

Article

Social Studies Teachers' Authentic Assessment Practices, Tools and Challenges in Assessing Students' Learning Outcomes

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Abstract: Assessment is a vital aspect of curriculum practice. The study adopted explanatory mixed-method approach and sequential research design. The population for the study comprised all Social Studies teachers in Junior High Schools in the Ayensuano District. Convenient sampling techniques and census method were used to select the district, and all the one hundred and twenty-seven (127) teachers who teach Social Studies in the junior high schools in the district. The main instruments used for data collection and analysis were questionnaire and interview guide. The quantitative data was analysed both descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The qualitative data was transliterated and coded based on themes. Pre-set themes were used to generate the transcript (text) data based upon the research questions and discussed. The study concluded that authentic assessment practices by Social Studies teachers included the occasional guidance they give to their students about how to interpret topics and situations into relevant tasks with a clearly defined goal, and how to relate their knowledge in practical challenges. The study also revealed that refined essays, oral presentations, interviews, case study discussions, and live performances as authentic assessment strategies or tools Social Studies teachers used in assessing their students' learning outcomes in lessons. The study indicated that large class size, traditional assessment (examination) system, insufficient logistics and infrastructure, a paucity of funds to begin various activities and programs, a lack of motivation from school administrators, time constraints and difficulty in developing some authentic assessment tasks coupled with assessing some lessons using authentic assessment method are some of the criteria that influence the effectiveness of authentic assessment execution in teaching Social Studies courses. It is recommended that educational leaders should provide the resources to motivate Social Studies teachers to use authentic assessments for students' learning in the classroom situation. It is also recommended that, Colleges of Education, Universities and National Teaching Council should organise professional development workshops and seminars to build the capacity of trained Social Studies teachers on the effective uses of authentic assessment practices.

How to cite this paper:

Asante, G., Kojo Brany, N., Senyo Osafo, S., & Boateng, G. (2023). Social Studies Teachers' Authentic Assessment Practices, Tools and Challenges in Assessing Students' Learning Outcomes. *Universal Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3(1), 23–34. Retrieved from <https://www.scipublications.com/journal/index.php/ujssh/article/view/696>

Received: November 15, 2022

Accepted: March 10, 2023

Published: May 15, 2023

Keywords: Social studies, Authentic Assessment, Practices, Strategies, Challenges Learning Outcomes

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1. Introduction

Social Studies is a multi-disciplinary subject that aims to equip learners with knowledge, attitudes, values and skills that will enable them to become active, informed, innovative, and responsible citizens. Social Studies addresses the challenges or problems that confront and threaten the survival of the Ghanaian society. The teacher should emphasise these important areas in the day-to-day learning as they are aimed at promoting higher order thinking among learners [1]. Social Studies teachers within the

study area have a positive perception of a meaningful Social Studies curriculum. Social Studies curriculum engages students in the formulation of educational goals, selection of instructional strategies and assessment of learning outcomes; focus on the psychological and developmental needs of students; place emphasis on the social world, its challenges, strengths, and its prospects; and emphasis on contemporary, enduring and pervasive social problems and link them to students' real-life situations [2]. Social Studies curricula is more of authentic forms of profile dimension assessment techniques in laying a strong foundation for knowledge base for teaching and assessing the learners' learning outcomes [3]. This implies that in order to ensure effective formative assessment practices in Social Studies lesson, teachers need to develop appropriate tools to improve on their formative assessment practices in the classroom [4].

Authentic assessment is paramount to both teachers and students if they are implemented effectively in a Social Studies classroom [5]. A study on Social Studies Teachers' Knowledge Base in Authentic Assessment in Selected Senior High Schools (SHSs) in the Central Region of Ghana, published in *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* revealed that the form of authentic assessment used in their classrooms was limited by policies, time, resources and assessment methods employed by their schools. These policies affect teachers' use of this assessment method because the subject is a core in the SHSs [5].

Teachers, on the other hand, appear to rely heavily on lower-level thinking tasks, paying little attention to authentic assessment, which is supported by high-level thinking skills [5-7]. For example, Eshun and Mensah revealed that assessment tools employed by Senior High School Social Studies teachers were highly concentrated on lower-order thinking skills of recall and comprehension with less attention on higher-order thinking levels of evaluation, application, and synthesis. Researchers revealed that authentic assessments in Ghana are restrained by regulations, time, funds, and the traditional assessment techniques the schools use. Social Studies facilitators had a restricted theoretical knowledge of authentic assessment and how it should be included in the assessment process [5].

However, these studies appear to focus on some aspects of authentic assessment without looking at the challenges teachers encounter practicing authentic assessment; failed to show the link between teachers' knowledge and the benefits of the use of authentic assessment practices [5, 7]. The purpose of this study was to examine Social studies teachers' Authentic Assessment Practices, Tools and Challenges in Assessing Students' Learning Outcomes in Junior High Schools in Ayensuano District in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The study sought to answer these research questions – (1) How do Social Studies teachers in Junior High School in Ayensuano District practice authentic assessment to assess their pupils? (2) What authentic assessment tools do Social Studies teachers in Junior High School in Ayensuano District employ to assess their pupils' learning outcomes? (3) What challenges do Social Studies teachers in Junior High School in Ayensuano District encounter in the practice of authentic assessment?

1.1. Teachers' Practices of Authentic Assessment

The goal of the research was to see if there were any links between teachers' assessment procedures, grade level, topic area, and student ability levels. A study conducted on nationwide teacher survey discovered that teachers were keener in using performance assessment to assess students' proficiency or achievement. This implies that "knowledge is constructed during the learning process and that a student discovers knowledge for him/herself, rather than receiving knowledge, and this inspires the notion of performance-based assessment" [9].

A study revealed that authentic assessment was laborious for both the teacher and students, although it can improve both the teaching and students' learning of Social Studies. It further indicated that inclusion of authentic assessment as an integral part of

the normal Social Studies assessment processes will mean more work load [7]. The study also concluded that the traditional assessment strategies they employ in their classrooms assist them to get enough information about the quality of their teaching and the progress of their students' learning on time. The information obtained from traditional assessment could be used to make necessary whole class instructional adjustments such as re-teaching, trying alternative instructions, or offering more opportunities for practice but not of authentic assessment. Authentic assessment can provide valuable information and improve students' learning regarding how effective a teacher's instructional strategies have been to date. It informs both the students and teacher about any adjustments that should be made in the learning process to improve students' understandings and achievements [7]. Teacher professional development in the design of authentic assessment activities can help students learn and perform better. These findings are important to this study since it aims to determine the value of authentic evaluation for teachers [11].

1.2. Authentic Assessment Tools Teachers Employ

Teachers use portfolios as authentic assessment tool to pick and consider artifacts of their practice accumulated over a period and from various origins, including varied situations, to provide proof of students' reasoning, learning, and achievement [12]. Portfolios, should include records of lesson plans, student handouts, syllabi, tasks, examinations, and samples of student's work, audio-visual tapes, or classroom events spanning from notice boards and displays to filmed courses, and student forums [12, 23]. Portfolios, include documents such as teacher journals, evaluations of classroom instructions or learners' task, introspection on the results of teaching practices, notes from a teaching observer, colleague, or supervisor suggestions, and student evaluations [13-15]. Due to the multidimensional complexity of teaching, portfolios used as a technique for critical reflection can mitigate what Lee Shulman referred to as pedagogical amnesia, a condition characterized by the incapability to record and recollect the results of instruction, which is endemic to instruction at all levels; (Teachers report that the process of constructing a portfolio improves their learning, according to [14, 16-18]. They also suggest that portfolios are progressively presently used in pre-service teacher instruction curriculums to aggregate and integrate learning experiences, as well as to assess students' preparation to teach. Their arguments are important to this study since it aims to identify legitimate evaluation procedures utilized by teachers as well as the benefits of using them [13, 15, 16]. Techniques in teacher education have expanded as a result of one word: context. Theory on context allow for the investigation of precepts, ideas, theories, and life-long difficulties as they arise in the actual world [13, 19]. According to Colberg et al. (1996), when students are required to read and evaluate cases to learn the lessons and perspectives they provide, they are also required to write their cases and form judgments of occurrences as part of the procedure to articulating their understanding [19]. They explained that these initiatives can inspire education, act as materials for teaching others, and provide cures to overgeneralization risks [20]. These findings are of significance to this study since the researchers seek the authentic assessment practices teachers use in their assessments and the benefits of these practices [20].

Teachers use convenient and simple to carry out authentic assessment kinds such as quizzes, songs, and a rapid feedback system [21]. The teachers believe that quizzes help them to continuously check students' progress. They, therefore, administer many forms of quizzes spanning from paper and pencil to virtual versions which students enjoy and their content knowledge showed improvement [21]. Teachers assess students' progress and that they (teachers) were able to implement a rapid feedback process in the classroom, which led to positive outcomes in their work and inspired learners to study the target language [21, 22]. Classroom assessments inspires students to work, teachers obtain proof of learning from a variety of activities in real assessment rather than focusing on one methodology, which is an indication of a proper assessment strategy for producing pupils

with significantly greater thinking skills [13, 23, 24]. These findings are pertinent to this research since this study seeks to find authentic assessment practices used by teachers and the benefits they derive from the practices.

1.3. Challenges of Practicing Authentic Assessment

A researcher observation that authentic assessment is time and cost-demanding, with intricate directions frequently involved [25]. Authentic assessment in a diversity of perspectives and environments has been suggested to make students' progress less similar and more complex to evaluate [25]. A team of researchers study the difficulties experienced by Malaysian teachers in formulating authentic assessments in the English Language. Their objective is consistent to this study since it seeks to find the difficulties teachers encounter in the practice of authentic assessment [21]. Teachers experience difficulties in effectively planning and implementing realistic assessment activities in the classroom; teachers have inadequate awareness of authentic assessment, although it is part of their assessment methods [21]. Other obstacles instructors experience in their practice of authentic assessment include inadequate assistance from the school authorities, burdensome documentation, taxing teaching hours, and numerous school events on holidays [26]. A study revealed that instructors lacked pedagogical content understanding and training on how to execute suitable assessment methods [27]. As a result, teachers are unable to use authentic assessment procedures in the classroom successfully and efficiently [28].

In addition, a similar study postulates that instructors' uncertainty to be able to foster authentic assessment effectively stemming from high curriculum demand with limited time [29]. Researchers revealed that limited time becomes a handicap for the teacher to conduct authentic assessments properly. Also, the teacher was challenged by the lack of information and sources to implement the authentic assessment. The limited source of material to teach the students is another issue since the teacher is only focusing her teaching on the material given in students' worksheets and rarely used other sources of material. The teacher exposed she was not familiar with the authentic assessment [30, 31]. Their findings are relevant to this research since this study seeks to find the problems teachers face in the use of authentic assessment.

2. Materials and methods

The study adopted explanatory mixed-method approach and sequential research design. This design was used to triangulate the quantitative data with that of the qualitative data, to get a clearer picture and comprehension of the study. In addition, it also allows the readers to get a clearer picture and better comprehension of the findings of this study [32]. The researchers adopted this design to reduce the weaknesses associated with quantitative and qualitative data. This is because issues that the questionnaire could not prove could be addressed by the interview and vice versa. The population for the study comprised all Social Studies teachers in Junior High Schools in the Ayensuano District. Convenient sampling techniques was used to select the district, while, the census method was used to select all the one hundred and twenty-seven (127) teachers who teach Social Studies in the junior high schools in the district. The census method is the process of gathering data from every member of the population. The census method can collect reliable, representative, and accurate data and provides researchers with in-depth information covering all the facets of their research problems [33].

The main instruments used for data collection and analysis were questionnaire and interview guide. These instruments were used for triangulation purposes. The questionnaire gathered data on the authentic assessment practices by Social Studies teachers through a 4-Point Likert scale of Most of the Time, Occasionally, Rarely and Never, also dealt with issues on authentic assessment strategies employed by Social Studies teachers. Data was gathered from respondents by the use of a 4-Point Likert scale

of Most of the Time, Occasionally, Rarely and Never. It also covered items on challenges teachers face in the use of authentic assessment whilst section F dealt with the advantages of authentic assessment to Social Studies teachers in junior high schools. A 4-Point Likert scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree was used to gather data. Besides the questionnaire, a semi-structured interview guide was used to gather data from some of the teachers to probe further into some issues on which the questionnaire was unable to obtain in-depth information. The quantitative data was analysed both descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The questionnaire gathered was organized and edited to ensure completeness of the questionnaire. In addition, the questionnaire was coded and fed into the SPSS application. The qualitative data was transliterated and coded based on themes. Pre-set themes were used to generate the transcript (text) data based upon the research questions and discussed. Common ideas repeated throughout the research interview from the interviewees were placed into units of meaning, rephrased, and reported. This was aimed at achieving convergence and corroboration of data.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Authentic Assessment Practices Social Studies teachers used in assessing students' learning outcomes

This section presents results and discussion on the Research Question - How do Social Studies teachers in Junior High School in Ayensuano District practice authentic assessment to assess their pupils? The research question intended to find out authentic evaluation procedures Social Studies teachers use in assessing students' learning outcomes in classes. The interview guide and questionnaire item were employed to solicit responses and findings from the teachers. [Table 1](#) summarizes the findings.

Table 1. How Social Studies teachers practice authentic assessment to assess their pupils

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
I guide my students to effectively translate issues and situations into meaningful tasks that have a clear purpose.	3.28	0.79
I ask my students to write simple sentences expressing a complete thought.	3.24	0.77
I ask my students to create and organize ideas with a purpose.	3.07	0.82
I ask my students to use symbols and words to show meaning.	2.79	0.88
I assist my students to prepare criteria for assessing their projects.	2.62	0.92
I assist my students to collaborate and create editorials and reports.	2.29	1.03
I guide my students to apply their knowledge to real-life problems.	3.59	0.68
I guide my students to apply their knowledge to organize ideas effectively.	3.25	0.66
I ask my students to use hands-on tasks to conduct several investigations.	2.65	0.86
I ask my students to provide explanations for their responses.	3.33	0.66
I assist my students in co-operate with peers and school personnel.	3.39	0.71
I assist my students to add supportive details to stories.	2.80	0.85
I ask my students to reflect on their learning process to take control of learning.	3.21	0.76
I assist my students to communicate meaning through pictures.	2.85	0.9
I assist my students to demonstrate and extend their understanding of number meaning.	2.56	0.95
I make informal observations about how students are responding to instruction.	3.49	0.73

Source: Field Survey, Scale: M=4, O=3, R=2, N=1.

According to the results in [Table 1](#), most of the respondents assist their students in efficiently translating challenges and situations into meaningful assignments with a clear goal, and their replies were not dissimilar (M=3.28, SD=0.79). This finding agrees with a similar study that, an authentic assessment tool such modified essay helps students to

clearly and effectively communicate with intent, clarity, and the flow of arguments on all aspects of the essay topic [34].

The results again show that most of the respondents occasionally ask their students to write simple sentences to express a complete thought and their responses were homogeneous ($M=3.24$, $SD=0.77$). Previous studies revealed that the practice of authentic assessment helps the learner to give thoughtful ideas, and answers and ask relevant questions, especially during the discussion of controversial issues [5,7-34]. More, the results depicted that majority of the respondents occasionally guide their students to create and organize ideas and their responses were homogeneous ($M=3.07$, $SD=0.82$). Authentic assessment tools such as debates, modified essays, white papers, and oral presentations practiced by the learner through the guidance of the teacher develop the learner to communicate on purpose and give good background information [5, 34].

Moreover, the results revealed that most of the respondents occasionally assist their students to prepare criteria for assessing their projects, and their responses were homogeneous ($M=2.62$, $SD=0.92$). This concurs with other earlier studies that effective authentic assessment practice or implementation process is influenced by factors which are the assessment task, the physical or simulated background for the task or set of tasks to be performed, the social context or with whom the tasks should be performed with the evaluation result, and the standards the set of tasks performed should be assessed on [5, 7-35].

On the statement "I assist my students to apply their knowledge to real-life problems" (Table 1), the respondents most of the time practiced that and their responses were homogeneous ($M=3.59$, $SD=0.68$). Researchers supported the current study that authentic assessment practices through authentic tasks build learners' thinking processes to become experts in solving problems in real life [7, 36]. The findings also revealed that most respondents help their pupils collaborate with peers and school employees the majority of the time, and their replies did not significantly differ ($M=3.39$, $SD=0.71$). The above finding relates that authentic assessment can be regarded as a constructivist approach to teaching and learning emphasizing collaborative, self-directed learning, experimentation, and being strengthened by flexibility in practice [7, 36].

Owing to the practice that asks students to think about their learning to determine the success of their education, the majority of the respondents occasionally practiced that and their responses did not significantly vary ($M=3.21$, $SD=0.76$). This finding supports that of Sridharan and Mustard (2015) when they said, knowledge and practices of authentic assessment help students to self-reflect and self-evaluate their learning. The overall responses on the authentic assessment practices which Social Studies teachers use in their instructional lessons had a mean value and standard deviation of 3.02 and 0.46 respectively. Hence, it can be concluded that the majority of the respondents occasionally practiced the above-discussed practices in Social Studies education thereby affecting the benefits of its implementation and realization as indicated in the conceptual framework of this study. Following the results above, Table 1 agrees with the findings of a similar study that there were substantial variations in the authentic assessment practices of teachers for all grade levels and for student work which are also varied in schools [7, 11]. The findings from the interview on authentic assessment practices in Social Studies confirm the respondents' responses:

"In the course of teaching and learning in the classroom, I sometimes use real-life situations as examples for discussion. These real-life situations such as teenage pregnancy and drug abuse are discussed to help learners understand the causes, effects, and ways to minimize or protect themselves from them".

"I let my students collaborate during teaching and learning time. Also, I demonstrate some of the things to my students. I again provide explanations about a phenomenon

or happenings to my students when a discussion is ongoing. I encourage oral presentations and short writings from my students”.

3.2. Authentic Assessment Strategies that Social Studies Teachers Employed to Assess Learning Outcomes

This sub-section presents results and discussion on the Research Question: What authentic assessment tools do Social Studies teachers in Junior High School in Ayensuano District employ to assess their pupils learning outcomes?

The summary of the findings presented in [Table 2](#).

Table 2. Authentic Assessment tools used to assess pupils learning outcomes

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Refined essays	2.71	0.95
Oral presentation	3.44	0.69
Oral interview	3.07	0.85
Case study discussion	2.85	0.88
Live performances	2.27	0.99
Simulation or game-based assessment (quizzes)	2.44	0.98
Media presentation (PowerPoint)	1.97	1.00
Computer-based simulation task	1.79	0.89
Story or text-retelling	3.13	0.83
Writing samples	2.76	0.92
Projects/ Exhibition	2.66	1.02
Experiments/ Demonstrations	2.86	0.93
Problem-based inquiries.	2.87	0.79
Grand men	2.68	0.44

Scale: M=4, O=3, R=2, N=1.

Source: Field Survey.

From [Table 2](#), the results showed that the respondents occasionally used refined essays and their responses did not differ much from one another. This is evident from the computed values of the mean and standard deviation of 2.71 and 0.95. On oral presentation as an authentic assessment strategy, the majority of the respondents, most of the time used it and their responses were homogeneous as the computed mean and standard deviation value was 3.44 and 0.69 respectively. Concerning oral interviews as an authentic assessment strategy, the majority of the respondents occasionally used it and their responses did not vary significantly ($M=3.07$, $SD=0.85$). Also, most of the respondents, according to the results, occasionally used case study discussion as an authentic assessment tool or strategy and their responses did not vary significantly ($M=2.85$, $SD=0.85$). Previous study supports the findings of this research that case methods in education have grown and help to provide context for the theory, allowing students to investigate principles, ideas, and life-long issues as they arise in reality [19]. The results in [Table 2](#) depicted that, the majority of the respondents rarely used live performances and their responses were homogeneous as the computed mean and standard deviation value was 2.27 and 0.99 respectively. Similar findings came up from simulation or game-based (quizzes) assessment strategies where the majority of the respondents rarely used it and their responses were homogeneous ($M=2.44$, $SD=0.98$).

More, the results depicted that majority of the respondents occasionally used the story or text retelling as an authentic assessment strategy, and their responses did not differ much from one another as the computed mean value and standard deviation were 3.13 and 0.83 respectively. Moreover, the majority of the respondents occasionally used

demonstrations as an authentic assessment strategy and their responses were homogeneous ($M=2.86$, $SD=0.93$). In addition, the findings depicted that majority of the respondents occasionally used problem-based inquiries and their responses did not differ much from one another as the computed mean value and standard deviation were 2.87 and 0.79 respectively. The overall responses on the authentic assessment techniques employed to appraise learners' learning outcomes in Social Studies education had a mean value of 2.68 and a standard deviation of 0.44. The implication is that majority of the respondents occasionally used the different authentic assessment strategies during their instructional time. Researchers, found that case studies, performance exhibitions, and problem-based inquiries are among the tactics or tools utilized to capture significant qualities of teaching and rationale about teaching. Furthermore, these tools help teachers better comprehend both the philosophy and practice of authentic assessment [7, 12-13]. Authentic assessment tasks used by the teacher during instructional time help learners to achieve complete personal development (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning) and achievement [5, 7-34]. Similar studies posit that these tasks aid students to acquire and develop skills in written communication, oral communication, digital literacy, critical thinking, self-management, teamwork, and problem-solving [5, 7-34]. These findings are very significant since different instructional strategies are needed to be practiced to cater to the individual differences of the learners. This finding did not differ from responses from the interview. The interviewees said:

"I use formative assessment practices such as question and answer, multiple-choice, stories, group works, picture descriptions, and scenarios during my lessons. The group works help the student who feels shy to speak and perform some activities in front of their friends to be able to express their views during the group work"

"I motivate my students to present their ideas orally. Also, one thing I do is the interview which is a form of discussion. Once I ask a question for clarification and call on students to share their ideas or views, then it is a form of an interview. I do that a lot. At times too, I give them scenarios and real-life cases that have happened in our communities for them to explain mind-sets about them".

3.3. Challenges Social Studies Teachers Faces in the Practice of Authentic Assessment

This sub-section also presents results and discussion on the Research Question: What challenges do Social Studies teachers in Junior High School in Ayensuano District encounter in the practice of authentic assessment? Questionnaire and interview guide were used to ascertain respondents' opinions on the issues that affect the effective practices of authentic assessment in Social Studies education. The examination and analysis of the study's findings using the mean values followed this interval. Strongly Disagree responses were from 1.00 to 1.75, Disagree responses ranged from 1.75 to 2.50, and Agree responses ranged from 2.50 to 3.25. Furthermore, 3.25–4.00 denoted Strongly Agree. The scale was given a value of 2.5 as a criterion. The scores were combined and divided by the number scale ($4+3+2+1= 10/4=2.5$) to produce the criteria value ($CV=2.5$). [Table 3](#) summarizes the findings.

Table 3. Challenges teachers encounter in their practice of authentic assessment

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
The school assessment system makes it difficult to use authentic assessment.	3.16	0.73
Lack of funds to embark on some activities and projects.	3.58	0.64
Lack of support from school authorities in terms of logistics and facilities.	3.36	0.64
Lack of motivation from school authorities.	2.90	0.86
Developing an authentic assessment task is difficult.	2.25	0.98
Inadequate time allotted on the timetable for various subjects does not permit the use of authentic assessment.	3.47	0.72
The large class size makes it difficult to assess students using authentic assessment.	3.24	0.87
Some topics are difficult to assess students using authentic assessment.	3.17	0.82
Grand mean	3.14	0.36

Source: Field Survey

The results in [Table 3](#) indicate that most of the respondents agreed that the school evaluation system makes authentic assessment challenging, and their views did not vary. This is demonstrated by the computed mean and standard deviation values of 3.16 and 0.73. This finding is consistent with other studies that traditional assessment procedures, such as multiple test items, are more probable to be used by teachers since they need fewer resources to execute and score than employing human judgment in an authentic task [27, 28]. They argued that what is mentioned in the curriculum does not correspond to assessment methods. During the teaching process, teachers are unable to use authentic assessment effectively and efficiently [27, 28]. Furthermore, the data demonstrated that the majority of respondents believed that they did not have help from their school administrators in terms of resources to effectively implement authentic assessment, and their replies were quite similar. This is seen from the computed mean value of 3.36 and standard deviation of 0.64. This concurs with the findings of an earlier study that instructors confront challenges in their authentic assessment practice given the lack of assistance from school authorities and parents [21]. The results revealed a mean of 2.90 and a standard deviation of 0.86 for school officials' statements of lack of motivation. This implies that most of the respondents concurred with the statement, and their responses were not dissimilar.

Concerning the respondents' responses to the statement that developing authentic assessment tasks are difficult, the majority of the respondents disagreed and their responses were similar. This is noted from the mean value and standard deviation as 2.25 and 0.98 respectively. The data also demonstrated that the most of respondents strongly agreed that the limited time given on the timetable for different subjects prevented the use of authentic evaluation, and their comments were very similar. This is shown in the mean value of 3.47 and a standard deviation of 0.72. This finding is in line with other studies that in implementing authentic assessment, limited time coupled with high curriculum demand is a challenge [29, 37]. Their findings supported by previous studies that limited time becomes a handicap for the teacher to conduct authentic assessments properly [30, 31].

Furthermore, the majority of respondents felt that high-class sizes make authentic assessment challenging, and their views were consistent ($M=3.24$, $SD=0.87$). Moreover, the majority of respondents felt that authentic evaluation is difficult to evaluate with some topics, and their opinions did not vary ($M=3.17$, $SD=0.82$). The total mean and standard deviation of the obstacles instructors face in their practice of authentic assessment in Social Studies education were 3.14 and 0.36, correspondingly. It can be assumed that most of the respondents agreed that the above-discussed difficulties negatively affect the effective implementation of authentic assessment in Social Studies thereby affecting the benefits of its implementation as indicated by the conceptual framework of this study. This finding

aligns with similar studies that authentic assessment practices are limited due to time, resources, complex instructions, varying environmental conditions, and examination policies and assessment methods employed in schools [7, 25]. This finding did not differ from responses from the interview. The interviewees said:

“Some lessons or topics in Social Studies education demands some TLRs to effectively teach them. These resources are difficult to find. Also, some of the things taught in Social Studies such as vulcanicity have not happened in Ghana, therefore, teaching such things other than common natural disasters such as flooding is difficult to explain and assess students using authentic assessment. Difficulties in assessing these topics also come because most of the schools do not have access to computers that may have videos or animations on such things. Assessing the students through the retelling of how such events happen is difficult”.

“There are a good number of challenges I face. First, the population of the students in the class makes it difficult for me to practical assessment lessons in Social Studies. Imagine having about 25 to 50 students who are to take turns to demonstrate a skill, or present orally their write-ups. You will not be able to progress according to the time set for you. Time allocation to the subject or lesson is insufficient. Authentic assessment needs more time for its practice. Sometimes too, motivation is an issue. Though we know we must teach and assess our students, we sometimes need external motivation in the form of teaching-learning resources provision from our educational authorities to practice authentic assessment effectively”.

This implies that materials and resources are needed to ensure effective assessment of Social Studies lessons in the classroom situation. Also practical lessons can be used to assess the subject where Social Studies room and museums are in place to reduce difficulties to explain and assess concepts to students using authentic assessment.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concluded that authentic assessment practices by Social Studies teachers included the occasional guidance they give to their students about how to interpret topics and situations into relevant tasks with a clearly defined goal, and how to relate their knowledge in practical challenges. In addition, the teachers coached their students on how to produce and arrange their thoughts with a purpose, as well as how to collaborate and cooperate with their peers and school personnel. The study also revealed that refined essays, oral presentations, interviews, case study discussions, and live performances as authentic assessment strategies or tools Social Studies teachers used in assessing their students' learning outcomes during Social Studies lessons. The study indicated that large class size, traditional assessment (examination) system, insufficient logistics and infrastructure, a paucity of funds to begin various activities and programs, a lack of motivation from school administrators, time constraints and difficulty in developing some authentic assessment tasks coupled with assessing some lessons using authentic assessment method are some of the criteria that influence the effectiveness of authentic assessment execution in teaching Social Studies courses. Therefore, the full beauty and purpose of the use of authentic assessment may not be achieved if these limiting factors are not critically looked at. It is recommended that educational leaders should provide the resources to motivate Social Studies teachers to use authentic assessments for students for learning in the classroom situation. It is also recommended that, Colleges of Education, Universities and National Teaching Council should organise professional development workshops and seminars to build the capacity of trained Social Studies teachers on the effective uses of authentic assessment practices.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, GA, NKB, SSO and GB; methodology GA and GB; validation, , GA, NKB and SSO and GB; formal analysis, GA and GB.; investigation, AB, GA, NKB and SSO; resources, , GA, NKB, SSO and GB.; data curation, GA, NKB , SSO and GB; writing—original draft preparation, GA; writing—review and editing, , GA, NKB, SSO and GB; visualization, GA and NKB; supervision GA, NKB, SSO and GB;; project administration, GA, NKB, SSO and GB; All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: “This research received no external funding”

Data Availability Statement: Data is available on request from the corresponding author.

Acknowledgments: we acknowledge the participants in this study.

Conflicts of Interest: “The authors declare no conflict of interest.” “No funders had any role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript, or in the decision to publish the results”.

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