment.

For instance, the findings discussed above suggest that the majority of teachers are either reluctant or unable to apply the full range of assessment techniques/methods available to them. Research findings, attributed to Gross in the 1960s (see Gross, McPhie & Fraenkel, *op cit*), indicate that such reluctance on the part of teachers is as a result of their misconception or inconsistencies in their conception of assessment. This is compounded by the lack of understanding and confidence to use the full range of assessment methods available to them. Vandeyar (2005) also reports that the failure of teachers to apply all these assessment techniques for newer assessment imperatives, as was the case of teachers in South Africa, is due to the fact that the demands of this assessment regime conflicted with the beliefs and philosophies of teachers. Hutchison & Hayward (2005), on the other hand, stated that the inability of teachers to integrate data/scores from the alternative forms of assessment with the scores from traditional assessment, at least for Scottish teachers, is one of the reasons behind these not being fully applied in the classroom.

However, findings from this study did not reveal any relationship between the reluctance of teachers to use the full range of assessment methods available to them

and their misconception, or any inconsistency in their conception, and lack of understanding of these assessment methods. On the contrary, there was evidence that SSS Social Studies teachers in Ghana are clear and consistent in their conception of assessment. They also showed familiarity with, as well as clear and practical understanding of, the assessment methods recommended in the syllabus and gave indications that they can effectively apply them in the classroom. There was also no evidence to suggest that the use of these assessment methods conflicted with teachers' beliefs and philosophies of assessment.

There was rather an indication that the SSS Social Studies teachers in Ghana are not integrating the students' scores from the alternative forms of assessment and assessment of affective outcomes with the scores gathered from the traditional method of assessment. This therefore suggests that these teachers, like their Scottish counterparts, are unable to integrate scores from the different forms of assessment available to them. Consequently, teachers only focus on form of assessment employed by the external examiners.

Other factors that compel teachers to be influenced by the external assessment include the pressure to devote much of their instructional time on the preparation of students for the external assessment. In this case, the majority of teachers in the questionnaire (87%) claimed that there is pressure from some stakeholders which compels them to devote a greater portion of the instruction to preparing students for the SSSCE. To support this point, 69% of the teachers, on whom the questionnaire was administered, identified the Ghana Education Service (GES) as one of the sources where the pressure is strong. Other sources of strong pressure identified and the percentage of respondents who identified them are as follows: Parents, 70%; Students, 78% and teachers own conscience, 82%.

Almost all the teachers who answered the questionnaire (96%) believed that the performance of their students at the SSSCE is being used to evaluate their professional competencies. The majority therefore identified their School Heads and themselves (72% and 54% respectively) as the persons who carry out this kind of

evaluation. Even though Parents and Students also strongly came up as persons who persistently evaluate teachers by the performance of students at that SSSCE, the number of missing values or data, in each case, was such that it reduced significant findings to insignificant ones (see Appendix-L, pages 390-391).

Rottenberg & Smith's (1990) report that teachers do feel ashamed and embarrassed by the low scores or grades of their students in the external assessment was corroborated by findings from this study. Between 74% and 75% of teachers (in both the questionnaire and the interview) indicated that they do feel ashamed or very bad (embarrassed) when their students perform poorly on the external assessment and thus feel under great pressure to teach only content areas and objectives covered by the SSSCE. In fact, a very strong relationship ($P: .001 < .01$) was established between teachers' emotional attachment or response to the performance of their students at the SSSCE and the extent of pressure on them to teach only content and objectives covered by the SSSCE.

Also corroborated in this study and closely related to Rottenberg & Smith's statement, is Cockburn & Haydn's (op cit) report that the main source of motivation for teachers is the children they teach. That is, teachers feel fulfilled in their job when they think that they have been able to help their students achieve something out of their classroom practices. In view of the fact that this achievement is ultimately defined as the performance of the students in the external assessment teachers take responsibility for it and subsequently feel that it is being used to evaluate their professional competence even as they themselves judge the meaningfulness of their work by these results.

Therefore, the impact of external assessment on teachers' classroom practices through the pressure and accountability demands, as has been stated above, is very constraining. This is confirmed when about 69% of teachers admitted in the questionnaire (see Table 5.39 above) that they are either constrained completely or to a great extent by the need to match their classroom practices to the demands and coverage of the SSSCE because of pressure and accountability. Table 5.40 above

also reveals a very strong statistical relationship between the pressure on teachers to teach only contents and objectives covered by the SSSCE and the constraint on them to match their classroom practices to these demands and objectives.

The above discussion is further supported by the statistically significant relationship that was established between the pressure on teachers to devote more of the instructional time to the preparation of their students for the external assessment and the constraint on them to match their classroom practices to the demands and objectives of this assessment (see Table 5.41). It was also found that the constraint on teachers to match their classroom practices to the demands and objectives of the external assessment is significantly related, statistically, with the shame they feel when their students perform poorly on the external assessment ($P: .000 < .01$).

Other important findings that came up from the analyses of the study data (see pages 217 – 218 above) suggested that the conception or misconception of the goals and objectives of Social Studies could also be a reason behind teachers' reluctance to assess completely across the curriculum. This relates to the suggestion from another finding (pages 218-219 above) that teachers' perceptions about the attainability or otherwise of all Social Studies goals and objectives through instructional activities could also be a reason behind the reluctance to widen the scope of assessment. The foregoing seems to give credence, at least from the point of view of 50% of teachers interviewed, to Gross, McPhie & Fraenkel's (op cit) argument that the problem of adequately assessing Social Studies learning outcomes is due to the fact that it is plagued by broad and imprecise goals- many of which are future oriented.

However, it can be argued that the future orientation of curriculum goals does not beset Social Studies alone, but is the main purpose and principle behind education in general and yet assessment of learning outcomes takes place in all other disciplines. Thus instead of neglecting these outcomes in assessment it is rather important for practitioners, as suggested by Gross, McPhie & Fraenkel (op cit), to start using improved assessment devices to assess these future oriented objectives. This is because the results of the so called immediate goals are still mainly used for

predictive purposes thus making them also future oriented. That is, in selecting current graduates for further academic or career pursuits, the selectors involved invariably use the current assessment results to predict the future performance of candidates. In other words, one is selected because it is assumed from his or her good results that he or she will perform better in further academic pursuit or chosen career than other persons whose results might not be relatively good. Therefore the future orientation of curriculum goals should not be a reason for the reluctance or inability to assess or teach them.

Another reason behind the current classroom practices of teachers, which was induced from their interview responses is the belief held by the majority (75%) that the WAEC does not integrate the continuous (internal) assessment marks of students with the marks they get on the SSSCE for their final grades. It therefore follows that teachers will be reluctant to teach and assess curriculum areas they know will not be covered at the external assessment. This implies that it is external assessment that defines what is learning in the schools or classroom which gives indication of serious systemic implications for the schools' curriculum.

This implication becomes even more pertinent to investigate since it has been established in chapter four that the SSSCE in Social Studies in Ghana is largely incongruent or incompatible with the curriculum goals and objectives of the subject. It was found that the SSSCE does not assess certain major learning domains (affective and skills) of Social Studies in Ghana and even with the domain that it assesses (cognitive), not all the domain levels or objectives are adequately covered. Last but not the least, on the issue of curriculum implication, is the evidence stated in the previous chapter that some of the SSSCE assessment items have no relevance to the goals, objectives and the contents of Social Studies in Ghana. The findings of the implication, intimated above, will be presented and discussed in chapter six.

6.1.0 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT AND THE IMPLEMENTATION AND ATTAINMENT OF CURRICULUM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

6.1.0 INTRODUCTION

Applying the grounded theory approach, this chapter presents findings concerning the relationship between the nature and demands of external assessment and the implementation and attainment of curriculum goals and objectives in the schools. This is in respect of the third major research question stated in the methodology chapter and provided in the next section of this chapter. The chapter reports the perspectives of teachers, who are directly responsible for the implementation and attainment of the goals and objectives of the Social Studies curriculum in the senior secondary schools (SSS) in Ghana, as to the impact of the external assessment on their classroom practices and the curriculum as a whole. These perspectives were part of the data gathered from the interview conducted with the teachers, in respect of this study.

In order to find answers to the research question posed, teachers in the interview were asked a series of questions about how and why the external assessment impacts on their classroom practices and how these practices subsequently affect the implementation and attainment of the goals and objectives of the curriculum. Teachers were thus asked to state their views as to how the demands of the external assessment impact on their instructional practices and why. They were also asked to indicate how and why the demands of the external assessment influence their internal assessment practices and other conditions or factors that intervene between these demands and how teachers respond to them when teaching or assessing learners. Teachers' responses in this direction are further verified by what they claimed to be the outcomes or objectives of emphasis whenever they are teaching or assessing learners in the Social Studies curriculum. Teachers were then finally asked to state what will make them teach and assess to adequately cover the content, goals and objectives of the curriculum.

This chapter focuses on the development of theory that is grounded in data and verifiable by substantive theories and assumptions, but does not resort to generalisation with the findings emanating from the data. It must be noted that the substantive theories and assumptions mentioned above have also been verified with new data, gathered for this study, as presented in the preceding chapter. Some of these assumptions and theories, which have been further verified in this study, are the narrowness and baseness of most external assessment items, external assessment defining what knowledge is and thus what should be taught in the classroom and teachers therefore teaching and assessing to match what the external assessment demands. The findings as presented in this chapter therefore focus on the kind of relationship that exists between the external assessment and how a school's curriculum is implemented and its goals and objectives attained. It establishes a relationship where the narrowing or broadening of the coverage of the external assessment over the curriculum content, goals and objectives does have a direct proportional effect on the coverage of the implementation of the curriculum and thus its attainment.

In arriving at the findings the data, gathered through the interview of Social Studies teachers in Ghana, was subjected to an open coding; where initial categories and subcategories of information pertaining to the phenomenon described above were identified and formed. This was followed by the identification of the central issue or phenomenon within the categories and exploration of the causal conditions and factors that result in the central phenomenon. Intervening or aggravating conditions/factors that influences the actions and strategies emanating from the central phenomenon were also identified and the consequences of this phenomenon clearly established. The findings are subsequently reported, by utilising a selection or sample of direct quotes from the interview to write a story that integrates all the categories of information into a theoretical model, which further results in the presentation of two substantive theories and other conditional propositions. This model is further presented in a diagram (conditional matrix), which clearly explains the linkages among the categories of information pertaining to the research question and the conditions or factors that influence the central phenomenon in the theory.

6.2.1 RESEARCH QUESTION

- ❖ Does a relationship exist between the demands of external assessment and the implementation and attainment of curriculum goals and objectives in the schools?

6.3.1 WHAT THE LITERATURE SAYS

It is noted that educational assessment do not just happen or take place in a vacuum, but rather seen as a process that enables the assessor to establish the extent to which learners have attained the goals and objectives that were set out for them. Thus the call being clearly made in the literature and in debates among practitioners is that since classroom learning runs the gamut of various kinds and levels of learning or outcomes (Phye, 1997a) so also should the assessment of learners' attainments cover the gamut of these outcomes. In the same vein, since each of the kinds and levels of learning in the classroom demands different kinds of instructional and learning approaches and strategies so also should the mode of assessment be varied to ensure that the most appropriate assessment tool is selected and use for each of the kinds and levels of learning. The above call is made in line with the call to ensure the collection of a more comprehensive and complete data on students' learning (McMillan, 2002), which is to be ensured by linking assessment directly to curriculum intents (Mager, 1990) and also by covering all outcomes to the appropriate level of demand of the curriculum objective (SQA, 2001).

Unfortunately, however, the above seems not to be the case, as external assessment, particularly, has been noted to emphasise the base/elemental of classroom learning (Bennett et al, 2003), concentrating only on knowledge to the neglect of higher educational attainments (Torrance, 1995). To add to the foregoing is the kind of impact external assessment has been reported to have on teachers' classroom practices (Harlen, 2005; Havnes, 2004; Grant, 2000). It is for instance reported, and confirmed in this study (see findings presented in chapter five), that external assessment has the tendency to define what relevant knowledge is for teachers and learners and thus making them concentrate only on the aspects of the curriculum covered by the assessment.

Even though some people do argue that the evidence for an external assessment's influence on either the curriculum content or instructional process is not clear (Mehrens, 1998), logic indicates that the fact that the external assessment is narrow, in terms of its curriculum coverage, will eventually lead to the corresponding narrowing of the curriculum by teachers. That is, as teachers teach-to-the-test, as has been verified in this research and presented in chapter five above, the curriculum, as being implemented in the classroom, will become constricted to only those objectives and content covered by the external assessment.

This issue becomes even more pertinent when placed alongside the case of an innovative curriculum. That is a curriculum that introduces learning outcomes that are relatively new and broad, which hitherto have not been emphasised, as major objectives to be attained through classroom instructions. Such curricula usually depart from the traditional disciplines, whose core emphasis is cognitive learning, and introduce outcomes such as critical thinking, problem-solving, value clarification, disposition to action based on positive attitudes among others. This is seen as a movement from functional literacy to critical literacy (Calfee & Masuda, 1997). Nickell (1993: 2) therefore argues that "if we really expect students to be able to do these things, then assessment instruments must be designed to provide evidence that such is the case". In other words, we must assess in authentic ways outcomes that are considered to be most important in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values (Nickell, *op cit*).

Both the literature and findings of this study, reported in the previous chapter, indicate that the agencies responsible for external assessment hardly utilise alternative forms of assessment and also produce items that do not adequately cover the content and objectives of the curriculum. This therefore gives an indication of the kind of impact such a traditional mode of assessment will have on an innovative curriculum. As noted above, while Mehrens (*op cit*) and others argue that there is no proven cause and effect relationship between assessment and the curriculum content or instructional strategy, the high stakes nature of external assessment is universally found to compel teachers to focus on the content of the test in their teaching and also

adopting the transmission style of teaching (Harlen, op cit). It thus becomes clear that there is the need to broaden the coverage of the external assessment in order for teachers also to broaden the objectives of focus in their instructions to ensure students' attainment of broader educational goals and objectives.

It is for this reason that Phye (1997b) argued to the effect that it will be improper to develop an assessment system and leave it unchanged in the context where curriculum imperatives, instructional techniques and strategies and knowledge about how students learn are in states of constant change. This position is supported by Cizek (1997:13) who states, "As the universe of valuable educational outcomes expands, so to must the array of instruments necessary to assess those outcomes". In the event where the system of assessment is left unchanged and thus becomes incongruent with the goals and objectives of an innovative curriculum, it is postulated that such a curriculum is certainly doomed to a short life (see page 32 above). It is also argued that as long as the criteria of success in students' attainment remain incompatible with the goals of the reform, the survival of the new programme in the school curriculum cannot be assured (see page 113 above)).

It thus becomes important to verify the above postulation with new data to see whether it is supported by evidence on the field. It also becomes pertinent to utilise the findings on this particular research question and supported by Kliebard's proposition to theorise about the relationship between external assessment and the implementation and attainment of curriculum goals and objectives in order to fill the vacuum, in the literature, about such a relationship as posited by Mehrens (see the paragraph above).

6.4.0 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

6.4.1 Impact of External Assessment on Teachers' Instructional Practices

External assessment, as noted above, is said to have an influence on teachers' instructional practices (Harlen, op cit; Grant, op cit). In the case where the coverage of this assessment is narrow in focus the impact it has on teachers' instructional

practices is seen as negative, as it compels teachers to also narrow the focus of the instruction to meet the demands of the test. It is important to note that the kind of impact the external assessment has on the instructional practices of teachers is deemed as negative even in traditional curriculum disciplines, which focus mainly on cognitive outcomes. In the case of the Social Studies curriculum in the SSSs in Ghana, the outcomes of emphasis have been broadened to include affective and skills outcomes with clearly articulated strategies, instructional and assessment, to achieve them (CRDD, 1998). In spite of this, teachers, who are the principal implementers of this curriculum, identified the demands and contents of the SSSCE as the major factor that influences their instructional decisions. They clearly intimated that it is the assessment demands that determine what they should or should not teach in the classroom, thus defining what knowledge is for the teachers.

Teachers' decisions to make the demands and content of the external assessment the main determinant of their instructional aim can be seen as a strategy they have adopted in order to satisfy the expectations of educational authorities and other stakeholders. They, for instance, claim that their main concern is for their students to pass the external assessment. One of them, in this direction, states, "I have...met people who teach and only teach even based on past questions and not even the syllabus. So you realise that they are only teaching to meet what WAEC expects them to do". "In fact it's about ninety percent or ninety-five percent, because, as I said, we are all tailoring ourselves to the exams. Everything boils down to WAEC, so you tailor yourself to WAEC's questions to enable your students also to pass" (says another teacher). Many of the teachers were of the opinion that many of the stakeholder in the educational enterprise in Ghana are actually less concerned about the outcomes students are able to attain, but rather evaluate students' successes on their performance on the SSSCE. In this situation, "many teachers are required under those circumstances to teach in line with WAEC's assessment demands" (as intimated by a teacher).

The situation described above has led to the establishment of the pre-eminence of the demands of the external assessment over the curriculum goals and objectives, as

specified in the syllabus. Thus teachers claim that between the demands of the SSSCE and the goals and objectives of the Social Studies curriculum, the former most influences their instructional decisions than the latter. The statement that runs through all their responses was that WAEC's assessment demands most of the time influence what they teach in the classroom or has a greater portion of the factors that influence their teaching. The conditions responsible for this situation include the fact that teachers feel they are being evaluated with the performances of their students on the SSSCE. A teacher, in this respect, claimed that "at the end of the day the best teacher is looked at in terms of whose students have passed with more 'A's and not so much of the students who have acquired that living skills with which they are going out". And thus for them the "main thing is to help the students to acquire knowledge and pass their examination" (as indicated by another teacher).

The expectation of stakeholders about the ends of education for students at the SSS level is also seen as one of the conditions responsible the primacy of the external assessment over the goals and objectives of the curriculum. As one teacher puts it,

"Definitely it is the WAEC, because we ultimately are preparing the students to write an exams conducted by WAEC, and parents and even students themselves don't care much about what they acquire in terms of attitudes or whatever, but being able to pass and pass well".

The pre-eminence of the WAEC's assessment demands over the curriculum goals and objectives of Social Studies in Ghana can also be traced to the fact that it is the performance of students on the SSSCE that is used to make very important decisions about their future progression, either in career or higher education. And as indicated by Madaus (1988: 83), "Testing is fast usurping the role of the curriculum as the mechanism of defining what schooling is about". This therefore suggests that it is the external assessment that has become the end of education and not the attainment of the goals and objectives of the curriculum. This fact is supported by a teacher, who said,

"The WAEC, because we are preparing the students for WAEC, so what WAEC does is what we all do. Even though we may vary the way we teach to maybe encompass whatever we want...you

know...especially the affective aspect of the individual..., but at the end of the day WAEC plays a major role in the way we teach”.

Teachers thus further explained that the influence of the SSSCE on their instructional practices is such that they are unable to adequately cover all the goals and objectives of the Social Studies curriculum in SSSs. This fact and those previously discussed above are verifiable by the findings from the questionnaire data, which have been reported in the preceding chapter (see Tables 5.19, 5.22 & 5.23 on pages 200 & 203).

6.4.2 Impact of External Assessment on Teachers’ Assessment Practices

Findings from the interview data indicated that not only are teachers’ instructional practices significantly influenced by the demands of the external assessment, but also their assessment practices in the classroom are likewise influenced. In this instance, teachers are said to be reluctant to use the full range of assessment tools available to them (Gross McPhie & Fraenkel, 1970) and thus focus on only the method employed by the agency responsible for the external assessment, by replicating their items in the classroom. Specifically, when teachers were asked to indicate the kind of influence the SSSCE has on their assessment practices, they responded by saying that the SSSCE has a great influence/impact on the way they assess their students.

Many causal conditions were identified as responsible for the phenomenon described above. One of these conditions, which was common in most of the responses, was the fact that the curriculum in the schools has been made examination oriented instead of the outcomes based Social Studies curriculum. Thus teachers intimated that their internal assessment practices are influenced by the SSSCE,

“Because you would want to assess the children, but the interest, in the final analysis, lies on whether the children were able to pass. And so school heads...and even now that they are having this, eh...grading system of schools, where emphasis is on the number of students that have passed, it is not how well you have assessed them, using the other methods, but in the final analysis how they could pass” (said one of them).

Another teacher, in this direction, states, “Yes, sometimes as a teacher if you fully want to develop the form, then you must tailor everything to suit that of WAEC,

because at the end of the day everything boils down to WAEC. So what WAEC comes out with greatly influence the way we assess”.

The public’s expectation about the performance of students on the SSSCE was also identified as one of the reasons, which make teachers replicate the external assessment in their classroom assessment of students. To the teachers,

“The influence of WAEC comes in where at the end of the day the public is expecting good output from you. The school, public opinion, politicians...so at times the methods of assessing, from WAEC, influences ours, so that you don’t have problems with society”.

The above statement, by one of the teachers of Social Studies in Ghana, suggests that teachers, in this sense, are much concerned about how the results of their students at the SSSCE are interpreted by other stakeholders in the educational enterprise and how such results are used to judge their competence. This, therefore, goes to show the extent to which the external assessment has usurped the role of the curriculum, as to what schooling is all about and also the extent to which the assessment agency has taken pre-eminence over all that there is to education.

The fact about the assessment agency taking a pre-eminent position in the curriculum process is recognised by teachers and is voiced in the following manner,

“In view of the fact that they issue certificates to students at the end of the programme, we are compelled to go according to their assessment methods. So that’s how we are influenced, because sometimes we measure our efficiency or the capabilities of the teacher by the success of the students. When it comes to that then we have to tow to procedures being affected by WAEC”.

A teacher, in this case, links the influence of WAEC’s SSSCE on their assessment practices to the fact that most of the affective outcomes in Social Studies seem to be future oriented and thus since the immediate aim of their instruction is to prepare the students for the external assessment, they have no option than to go according to its demands. This he puts as follows:

“The influence is great, I must admit, because again we are preparing them towards that exam. As I said, attitudinal change means something that is long term. Some can be immediate; we can quickly observe it, but the immediate thing is that they are

going to write an exam and we have no choice than to prepare them towards that exam”.

The fact that teachers’ assessment practices are greatly influenced by the demands of the external assessment is underscored by the methods of assessment they employ in the classroom. According to the teachers, the tools of assessment they mostly use are the essay and multiple-choice items, all belonging to the traditional method of assessment and also employed by the WAEC in the SSSCE. Where they use other/alternative methods of assessment, teachers claim that they do not award any marks for the performance or outcome or objective assessed and thus such do not count towards the grading of students so far as their learning outcomes in Social Studies is concerned. Teachers listed the following as some of the reasons why they tend to use the same tools as employed by the WAEC in the assessment of their students:

1. They are the methods employed by the WAEC and thus the standard tools of assessment for teachers,
2. Time constraints and class sizes make it easier and flexible to use, and
3. They are the most familiar tools of assessment for teaches.

In the case where teachers see the tools of assessment they employ in assessing their students as those use by the WAEC and thus the standard tools of assessment set for them, one of them clearly stated that “well, they are the methods traditionally use by WAEC”. Another teacher puts it as follows: “It is because of the fact that that is the standard or what has been set out for us by the West Africa Examinations Council. So we tend to follow that system, to prepare them for that particular exam”. Thus whereas the official syllabus is supposed to provide guidelines to teachers as what and how they should assess, they still feel that it is better for them to use the method employed by the WAEC than to go according to the methods of assessment provided in the syllabus. This again goes to underscore the pre-eminence of the WAEC, and thus the SSSCE, over the official syllabus that stipulates the curriculum goals and objectives and how the curriculum is to be implemented.

“Conventionally it is easier and flexible and I find it more accommodating, because of the size of the classes and the time allocation, because in each of the classes that you teach you have only two periods in a week. So it means you...if you have access to the class this week Monday, you will visit them the following Monday, so the time allotted too does not permit you to use the other methods fully”.

The above statement was made to support the fact that even where teachers would wish to utilise the alternative forms of assessment in the classroom, the size of the class, in terms of student numbers and the time allotted for Social Studies instruction on the schools’ time-table are such that it becomes almost impossible to utilise these methods. Thus the only option left for them is to fall on those assessment tools that they are familiar with and are easier for them to apply than the alternative ones.

The use of the traditional method of assessment by Social Studies teachers in Ghana, because of their familiarity with its tools, is captured in this response, “That is the method...that I have been...you know, so that is the one we use”. Even though this particular statement is not clear on what the teacher in question wanted to say, the context of the conversation and subsequent responses indicate what it meant. That is, some teachers tend to use the traditional method of assessment, because they see it as very familiar, since that was what was used to assess them while in school, and thus easier to use as compared to the alternative forms of assessment. This is especially so, because the alternative forms of assessment are relatively new in the context of Ghana and thus have not yet taken root in the country’s assessment culture. Thus to these teachers they are just following the norm as it exists in the assessment culture in the country.

The kinds of learning outcomes or objectives teachers emphasise when assessing their students also go to underscore the influence of the WAEC on their assessment practices. The majority of teachers focus mainly on cognitive outcomes in their assessment of students. In this case teachers claim that they emphasise the following outcomes in their assessment practices:

- 1. The knowledge acquired by students and their understanding thereof,**
- 2. The ability of students to apply the knowledge in certain conditions, and**

3. Their ability to analyse issues cognitively.

These objectives or outcomes were shown by the findings in chapter four to be exactly what the WAEC also emphasises in the SSSCE papers.

Teachers claim they emphasise these outcomes in their assessment of students, because, as one of them stated, “The goals in the syllabus are towards the acquisition of knowledge and change in attitudes, so you prepare them towards that, but when you look at WAEC’s questions, they mainly span knowledge”. Another teacher opines, “Mostly when you look at the nature of WAEC’s questions, it is to test their knowledge, so you might want to set questions that will reflect some skills acquired, but it is mostly to test their knowledge on the content of the syllabus”. This teacher went on to say that in spite of the fact that the method of assessment they employ is not adequately assessing for learning outcomes in Social Studies, the option to do otherwise is limited by the looming effect of the WAEC and thus the SSSCE. “Well...yes. Here again the WAEC...this thing comes in, so you have no option than to fashion it along that line”, so claims this teacher.

For some other teachers they happen to be emphasising the outcomes as described above, because that is what they ultimately prepare their students for. The statement to this effect is made thus,

“We try to look for everything in the assessment, but then you realise that with affective outcomes, it is not too much to be examined than the cognitive, because that is what we prepare our students for in terms of WAEC’s exams. So we stress more on the cognitive”.

The stress on cognitive outcomes in the internal assessment of learners is sometimes seen as a balancing strategy, for some teachers, to enable their students pass the SSSCE after they have been instructed in almost all the goals and objectives of the curriculum.

“I have to meet halfway what the Examinations Council expects, and then what I have also learnt and then what to give the children. So it is fifty-fifty. If I go the WAEC way then it means the goals or the objectives of the subject will not be met. And then if I go the other way too, then it means my students are going to fail” (states another teacher).

6.4.3 Intervening Conditions between the External Assessment and Teachers' Classroom Practices

If one is to consider the fact that teachers are encouraged, by provisions in the SSS Social Studies syllabus (CRDD, 1998), to use alternative forms of assessment to assess their students, particularly in affective outcomes, during internal assessment it can be said that they have little excuse for not using these methods. This position becomes clear when it is juxtaposed against the fact that the cumulative score of students' internal/continuous assessment contributes 30% to their total score and thus grade in the SSSCE result (see Chapter One, page 17). However this is not the case, because teachers, mostly, doubt whether the WAEC is really integrating these scores into students' scores at the SSSCE for their final grades.

To these teachers, if it is the case that the WAEC is actually making use of these continuous assessment scores, then there should not be a *complete failure (F)* among the grades of their students. In expressing doubts about WAEC's use of the continuous assessment scores, one teacher states,

“Yeah, the assumption is that...because if you look at...they are supposed to make 70% at the external exams and 30% in the internal. So, having assessed a student who has gotten, say, 25, then you should not expect an 'F', which is below 44, because the person already has 25marks. So we are saying that in the exams he couldn't even make 20...inclusive...and if somebody has made 25, which is fair representation of the person's mark for the three year period, then we are saying that when the person should go to the exams, at least he should have more than half of the 70% so that he can come out with..., by getting 35 and 25, with a 'C'. But when somebody has gotten 'F', then you are tempted to believe that somewhere there is something wrong”.

Another statement to support the one above was put thus,

“Well, personally I have doubts as to whether they use them; I don't. If anything they may rather be scaling the marks down. I am saying so, because you don't expect students to fail the SSSCE if WAEC is making use of their continuous assessment marks, yet there are times some students get 'F', representing a failure”.

Teachers also hold the view that the WAEC may not be using these continuous assessment scores or may be scaling down the marks, because the WAEC believes

that teachers are not truthful with these scores and thus may not have faith in them. “I think they are saying, ah...they say that they think that the teachers are not giving the true reflection of what the child is doing. To them...so they think there is no need for them to use it” (says one of the teachers). Another teacher opines that “we don’t really know whether they use them, but they say they use them. Anyway they seem not to have faith in the continuous assessment, so they scale down whatever we send”.

The views of teachers about the WAEC’s use of students’ continuous assessment scores are held on the premise that the WAEC itself is not forthcoming with convincing answers whenever it officials are questioned on this matter. This view is captured in a teachers’ response as, “Yes, several times I personally ask questions when we go for conference marking, and from the way they present their answers I am tempted to believe that they don’t use them, but I have no practical evidence as to whether they are using it or not”. In this case the results of the SSSCE conducted by the WAEC is viewed, by teachers, as a black box in which nobody is allowed to have a look or even a peek, not even teachers whose students have been assessed.

Teachers’ doubt about the WAEC’s use of students’ continuous assessment marks is even increased when the issue of remedial students is taken into consideration. In this instance one of them states,

“Yes, because when students fail and they are to take remedial; like in the November/December examinations, you can’t really have the evidence of input from this assessment, but yet they receive the results. So that places a level of doubt whether they are actually using the continuous assessment”.

However the WAEC, in this case, has once said that they only have to go back to the remedial candidates’ former school record, which they still have in their database, to compute the 30% to be added to the person’s score on the final examination for a grade to be awarded. In any case teachers do not feel convinced about the utilisation of the internal assessment scores of students by the WAEC and thus would rather prefer using the opportunity to prepare their students on a replica of the SSSCE, hoping that they will acquaint themselves well on it before the actual assessment,

than to use alternative assessment methods to assess students on outcomes not covered by the SSSCE.

The findings so far suggests that the performances of students on the external assessment, which is now held as the end of schooling, are the drivers of the influence the external assessment has on teachers' classroom practices. This is shown in almost all the responses given by teachers on why their instructional and assessment practices are influenced by the SSSCE. And it is particularly so, because teachers claim that they do, to a large extent, feel accountable for the performance of their students on the SSSCE. This is linked to the fact that they believe that the performances of students at the SSSCE are used to evaluate their competences as teachers (see results in Table 5.33 in the previous chapter) and identified schools heads, parents, students and their own conscience as persons constantly doing this evaluation.

The above belief of teachers has been recently compounded by the introduction of league tables where SSSs are rated and placed in the table upon the performance of their students at the SSSCE. In view of this the issue of teacher accountability in Ghana is moving from a perceptual phenomenon to an official policy, especially when

“at the recent school league, you know...individual teachers were called by the school authorities to answer why their students have not come out with good grades, and in that sense you have the moral obligation to do everything possible...to make sure that at least your students will also come out with good grades” (says a teacher).

Even where teachers are not called upon to explain the performance of their students, the idea of the league table alone reinforces the perception of accountability into them. Teachers' response in this direction is captured as, “Yes, in the sense that I will want the students to pass, because even quite recently there was a table of performance, of how the schools performed. So if I teach, I will have to teach for the students to pass the exam”.

The issue of teacher accountability in this respect is also interpreted, by teachers, as resulting from the kind of pressures that are brought to bear on them by some stakeholders, who they identified as parents, students, school heads, their conscience and colleagues in the profession.

“Yes, I think so, because if you take the parents especially; most parents believe that they send their children to because they want good results. And if at the end of the day the performance is not good you don’t feel too fine about it. Sometimes your own conscience; you feel that you haven’t done enough work”.

Another teacher rather felt the pressure from the students and the Headmaster or Headmistress.

“I don’t meet parents much, but with the students and the Head; at the end of it all...eh in last year’s Speech Day our department was adjudged the best department in the school. Even the children, the students, when we teach them...they know teachers who teach them... So students even assess us”.

The school heads are noted, by the teachers, for wanting explanations from them when their students did not perform well at the SSSCE.

“Sometimes you feel accountable. I quite remember after results have been presented, sometimes, you will be asked to explain the performance; whether it’s a better performance or a low performance. Especially when the performance is quite low, you are compelled to explain why your students could not perform, so that is where the accountability comes in”.

As stated earlier on, to some teachers, accountability does not end with parents, students, school heads and their conscience, but extends to their professional colleagues, who they feel will be evaluating them according to the performance of their students.

“I feel myself accountable to the school administration; that is the authorities, my colleague staff; because if your students perform well they know that you are actually on course. And the students, because they will tell you oh...your students have performed well and therefore you are good or something like that. So, in a way if my students do not perform well, I mean I have not done well. It’s more or less like a way of trying to shape your...you know...maybe trying to adjust and make some few amendments to make sure that your teaching is helping to...But again if one is not very careful it will also mean that you are preparing the people for only examination”.

A teacher, in this respect, went further to intimate that the aspirations or expectations of other stakeholders place the onus on teachers to ensure that their students do well at the external examination, making them focus their aim on students' ability to do well at this exam.

“In fact that is what we are all aiming at; for students to pass. So if you are aiming at for students to pass, then it looks as if you are trying to meet the aspirations of all the stakeholders. Even other colleagues around, your own expectation...you should be able to meet it”.

The situation above compels teachers to see the performance of their students at the external exam to be resting on their shoulders, thus taking a great amount of responsibility for such performance.

“...the performance or success of the students rest on the shoulders of the master and, you know, your teaching ability, process, can positively or negatively impact on the students' performance... So I do my best to get my students to pass, so that I also get some credit... So when they fail you feel guilty, and there you become quite accountable to the stakeholders, because they might think that you are master who didn't contribute well to the students' success”.

In addition to taking the responsibility of students' performance at the external examination upon themselves, teachers also have some kind of emotional attachment to the students, in terms of their performance at the examination. In this respect teachers claim that they do feel ashamed, bad, disturbed or sad whenever their students perform poorly at the SSSCE. The opposite is that they do become happy and fulfilled if the performance of their students is good. Teachers are of the view that the sense of shame they undergo when their students perform badly at the external examination is due to their conscientiousness. “I feel if you are a teacher with a conscience that should be...you will be ashamed, seriously. And knowing very well that you've done something and then people you expect to do well are not able to; to a great extent, you will be ashamed”.

Teachers also claim to feel disturbed if the results of their students on the SSSCE do not meet their own expectation. “Definitely as a teacher you want success, and if it doesn't come the way I expect it; I don't feel at ease. I feel disturbed”.

“Certainly we see as teachers; it is not the money that motivates us, but then the performance; results have been released, students have done well, is more than you being given hundred million. If they do not perform, you will also not feel... So you the teacher, you are now being looked up to. If they have not done well, you have that sense of shame”.

The above statement was made by a teacher to signify that students’ performance on the external assessment is seen as a great source of motivation for teachers. That is a very good performance from the students will go a long way to boost their ego and feel confident about their competences. However, in the situation where this does not happen, but students rather perform poorly, the joy and confidence they would have felt is replaced by shame. To another teacher the sense of shame and sadness become apparent when teachers start getting complaints about the poor performances of their students. “...sometimes complaints are why is it that your students have not done well, that’s where the other issues come in”.

It is very clear, from the above findings, that the effect of the impact of the external assessment on teachers’ classroom practices will have a consequential effect on other aspects of the curriculum process. That is, if teachers are going to teach and assess, only, according to the content and objectives of emphasis of the external assessment then we cannot say that the curriculum will be adequately and effectively implemented. Likewise neither can we say that students’ attainment of curriculum goals and objectives will be adequate nor congruent with what has been stipulated. This fact is supported by teachers when the majority of them (about 78%) agreed in the questionnaire survey that the nature of the SSSCE in Social Studies, in Ghana, is undermining the curriculum of the discipline (see Appendix-L, page 392).

Teachers therefore believe that the main thing that will drive them to teach and assess in congruence with the curriculum, is when the WAEC restructures its assessment practices with the aim of broadening its coverage to allow for the fair assessment of all the curriculum outcomes. It is, for instance, held that teachers should be given some level of freedom in the assessment of students and take an active role with the WAEC in looking at how best all the learning outcomes in Social Studies can be assessed.

“There should be some level of freedom in the assessment. Then if WAEC could have a way of drawing experts, may be, from the field...and then we can come together and decipher out some of this things then we can have a fair assessment of some of these tendencies children exhibit”.

The West Africa Examinations Council (WAEC) is also being called upon by the teachers to broaden its assessment coverage in Social Studies, since it is seen as being too narrow in focus. **“...if WAEC will broaden its assessment coverage to include all of the goals and objectives of the subject”.** Another teacher intimated thus, **“That is eh...if WAEC does not focus...eh...if WAEC does not draw its examination questions on only a particular part of the syllabus and makes it general and all encompassing”.** The foregoing is again capture in the following statement:

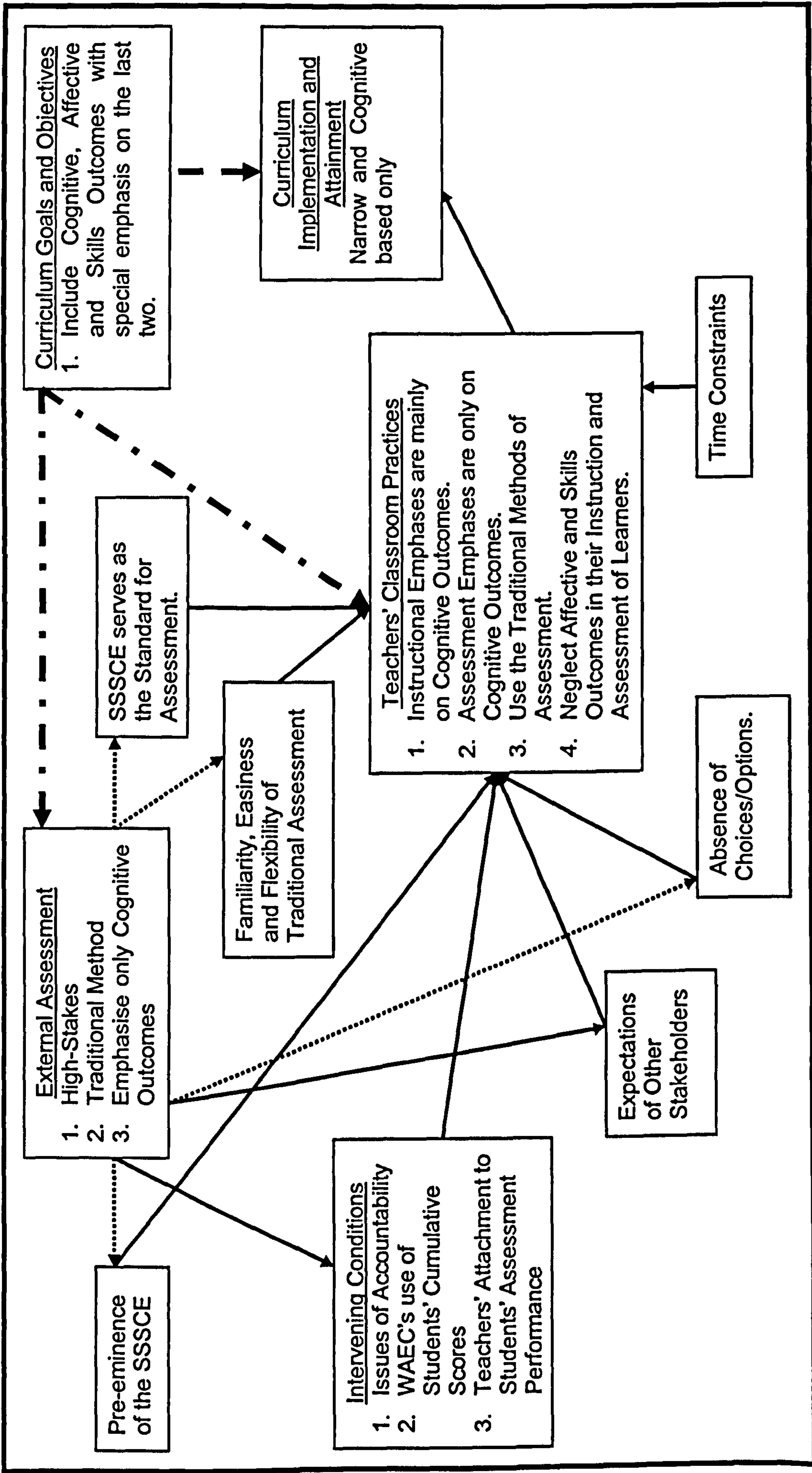
“...the questions that are set should not be knowledge based, but it should be questions that will be critical; that will demand thinking; that will demand situational answers so that when students answer such questions, they will not answer because they are able to memorise, but they will answer because that is what they will do if they find themselves in such situations”.

Teachers are taking the above position, because they feel that their hands have been tied, by being compelled to come under the constraining influence of the WAEC and thus will begin to do what is appropriate if the WAEC will review its assessment of students.

“Once you work, your output at the end of the day is going to be determined by somebody, you tailor yourself to that, but you see, as we are saying it’s not only that per se that the students should have. You could digress, bring in more values and what have you”.

To this particular teacher, teachers are certainly dancing to the tune of the WAEC, thus it is only when the SSSCE begins to emphasise all the curriculum goals and objectives that they will also teach and assess to cover them. According to the teachers, **“Well I think the SSSCE examination will be the sole determinant in my teaching”** (as stated by one of them), therefore they will only cover other areas in their teaching and assessment if the WAEC takes the lead to ensure that its assessment items in Social Studies adequately cover all the curriculum goals and objectives.

Diagram 6.1 (Conditional Matrix) Relationships among External Assessment, Classroom Practices and the Curriculum



6.5.0 BUILDING OF THE THEORIES AND PROPOSITIONS

6.5.1 The Central Phenomenon and its Relationship with the Other Phenomena

The findings discussed so far indicate an intricate relationship among certain parts of or phenomena within the curriculum process. The curriculum process, in this case, is taken to mean the identification and selection of curriculum goals and objectives, the implementation of the curriculum through classroom practices of teachers involving instruction and assessment, the attainment of the curriculum by learners and the assessment of students' learning outcomes in the curriculum at the external level. If these parts of the curriculum are placed on a straight line, the extreme ends of this line will be the curriculum goals and objectives, on one hand, and the external assessment on the other. The central phenomenon in these relationships, as revealed by the findings presented above, is the classroom practices of teachers, which include both their instructional and assessment practices. These relate to the kinds of curriculum goals and objectives that teachers emphasise in their instruction and assessment of students, as well as the extent of coverage of curriculum content in their instruction and assessment of students.

The relationships, as clearly shown in the conditional matrix (Diagram 6.1), reveal that the external assessment has a great and constraining impact on teachers' classroom practices. This kind of impact is made possible through some intervening conditions such as teachers' perceptions of accountability, teachers' interpretation of and response to students' poor performance on the external assessment (or teachers attachment to students' performance on the assessment) and the use or otherwise of students' cumulative scores by the assessment agency. The impact is defined by the restrictions that the demands of the external assessment places on the teachers' instructional and assessment decisions. In this respect, teachers claim that their instructional offerings and assessment demands are as narrow as the demands and coverage of the external assessment. It is thus very significant that the teachers were saying that their instructional and assessment coverage and focus will be broadened to cover adequately all the goals and objectives of the curriculum if the WAEC takes the lead in broadening the coverage and demands of the SSSCE. The foregoing

clearly indicates a directly proportional relationship between the external assessment and teachers' classroom practices, in respect of curriculum content and goals and objectives coverage.

Other conditions, apart from the three main intervening conditions identified above, exist to influence teachers to tailor their teaching and assessment of learners along the lines of the demands and curriculum coverage of the external assessment. These causal conditions were mentioned by teachers in their responses to why their instructional and assessment practices are influenced by the SSSCE. These include the pre-eminent position taken by the SSSCE over the curriculum goals and objectives; the absence of choices for teachers to stick to the curriculum rather the SSSCE, as sources of instructional and assessment objectives; expectations of other stakeholders about students' performance on the SSSCE and the fact that items in the SSSCE span only the cognitive domain. Teachers also talk about the fact that the nature and demands of the SSSCE is seen as standards set for them to follow, instead of the curriculum goals and objectives in the official syllabus and also about the fact that time constraints do not make it easy for them to teach and assess to adequately cover the curriculum even if they are ready to do so. Thus they find the traditional method of assessment much easier and flexible to use since they are more familiar with it than the alternative forms of assessment.

It therefore becomes apparent that the impact of the external assessment on teachers' classroom practices will subsequently lead to a narrowing effect on the curriculum, as many of the curriculum goals and objectives will be neglected by teachers in their instruction and assessment, because they are being neglected at the external examination. A logical effect of the above will also be the narrow and thus inadequate attainment of the curriculum goals and objectives by learners and thus jeopardising the effectiveness of the curriculum as a whole. It thus goes without saying that the external assessment has a serious systemic impact on the curriculum.

6.5.2 Conditional Matrix

The diagram (Diagram 6.1), as stated above, shows the linkage which defines a relationship between external assessment and teachers' classroom practices. However, there exist some intervening conditions that make it possible for the external assessment to have the kind of impact it is reportedly having on teachers' classroom practices. In addition to the main intervening conditions the other conditions that cause the teachers to teach and assess to the test are also linked to the central phenomenon and the principal cause, the external assessment, to show the relationship among them. The short dashed arrows used to show the link between the external assessment and the other causal conditions indicate the fact that these conditions emanate from the external assessment and go to explain how teachers are describing the power it has come to assumed. The diagram also shows the curriculum goals and objectives which are supposed to inform teachers' classroom practices but are not adequately doing so because of the impact of the external assessment. The diagram also reveals the kind of impact the external assessment has on teachers' classroom practices, by indicating exactly what their instructional and assessment practices entail.

The subsequent effect of the above relationship is the narrow and ineffective implementation of the curriculum and thus the inadequate attainment of its goals and objectives by learners, as shown in the diagram. Finally, the diagram depicts a consequential narrowing effect on the curriculum itself, as many of its goals and objectives are neglected both by the external assessment and subsequently the teachers. The above thus creates a disjointed relationship, where there should have been a perfect one, between the curriculum and the external assessment on one hand, and the curriculum and teachers' classroom practices on the other. The perfect relationship that should have existed implies the adequate coverage of the curriculum content and goals and objectives in the tasks of the external assessment and in teachers' classroom practices.

6.5.3 Theories and Propositions

The relationships among the phenomena of the curriculum process (in respect of curriculum change and implementation in Social Studies in Ghana), as revealed by Diagram 6.1 above, lead us to make the following propositions.

1. If the coverage of the external assessment on the curriculum is broadened, teachers will also equally broaden the goals and objectives of emphasis in their instruction and assessment to meet that of the external assessment.
2. Conversely, if the outcomes of emphasis at the external assessment are narrowed, teachers will equally narrow the focus of their teaching and assessment in respect of the curriculum goals and objectives.
3. Teachers will adequately cover the goals and objectives of the curriculum in their classroom practices if the external assessment does so.

We can therefore theorise from the above propositions about the relationship between external assessment and teachers' classroom practices that:

- There is a direct proportional relationship between the curriculum coverage in the external assessment and the curriculum coverage in teachers' instructional and assessment practices.

If the assumption that learners' attainment of curriculum goals and objectives are directly related to what teachers emphasise in their classroom practices holds, then the following proposition will apply:

4. Learners' attainment of curriculum goals and objectives will be directly proportional to those usually covered by the external assessment.

A further theory follows from the findings presented above, the relationships among the phenomena depicted in the conditional matrix, and the aforementioned theory and propositions. The theory proposes that;

- The effective and successful implementation of an innovative curriculum depends on a corresponding change in the external assessment to ensure that its nature and demands are congruent with the curriculum goals and objectives.

6.6.1 DISCUSSION

The picture painted above describing the relationship between external assessment and the curriculum goals and objectives is largely supported by assertions in the literature that external assessment drives classroom instruction and subsequently influences the curriculum content (Harlen, 2005; Havnes, 2004; Grant, 2000). Furthermore, the first three propositions enumerated above are all verifiable by data gathered through the questionnaire in this study. The findings clearly support the argument that external assessment has a narrowing effect on the curriculum (Linn, Baker & Dunbar, 1991; Madaus, 1988). This study has also revealed that the nature and demands of the external assessment inhibits the pursuit of new curriculum goals (Broadfoot, 1995; Torrance, 1995; Kliebard, 1988).

Kliebard (op cit) corroborates the evidence in this study about the impact of the traditional nature of external assessment on the implementation of an innovative curriculum since he argued that a change in the curriculum without due regard to the context within which the curriculum is to operate will doom this new curriculum to a short life. Therefore the analyses and the literature allow us to theorise about the relationship between external assessment and teachers' classroom practices. The theorisation also extends to the relationship between the external assessment and the implementation of the innovative curriculum.

However, the findings in both this chapter and chapter five indicate that for the theories to apply, the external assessment in contention should be of a high-stakes nature. That is, students' performances on this assessment should be used to make important and far reaching decisions about their future educational and career progression. As revealed by the report above, the high-stakes nature of external assessment will make stakeholders, especially parents and students, insist that teachers comply with the demands of this assessment. On the other hand, low-stakes external assessment will not lead stakeholders to put pressure on teachers to ensure that students perform well on it.

In arriving at the theories and propositions listed above sight was not lost of the fact that other equally important factors exist to either hinder or promote effective classroom practices and the attainment of the curriculum goals and objectives. Some of these conditions are the availability of teaching and learning resources, enough instructional time to cover the curriculum, an enabling administrative regime in the schools, an effective and efficient support system for teachers and the competence and capability of the teacher. However, responses from teachers indicate that whereas they may be able to engage some of these conditions and devise strategies that will ensure that students still attain the levels of performance that the curriculum stipulates for them, that option becomes limited or non-existent when it comes to the external assessment.

The claim made by teachers is that they have no option or choice when it comes to the demands of the external assessment than to just go along with them in order to satisfy the expectations of the other stakeholders in the educational enterprise. For instance, although teachers complained about time allocation and unavailability of teaching materials for them to effectively implement the Social Studies curriculum for the SSS, they still did find strategies that enabled them to deliver on the results that were expected of them. However, teachers state that the demands of the external assessment are the sole or major determinant of their classroom practices and believe that any attempt to drift from the focus of the external assessment to the intended curriculum will result in their students failing or not doing well on the examination.

Consequently, while other conditions could easily be handled by teachers, it will be very difficult for them to focus on only the actual/intended curriculum and still expect their students to do well on the examination. The discussion thus indicates that the theories and propositions developed in this chapter are well grounded in the data collected for the study and the literature. Most importantly, these theories and propositions indicate a strong cause and effect relationship between the external assessment and the curriculum content or goals and objectives. These theories and propositions therefore fill the vacuum, in the literature, about the absence of such a relationship as argued by Mehrens (op cit).

7.0.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

7.1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a summary of the whole thesis. It gives a brief overview of the issue that was researched and the background of the issue, as was identified and discussed in Chapter One. This is then followed by an overview of the important issues discussed in the literature about the main issue researched. The research questions, which formed the basis of this research, are listed, followed by a brief account of the methodology applied in the research. A summary of the major findings under each of the research questions are presented and briefly discussed in relation to the problem researched. This is followed by a section on conclusion/contribution, which discusses the implications of the research and the contributions it has made to knowledge in the specific field of study. Recommendations are then made on methodological issues and issues that should form the bases of future research in the area of study.

7.2.0 SUMMARY

7.2.1 Overview of the Research Problem and the Background

This study was set out to find the extent of systemic impact of external assessment (SSSCE) on the Social Studies curriculum in Ghana's senior secondary schools. The systemic impact was defined as (see page 35 above) the impact of the external assessment on teachers' classroom practices, the effective implementation and students' attainment of the curriculum goals and objectives. The basis of this investigation is situated in the context where an innovative curriculum has been introduced without consideration given to the organisational arrangements within which it is to operate. The organisational arrangements mentioned above were particularly narrowed down to the arrangement that already exists for the assessment of learning outcomes at the external level. The assumption underlying the choice of external assessment is that its high-stakes nature makes it the single most important determinant of the successful implementation and attainment of the goals and objectives of a curriculum.

The innovativeness of the SSS Social Studies curriculum in Ghana lies in the fact that it broadens the curricula emphasis to include outcomes from the affective and skills domains of learning. As explained in the background to the study in chapter one, the previous Social Studies curriculum in Ghana emphasised mainly cognitive outcomes and its content only consisted of topics selected from the existing Social Science disciplines. This therefore did not give Social Studies a character of its own, as it lived in the shadows of the disciplines from which its content was selected from. The new curriculum therefore introduces a thematic based curriculum which emphasises attitudinal and value changes and the acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills that will enable the learner to solve both his/her personal and societal problems.

Thus in this case, the principles of assessment (see Mager, 1990; Tyler, 1949) demand that assessment tasks and items should adequately cover these outcomes to ascertain the extent to which they are being attained by learners. The thrust of the argument is that a curriculum cannot be said to be attained if no evidence exists, through the results of students' assessment, to indicate that its important outcomes are being attained. Even though the syllabus of the SSS Social Studies in Ghana (CRDD, 1998) stipulated that teachers should devote about 83% of the assessment emphasis on the affective outcomes of the subject (see page 17 above) other arrangements make it difficult for teachers to adhere to this stipulation. That is, the same syllabus recommends the external assessment to focus on only cognitive outcomes. The question therefore is, why would teachers teach and assess outcomes that they know for sure will not be assessed at the external level, especially where this assessment is used to determine which learner progresses further on the educational or career ladder? The other question is what will be the outcome so far as the classroom practices of teachers and thus the implementation of the curriculum and its attainment by learners are concerned?

7.2.2 Overview of the Issues Reviewed in the Literature

The literature provides a variety of evidence; all pointing to the fact that an innovative curriculum, which is left to operate within the context of existing

traditional organisational arrangements is doomed for a short life (Kliebard, op cit). One such evidence in the literature is that since teachers invariably teach-to-the-test the curriculum content and outcomes that are not covered by the external assessment are equally neglected by the teachers (see Broadfoot, 1995; Kliebard, op cit; Madaus, 1988). This action of teachers in the classroom is said to derive from the context that it is the external assessment that drives classroom instruction, students' learning and consequently, the curriculum content. In the first place, the nature of the external assessment itself is said to be base, elemental and trivial (Bennett, et al, 2003; Ebel & Frisbie, 1991) and thus does not promote the teaching and learning of high-order skills. This suggest that teachers, by teaching to the test will only be teaching the base and elemental parts of the curriculum content to the neglect of almost all the important and higher-order outcomes in the said curriculum.

Teachers' neglect of the areas of the curriculum that are not covered by the external assessment in their instruction and assessment is said to lead to the narrowing of the curriculum (Linn, Baker & Dunbar, 1991; Madaus, op cit). Thus so far as the external assessment lacks the objectivity and detailedness to provide a true and comprehensive data of students' real educational attainment, teachers' classroom practices will also lack the objectivity and detailedness of providing the true picture of the implementation and attainment of the curriculum. Despite the fact that teachers are aware of the potential danger of the impact of the external assessment on their classroom practices and the curriculum as a whole, they not only still teach-to-the-test, but also assess to meet the scope and demands of the test (see Harlen & Deakin Crick, 2002).

The statement above becomes significant when juxtaposed against the fact that the SSS Social Studies syllabus in Ghana provides teachers with the opportunity to use alternative/authentic assessment devices to assess for some of the new goals and objectives that have been introduced in the curriculum. However this is not the case, as teachers still use the traditional form of assessment to assess their students. The question then is why are teachers reluctant to use the full range of assessment tools made available to them? Vandeyar (2005) for instance proffers an answer when he

reported that teachers in South Africa failed to implement the demands of a new assessment policy because it conflicted with their beliefs and assumptions of the role of assessment and its relationship with learning. Hutchison & Hayward (2005) on the other hand attributed the failure of teachers to implement such innovative assessment guidelines, in the case of Scotland, to their inability to integrate data from the new assessment tools with the conventional test scores. This therefore provides a justification for this study to investigate the reason(s) that might be behind the reluctance or failure of Ghanaian teachers to utilise the alternative assessment devices.

Debates in the literature also suggest that the issue of teacher accountability is a major reason why teachers teach-to-the-test. According to Ebel & Frisbie (op cit) the press for public accountability of teachers' classroom practices has led to the introduction and retention of high-stakes external assessment. Even more pertinent is the use of students' results in this assessment to measure school and teacher performance, by governments and other interest groups (Gray & Wilcox, 1995). Kelly (1999) thus condemns this practice as encouraging the acceptance of simplistic educational goals (see page 91 above). Noddings (1992) also asserts that the accountability practice, coupled with the emphasis on scores representing the cognitive performance of students as a measure of school and teacher effectiveness has led to many schools becoming poor cultivators of emotional intelligence. Since the issue of accountability seems to pertain in Ghana too, albeit more perceptual than policy directive, it therefore became important to verify all these assertions with new data gathered in the course of this study.

The issue of teacher accountability is further compounded by their attachment to their students' academic progress. Cockburn & Haydn (2004) for instance report that teachers are self motivated in their job by the children they teach, in that they tend to derive joy and fulfilment from the progress this children make in the attainment of the curriculum. Teachers, who were surveyed by Cockburn & Haydn (op cit), claimed that an excellent or good performance of the children in learning attainments, coupled with the positive comments and feedback from school heads,

colleagues and parents is what makes them enjoy being teachers. It is therefore logical that teachers will feel ashamed when the children they teach perform poorly on an assessment which is aimed at evaluating their levels of attainment in the curriculum (Rottenberg & Smith, 1990). It becomes indicative, as a consequence of the above, that teachers will do whatever possible, including teaching and assessing to the external assessment, to ensure very good performances of their students at this assessment.

7.2.3 Research Questions

The aim of the study was to find the extent to which the external assessment for senior secondary school candidates in Ghana (SSSCE) systemically impacts on the Social Studies curriculum (CRDD, op cit). In pursuance of this aim, the following research questions were therefore identified to become the focus of the study.

1. To what extent are WAEC's SSSCE items in Social Studies congruent or compatible with the Goals and Objectives of the curriculum?
2. What impact do WAEC's assessment practices have on the classroom practices of Social Studies teachers in Ghana's SSSs?
3. Does a relationship exist between the demands of external assessment and the implementation and attainment of curriculum goals and objectives in the schools?

Subsequently, three more subsidiary research questions were included in order to cover all the facets of the system being studied. These are as follows:

1. Do the SSSCE items measure all the major learner outcomes in Social Studies?
2. Are teachers of Social Studies in Ghana's Senior Secondary Schools teaching to the test?
3. If the answer to question 2 above is positive, are there other factors that make teachers to teach to the test?

7.2.4 Overview of Research Methodology and Procedure

The mixed method research design was selected, on pragmatic basis, as the best method that could help the researcher collect the necessary data that will result in

valid and reliable findings. Thus both quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative (interview and document analyses) methods were utilised in this study. The sources of data were identified as:

- I. SSSCE Papers in Social Studies, from 1999 to 2004.
- II. The 1998 SSS Social Studies syllabus
- III. SSS Social Studies Teachers

Whereas the whole syllabus was purposefully selected for the study, the multi-stage approach was used to select samples from among the teachers and the SSSCE Social Studies items (see page 139 – 144).

After designing and pre-testing the questionnaire and the interview guide, the researcher proceeded to the field in Ghana to collect all the relevant data and document for the study. This included visiting schools to administer questionnaires on teachers and interviewing some of those who participated in the questionnaire. Data thus collected was subjected to analyses, which included the use of the SPSS for the questionnaire data, content and grounded theory analyses of interview data and validity analysis of the SSSCE items. The findings resulting from these analyses are presented in the section below.

7.2.5 Summary of Findings

The following major findings were made in relation to the research questions listed above.

Major Research Question 1: To what extent are WAEC's SSSCE items in Social Studies congruent or compatible with the Goals and Objectives of the curriculum?

Analysis of both the SSSCE Paper 1 and Paper 2 items, which were sampled, revealed that the SSSCE items in Social Studies were largely incongruent with the curriculum goals and objectives of the subject. This means that the items did not adequately cover the goals and objectives of the curriculum, as majority of the items analysed were assessing for knowledge only. It therefore makes these items largely inappropriate and thus invalid. The analysis also revealed lack of balance in the scope and demands of the assessment items, as some content area as well as affective

and skills outcomes were either inadequately represented or not represented in the assessment. In fact, the majority of the items were found to be related to topics in the Year One curriculum. The findings confirm the assertion made in the literature that external assessment only assesses knowledge to the exclusion of higher-order intellectual skills, personal and social competencies and attitudes (Torrance, 1995; Wilson, 1992). Most significantly, the fact that the SSSCE was not adequately addressing the curriculum content, goals and objectives of Social Studies is not lost on teachers, as indicated by the majority (77%) of them.

In direct relation with the above major research question and thus the analysis carried out to arrive at the findings shown above is the following.

Subsidiary Research Question 1: Do the SSSCE items measure all the major learner outcomes in Social Studies?

The item analyses carried out in this direction showed that the SSSCE items do not measure all the major learning outcomes in Social Studies, particularly the affective and skills outcomes. As indicated above, the analysis revealed that these outcomes were totally excluded from the external assessment even though teachers are supposed to cover them in their instruction. This revelation confirms WAEC's own report that some of the SSSCE Papers do not adequately cover the content and objectives of their respective teaching syllabus (WEAC, 2002).

Major Research Question 2: What impact do WAEC's assessment practices have on the classroom practices of Social Studies teachers in Ghana's SSSs?

The analyses of both the questionnaire and interview data revealed that WAEC's external assessment practices (i.e. the scope and demands of the SSSCE) have a significant and constraining impact on the classroom practices of SSS Social Studies teachers in Ghana. This is verifiable by the fact that a variety of evidence gathered from the data shows that the SSSCE influences teachers' selection of instructional objectives and content, mode of assessment and outcomes of emphasis in assessment. The constraint in the impact of the SSSCE on teachers' classroom practices is derived from their claims of being under pressure by other stake-holders to produce good results on this assessment, irrespective of their awareness of the inadequacy and

thus inappropriateness of the SSSCE items. Further evidence of the constraint lies in the fact that even though 85% of the teachers claim awareness of and familiarity with the range of assessment methods that the syllabus recommends, the majority still only utilise the method of assessment employed by the WAEC in the SSSCE.

All the major findings presented above and other discussed in chapter five support the assertions made in the literature about the impact of external assessment on teachers' instructional and assessment practices (see Harlen, 2005; Havnes, 2004; Harlen & Deakin Crick, 2002; Grant, 2000). The findings also show that teachers neglect rather very important learning outcomes in their instructional and assessment practices all because they are equally neglected by the external assessment.

Subsidiary Research Question 2: Are teachers of Social Studies in Ghana's Senior Secondary Schools teaching to the test?

It is clear from the evidence provided above and in chapter five that SSS Social Studies teachers in Ghana are mostly teaching to the test. In other words, the scope and demands of the external assessment become the major determinant of teachers' instructional decisions and practices, instead of the curriculum content, goals and objectives. This thus provides empirical evidence to support the claim in the literature to that effect. It must be noted that some authors (e.g. Popham, 1987 cited by Torrance, 1995) believe that teaching to the test or test driven instruction is positive, as it leads to the improvement in the skills being tested. However findings under the first major research question indicate that the only 'positive' thing that will result from this practice is teachers' emphasis on base, elemental or trivial outcomes that the external assessment emphasises. And as Madaus (1988; 90) also states, "The only evidence to support this position is that the scores on test of basic skills rise, not that the skill necessarily improves".

The question we may ask is, why will teachers teach-to-the-test when they know that the test itself is largely inappropriate and invalid, as it does not adequately cover the gamut of curriculum goals and objectives? The foregoing leads us to the third subsidiary research questions.

Subsidiary Research Question 3: If the answer to question 2 above is positive, are there other factors that make teachers to teach to the test?

Evidence from both the questionnaire and interview data shows that other important intervening conditions exist, which makes teachers not only teach-to-the-test, but also assess in a similar manner as the external assessment. Analyses of both data revealed that the majority of teachers feel they are under pressure from some stakeholders to devote much of their instructional time to the preparation of their students towards the SSSCE and also to ensure that these students perform very well in the SSSCE. Teachers also believe that students' performances on this assessment are constantly being used to evaluate their professional competence and thus feel under pressure to teach only content covered by the WAEC in the SSSCE. The findings also indicate that the pressure felt by teachers to teach only content covered by the WAEC is also as a result of the shame they feel when their students perform poorly at the SSSCE.

Teachers claimed that all these pressures and the shame of seeing their students perform poorly at the SSSCE places constraints on them to match their classroom practices to the scope and demands of the external assessment. Evidence gathered from the data analysis is indicative of the fact that teachers' reluctance or inability to use the full range of assessment methods available to them, to assess the gamut of the curriculum goals and objectives, is also due to their inability to integrate data from these assessments with the conventional scores produced by the traditional method of assessment. This confirms Hutchison & Hayward's (op cit) findings about a similar situation in Scotland.

Major Research Question 3: Does a relationship exist between the demands of external assessment and the implementation and attainment of curriculum goals and objectives in the schools?

It is clear that evidence produced above indicates a relationship between the demands of the external assessment and the implementation and attainment of the curriculum goals and objectives of Social Studies in Ghana. Furthermore, a grounded theory approach to the analysis of the interview data revealed an intricate relationship between the external assessment, on one hand, and other parts of the curriculum

process on the other hand. In the centre of this web of relationships (central phenomenon) is teachers' classroom practices (i.e. instructional and assessment), which are influenced by the external assessment as a result of a variety of intervening conditions. The impact of the external assessment on teachers' classroom practices consequently leads to the implementation and attainment of a narrow aspect of the curriculum and thus resulting into a disjointed relationship between the external assessment and the curriculum, and teachers' classroom practices and the curriculum.

The relationships among the various phenomena in the curriculum process, which are depicted in the conditional matrix (Diagram 6.1, page 253A) lead us to make the following propositions and theories.

Propositions:

1. If the coverage of the external assessment on the curriculum is broadened, teachers will also equally broaden the goals and objectives of emphasis in their instruction and assessment to meet that of the external assessment.
2. Conversely, if the outcomes of emphasis at the external assessment are narrowed, teachers will equally narrow the focus of their teaching and assessment in respect of the curriculum goals and objectives.
3. Teachers will adequately cover the curriculum goals and objectives of the subject in their classroom practices if the external assessment does so.
4. Learners' attainment of curriculum goals and objectives will be directly proportional to those usually covered by the external assessment.

Theories:

- ❖ There is a direct proportional relationship between the curriculum coverage in the external assessment and the curriculum coverage in teachers' instructional and assessment practices.
- ❖ The effective and successful implementation of an innovative curriculum depends on a corresponding change in the external

assessment to ensure that its nature and demands are congruent with the curriculum goals and objectives.

The relationships described above are supported by the claims in the literature that external assessment drives classroom instruction and assessment and subsequently influences the curriculum content (Harlen, op cit; Havnes, op cit; Harlen & Deakin Crick, op cit; Grant, op cit).

7.3.0 CONCLUSION/ CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FIELD

7.3.1 Implications of Findings

An evaluation of all the findings revealed by this study indicates a systemic impact of the external assessment on the curriculum mostly because of its high-stakes nature. In other words, every single part or phenomena of the curriculum process, involving its instruction, internal assessment and the attainment of its goals and objectives by learners are influenced by the external assessment. Furthermore, all stake-holders in the educational enterprise (i.e. teachers, school heads, parents, students, educational authorities and politicians) are influenced in their decisions and evaluation of the success of the implementation of the curriculum, by the performance of students at the external assessment. The impact of the external assessment on the stake-holders of education makes them put much pressure on teachers and schools to deliver on the kind of results they expect students to get in the external assessment. More so, many of these stake-holders are constantly evaluating the professional competence of teachers and school effectiveness by the performance of the students in the external assessment. The evaluation of teacher competence, by the other stake-holders in the educational enterprise, coupled with the pressures they place on teachers result in the teachers emphasising only the content and demands of the external assessment in their classroom practices.

7.3.1a Policy Implications

There are various implications of the findings, as described above, which can be put in three main categories namely, Policy, Practice and Discourse. Policy wise these

findings revealed that it is improper to introduce an innovative curriculum, as the SSS Social Studies curriculum is, without due consideration being given to its external assessment arrangements. The foregoing is supported by the fact that findings from the study revealed that the external assessment has a narrowing impact on the curriculum and thus is undermining the implementation and attainment of the curriculum goals and objectives. Since indications are that it will be difficult to currently do away with the influence of the external assessment on the curriculum, *the best solution will be for policy makers, curriculum designers and assessment experts to agree on how best to assess learners on all the learning outcomes* and also for assessment to adequately cover the curriculum content. Thus it is important for those involved in educational policy to note that an effective implementation and attainment of curriculum goals and objectives significantly depend on the context within which the external assessment of its learning outcomes is carried out. And, as indicated in the second theory above, it is important that curriculum review and assessment review are done concurrently.

The policy dimension also includes serious considerations being given to how best data produced by different methods of assessment can be effectively integrated to allow for a comprehensive, meaningful and valid interpretation of students' attainment levels in the curriculum. This is due to the fact that the study also revealed that teachers are unable or reluctant to use the full range of assessment devices available to them, because they are unable to integrate data from the alternative assessment devices with scores from the traditional method of assessment.

7.3.1b Implications for Practice

The study also revealed that apart from teachers' inability or reluctance to use the full range of assessment devices at their disposal, they mimic or replicate the external assessment, because they do not believe the WAEC utilises the cumulative scores of students resulting from their continuous assessment in the school. This, to them, means that the WAEC does not regard their contribution towards the assessment of students in whatever form. Teachers will therefore prefer to go by the method of

assessment employed by the WAEC, because it is seen as the standard form of assessment for all to follow.

These findings imply that teachers should be involved in arriving at the best way in which these different assessment data can be integrated. Since only few teachers can be involved in arriving at the best method of integration of students' assessment data, there should be a programme in the continuous professional development of teachers that will ensure the honing of their skills in this direction. The findings also imply that the issue of treating the external assessment of students as a black box should be dealt with, in order to remove any suspicion or doubts in the minds of teachers about the utilisation of the cumulative scores of students who sit at the external assessment. In other words, teachers should be made to see and understand how these scores are utilised by the WAEC. Perhaps it will be significant in this direction if the final scores of students are segregated for teachers, especially, to see how the cumulative scores of students' internal assessments reflect in their final scores and thus grades.

An innovative performance appraisal mechanism should be put in place to ensure that teachers follow the curriculum of a subject, as provided in the syllabus, to the letter. This will ensure that teachers' performance in the implementation of the curriculum is fairly and comprehensively evaluated without resorting to students' performance on the external assessment. In so doing we might perhaps want to consider Creemers' (1996) criteria for measuring school or teacher effectiveness (see section 2.3.5 in the literature review). Should there still be the need to include students' outcomes in this criteria, as Creemers suggest, then we should go beyond academic or cognitive outcomes and also include affective and skills outcomes.

7.3.1c Implications for Discourse

Many of the claims about the negative impact of external assessment on the curriculum in the literature can best be described as logical assumptions (Mehrens, 1998) or conjectures arising out of personal experiences. For instance not much evidence has been provided to back the claims that teachers teach-to-the-test while it is also difficult to come across evidence, in the literature, suggesting that the impact

of external assessment on the curriculum is systemic. Findings of this research therefore enrich the discourse in the field of assessment and curriculum goals and objectives with empirical evidence to support most of these claims. This therefore helps in moving the direction of the debates in the literature from assumptions and conjectures to facts and empirical evidence, at least in the context of this research. The findings revealed in this study also give an indication as to where the focus of discourse in this field should be. It is hereby proposed that the focus of discourse in this field should shift from the debates about the primacy or importance of the various assessment devices and their reliability and validity thereof to how best we can ensure that the full range of curriculum content, goals and objectives is implemented and attained through teachers' classroom practices.

7.3.2 Contributions to Knowledge

It can be inferred from the implications of the study, as stated above, that some very significant contributions have been made to our knowledge in the broad area defined by the issue researched. First and foremost, this study reveals that the impact of external assessment on the curriculum is not discreet (i.e. affecting individual components of the curriculum process differently), but systemic (as shown in the conditional matrix). This leads us to the development of the propositions and theories enumerated above. Most importantly, some of these propositions and theories fill apparent gaps in our knowledge about the relationship between external assessment and the implementation and attainment of curriculum goals and objectives (see Grant, *op cit*; Mehrens, *op cit*).

Where very few indications have been provided in the literature on the reasons or factors that cause teachers' classroom practices to be influenced by the external assessment, findings of this study reveal evidence of the conditions or factors that compel teachers to teach and assess in the direction of the external assessment. This broadens our knowledge and understanding about why teachers, in their classroom practices, invariably neglect/ignore many of the curriculum goals and objectives and emphasise only those covered in the external assessment.

7.4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.4.1 Methodological Concerns

The utilisation of the two traditions in research methodology in this study proved to be very productive, as suggested by Nau (1995), in that each of the methods used was seen as complementing the other. That is, whereas the questionnaire results were used to quantitatively illustrate the results of the interview those of the interview provided clarification for the questionnaire results. The findings from the interview data were useful in providing rich texts that ensured the expansion of the findings from the questionnaire for better insight into the phenomena being reported on.

However, there were difficulties since the problem of inconsistencies and contradictions, as cautioned by Bauer & Gaskell (2000), was encountered in the course of analysing data from both the questionnaire and the interview. The anticipation of this problem, resulting from the utilisation of the mixed method design, enabled the researcher to handle it effectively by dwelling on various arguments put forward in the literature (see Singleton, Jr & Straits, 2002; Burn, 2000; Schober & Conrad, 1997; Sudman, et al, 1996). In juxtaposing Burns' (op cit) argument that close-ended items or questionnaires have the tendency to force responses that are inappropriate against the contradictions in the responses of teachers in this study, we came to the conclusion that the questionnaire survey might not be the best approach in researching practice. There were indications that some of the teachers selected some of the responses in the questionnaire, which sought to verify their professional practices, even though they were not practicing them. This was proven when the same teachers in the interview gave different answers that contradicted their responses on the questionnaire.

Even though some of these difficulties could have been resolved in the research, by verifying teachers' responses on the questionnaire with documentary evidence of their practices, the inability of the researcher to collect such documents weakens the findings in that respect. The issue as reported in chapter five, under section 5.4.2 (pages 198-199), indicates that the findings on teachers' assessment practices would

have been more conclusive if the researcher was able to further verify their questionnaire responses with their past assessment papers. This would have provided better evidence to support the arguments made under this section and thus made the findings more conclusive. However, the absence of such data compelled the researcher to resort to other arguments, rather than empirical evidence, to choose the interview findings over that of the questionnaire. The foregoing thus indicates a methodological problem in researching practice, especially when using questionnaires in this respect.

Thus taking this methodological problem, together with arguments in the literature about questionnaire responses, into consideration the researcher proposes that interviews, observations and document study (where portfolios/diaries of events and practice are kept by professionals) may serve a better purpose in researching into practice than the questionnaire. This is because, in the case of interview, the researcher has the opportunity to ask further questions to clarify previous responses given by interviewees. When possible, observation will serve as the best method in researching into a particular practice, as the researcher is able to collect first hand information about this practice from the practitioners. Also evaluation of respondents' portfolios/diaries, where these are kept, or any documentary evidence of practice can be employed to further verify the observed characteristics or behaviours in such cases.

7.4.2 Future Research Focus

Whereas this research can be said to have made significant contributions to the field of study, it is by no means the 'end-it-all' of researches in the particular field. It is important to note that this study revealed some interesting findings that gave indications of the focus or direction of future researches within the context of the problem studied. For instance analysis of the data in chapter 4 revealed that some teachers responded differently on two related items in the questionnaire. That is, whereas 77% agreed that the SSSCE does not cover all the goals and objectives of the curriculum, the percentage of the majority dropped to 59.5% for those who agreed that the SSSCE does not assess affective outcomes (see Tables 4.3 & 4.4 in

chapter 4). Further statistical analysis showed that this percentage difference was not significant, because a chi-squared test of the crosstabulation of the two responses revealed a significant relationship between them ($P: .021 < .05$). That is a teacher who agreed that the SSSCE does not cover all the goals and objectives of the Social Studies curriculum is also likely to agree that the SSSCE does not assess affective outcomes in the subject.

However, when the respondents were grouped into their various subject specialisations in another crosstabulation of the responses, the chi-squared test revealed that the relationship between the responses of teachers who specialised in other subjects was not significant ($P: .423 > .05$). On the other hand the findings, as presented in chapter 4 (page 177), revealed that the relationship between the responses of teachers who specialised in Social Studies was very significant ($P: .01 < .05$). The crosstabulation (Table 4.6) shows that about half the number of the teachers (i.e. those who specialised in other subjects) who agreed that the SSSCE does not cover all the goals and objectives of Social Studies were rather of the opinion that the SSSCE assesses affective outcomes.

This difference, even though it was not further explored in this study, points to the fact that differences in the opinion of teachers about the impact of the SSSCE on their classroom practices and the curriculum can be significant among teachers of different subject specialisations. There is therefore the need for research that will focus on the impact of the SSSCE among teachers of different subject specialisation, who are teaching Social Studies in Ghana. The questions for this research could therefore be as follows:

- Does External Assessment impact differently on teachers of Social Studies (or another subject) with different subject specialisations?
- Are the differences (in respect of the above) significant?

The study revealed that teachers recognised the potential to assess affective outcomes in learners and then mentioned various alternative modes of assessment as the right tools for such assessment. However, these alternative methods of assessment are said

to be relatively expensive to conduct especially at the external/national level (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000). It therefore becomes important for future researches in assessment to also focus on the possibility of developing 'Paper and Pencil' test items that can be used to assess affective outcomes.

It is clear that the propositions and theories developed in chapter 6 are well grounded in the data (collected in the course of this study) and other propositions and assumptions in the literature, which were also verified with new data in this study. However, since these theories are still in the early stages of development, it is important to collect more data to either verify or test them as hypotheses. In this direction, this researcher proposes research that will collect documentary data from teachers to verify how the external assessment influences their classroom practices. This data may include teacher-constructed assessment items (i.e. past internal assessment papers) and teachers' lesson plans and notes.

Last, but not the least, is the need to find out what students define as relevant knowledge. This, apart from enabling us to verify the assertion in the literature that the prevailing assessment culture defines what is knowledge and thus influences students' learning, will also help us understand why students are compelled to put pressure on their teachers to teach-to-the-test as the findings in this research indicate.

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