UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT PRACTICES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

TEACHERS IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

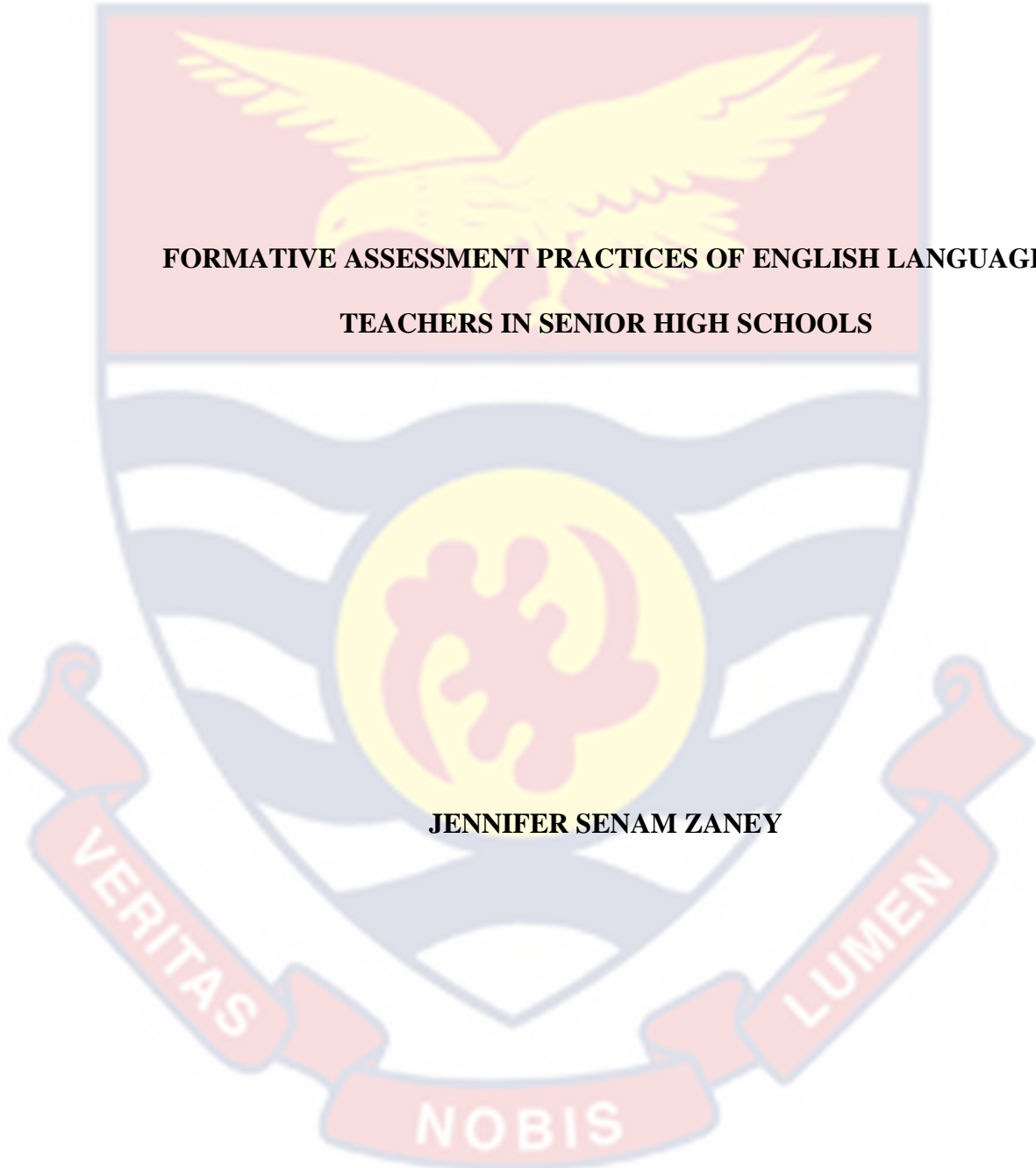**JENNIFER SENAM ZANEY**

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UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT PRACTICES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

TEACHERS IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

BY

JENNIFER SENAM ZANEY

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Philosophy Degree in Arts Education

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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this University or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature: ……………………. Date: …………….…

Name: Jennifer Senam Zaney

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and the presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on the thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature: ……………………… Date: …………..…

Name: Dr. Tekyiwa Amua- Sekyi

Co-supervisor's Signature: ……………………………. Date: …….............

Name: Prof. Kwabena Sarfo Sarfo-Kantankah

ABSTRACT

Formative assessment plays a significant role in the academic achievement of students. Thus, teachers' formative assessment practices will go a long way to affect students' academic achievement. The study sought to explore the formative assessment practices of English language teachers. Specifically, it examined: (i) the formative assessment techniques frequently used by English language teachers; (ii) the nature of formative feedback strategies provided by English language teachers; and (iii) the perception of English language teachers on how their formative assessment practices contribute to students' academic achievement. The study employed the mixed-method approach using a questionnaire and an interview guide. Through proportionate and simple random sampling techniques, the questionnaire was administered to 331 students. Seven (7) English language teachers were also interviewed using the convenience sampling. Data was collected from the Komenda Edina Eguafo Abrem Municipality (KEEA). Results from the study revealed that teachers frequently make use of exercises, homework, class test and oral questions in assessing their students formatively. Techniques such as group work, presentations and project work were less frequently used. Teachers employed varied feedback strategies where feedback was given in groups rather than to individuals and it was mostly done orally. Lastly, teachers expressed positive perceptions on how their formative assessment practices contributed to instruction and students' academic achievement.

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DEDICATION

To my Parents

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Overview

This chapter provides a background to the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research objectives, significance, delimitations, limitations, and the organization of the study.

Background to the Study

In every educational encounter, the main goal is to effect a change in behaviour such that individuals can apply the knowledge acquired in any society they may find themselves in to address societal issues. As such, it is the duty of the teacher and the learner to construct meaningful encounters that will aid teaching and learning in the various disciplines of study in the classroom. One important discipline of study that has received global attention and recognition is the English language. The English language is said to be an important language due to its status as a world language (Llurda, 2004). Internationally, English has become a language for inter-cultural communication, commerce, education, and governance. English has become the lingua franca of most countries like Australia, Cameroon, Tanzania, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, and many others (Sarfo, 2011). Due to its international recognition, individuals learn English for either instrumental purposes (learning a language to get a job, gain admission into a school) or integrative purposes where learners are interested in the culture and people of the target language (Gardner and Lambert, 1985).

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The history of English in Ghana dates back to the early 16th century, emerging as a language of trade, education and governance (Adika, 2012). This language contact was a result of colonialism when the British took over the territory and there was no common ground to communicate. To solve this communication barrier, the British saw the need to train interpreters in the English language to communicate with the indigenes. Today, the English language has become the lingua franca of Ghana. As a medium of communication, English serves the following purposes: used in all formal institutions in the country (government, educational institutions, media, law and many others), serves as the language of written communication, used to educate the public and as a common means of communication between people from different ethnic backgrounds. Given this, Gyasi Obeng (1997) indicated that it is a tool of unity since it is the only language used for communication beyond the local level in Ghana.

One important purpose that English serves is as the language of education. In every educational setting, the English language serves as a medium of instruction in all subjects of study from the upper primary school level to the tertiary level. As the official language, it is also a subject of study from the kindergarten stage to the tertiary level. The main objective is for citizens to become proficient to be able to communicate with other speakers locally and internationally. As such, at the senior high school level, the general aims of teaching English are:

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"to reinforce language skills and competencies acquired at the junior high school level, develop further the language skills and competencies which were acquired at the junior high school level, improve the communicative competence of students and give them the confidence to communicate, generate in students the love for reading for pleasure and the development of creative potentials, raise students level of proficiency in English usage and their ability to communicate with other users of English, prepare students to function effectively on their own, develop in students human values for life and enable all senior high school products to deal effectively with the accumulated knowledge of their chosen fields and be able to communicate such knowledge through the speaking and writing of English" (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. ii).

For all these aims to be achieved, stakeholders in education, specifically teachers, are to assess and evaluate both instruction and students' learning to adjust and improve teaching and learning.

In the field of education, assessment is generally an essential tool in determining students' learning outcomes as it allows teachers and students to reflect on how learning is best delivered. As such, it is relevant to collect information about students to make informed decisions or choices. According to Awinyam (2018), assessment is a vital tool that enables teachers and learners to become efficient and effective. This tool, however, is not developed by teachers

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only. Yambi (2018) asserts that assessments are developed by groups such as district administrators, universities, private companies and departments of education to collect information about individuals. Thus, when results are gathered from students' performance, teachers and stakeholders use it to make several decisions. Yambi (2018) further states that assessment results are used to, "identify individual student's weaknesses and strengths so that educators can provide specialized academic support, educational programming, or social services" (p.1). This suggests that assessment information is needed for varied purposes inside and outside of the classroom. For this reason, the assessment practices of teachers have to be of great quality to determine the true learning outcomes of students. As such, Cheng and Fox (2017) are of the view that a fundamental aspect of a quality assessment practice is alignment, which is the extent to which there is harmony among curriculum, instruction, standards and assessments. They posit that a quality assessment that is properly aligned should reflect learning outcomes. Emphasizing this, Black and William (1998, p. 7) also hold the view that, "tasks have to be justified in terms of the learning aims that they serve, and they can work well only if opportunities for pupils to communicate their evolving understanding are built into the planning". Ghaicha (2016) is also of the view that classroom assessment should be aligned with the curriculum. Thus, assessment tasks must be of great quality to determine the true learning outcomes of students and for that to be achieved, teachers have to ensure that their assessment tasks are properly aligned to instructional goals, syllabus and content.

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Generally, assessment comes in two forms: formative and summative assessment. Summative assessment is conducted to measure students' achievement whilst formative assessment is to adjust, improve learning and instruction (Popham, 2008). These are further classified as assessment of learning and assessment for learning respectively. My focus in this thesis is on formative assessment or assessment for learning.

Formative assessment seems to have received much attention recently by researchers and educationists. However, Popham (2008) indicates that in the past, educators placed much emphasis on the assessment of learning to determine what students had learned. However, in recent times, instructional specialists have argued that for teachers to enhance instructional effectiveness, there is the need to employ assessment for learning in classrooms. Black and William (1998) also posit that, in recent times, there has been a change of focus from narrow forms of testing to great attention on the interactions between assessment and classroom learning with the hope that it would make a strong contribution to improve students' learning. Kellaghan and Greaney (2004) indicate that in 1992, assessment policies in 14 African countries hardly stressed classroom assessment where much weight was given to summative assessments such as examinations. They further stated that, with time, attention was paid to formative assessment as government policies were in support of formative assessment and continuous assessment in countries such as Lesotho, South Africa, Malawi, Nigeria, Zambia and Ghana. Today, formative assessment has received a lot of recognition as it has been identified as an important form of assessment that teachers can use to

improve instruction. Black and William (1998) reviewed 250 articles and books and suggested that formative assessment is a measure to enhance students' academic accomplishment, especially low achievers. Other studies (Oduro, 2015; OECD, 2011; Amoako, 2018) have also indicated that the formative assessment practices of teachers have a constructive influence on teaching and students' achievements.

Zhang (2003) posits that formative assessment "embraces a broad spectrum of activities from constructing paper-pencil tests and performance measures, to grading, interpreting standardized test scores, communicating test results, and using assessment results in decision-making" (p. 324). It is thus developed and administered by teachers to determine the progress of teaching and learning (Ghaicha, 2016). Black and William (1998) refer to assessment as

"All those activities undertaken by teachers, and/or by students, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged" (pp. 7-8).

To them, this becomes formative assessment when evidence of learning is used to alter teaching and learning to meet the needs of students. Therefore, formative assessment helps the teacher to determine where students are, where they need to go and how to get there in terms of subject matter. Thus, for assessment to operate formatively, it has to be used to modify teaching and learning (Black & William, 1998).

At the heart of formative assessment is the concept of feedback (Hattie & Timperly, 2007). As teachers are gathering information about their students through formative assessment, it is also an avenue for them to provide feedback to students on their assessment tasks. Teachers would have to engage their students and help them to identify their weaknesses and strengths to identify areas that need improvement. Given this, Black and William (1998) state that "feedback to any pupil should be about the particular qualities of his or her work, with advice on what he or she can do to improve, and should avoid comparisons with other pupils" (p.6). Shute (as cited in Ozan & Kincal, 2018, p.87) also indicates that "formative feedback is information transmitted to students that allow or encourage them to organize their thoughts or behaviours to improve their learning." This implies that feedback, when provided through formative assessment, becomes significant when the teacher helps or motivates students, reinforces their work, and provides them with a learning profile (Luckett & Sutherland as cited in Ozan & Kincal, 2018). Jones (2005) also argues that the worth of feedback is dependent on the nature of feedback and how learners receive and eventually use it. This suggests that feedback goes beyond marking and grading in the sense that students have to be able to make use of the feedback given by the teacher to improve upon their learning. The teacher also uses such feedback to make decisions about students' performance and his/her instruction. Ozan and Kincal (2018) are of the view that feedback is not only the duty of the teacher but it can be given through self and peer assessment where students

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review their learning or receive vital input from their colleagues to improve learning.

It is explicit that teachers have a lot of burden in ensuring that teaching and learning are effective and efficient. If teachers can go by all assessment procedures diligently by selecting the appropriate assessment procedure, aligning tasks with objectives and providing relevant feedback to students, the performance of students will likely improve not only in the classroom to enhance instruction and learning but also during standardized examinations or summative assessments. Again, students would also achieve proficiency in the English language to become competent communicators. However, English language performance of students seems to be below standard in senior high schools in the country. It is in view of this that I seek to investigate how English language teachers assess their students formatively to ensure academic achievement.

Statement of the Problem

English language in Ghana has received much recognition in the country ever since it became a lingua franca. It is used in all formal institutions and also used as a socialization tool. Thus, it is imperative to learn the language to function well in a society where English has so much communication power. It is for this purpose that English is taught from the basic level to the tertiary level of education for students to become competent speakers to communicate with other speakers locally and internationally. However, the academic performance of students in English in recent times has been reported to be abysmal (Chief Examiner's Report, 2018). Statistics indicate that in 2018, English recorded a

51.03% failure as against that of 54.06% pass in 2017. In addition, students'
performance in 2019 shows that, among the core subjects, English recorded the
most failures with 51.04% (Chief Examiners' Report, 2018, 2019;
graphic.gh.com). The consistent failure in the English language is a source of
worry to stakeholders. Specifically, data from the senior high schools in the
Komenda-Edina-Eguafo Abrem (KEEA) Municipality indicate that the academic
performance of students in English is not encouraging. The average percentage of
passes in English is less than 50% in the senior high schools in the Municipality
(KEEA Education Directorate, 2019). Though teacher factor, family factor and
influence of the mother tongue account for the poor performance of students in
English (Alami, 2016; and Akowuah, Patnaik & Kyei, 2018), the literature also
suggests that assessment practices as an aspect of teacher factors that influence
students' performance play a significant role in improving students' performance
(Clark, 2012, Rodriguez, 2010). In addition, researchers (see Atkin & Coffey,
2003; Hattie & Timperley, 2007) indicate that an essential element of teachers'
classroom practices that has the pedagogical ability to raise the performance of
students is assessment. The foregoing indicates that there is a need to explore the
assessment practices (formative assessment) of English language teachers. This
kind of investigation becomes necessary on account of formative assessment
having been identified as a requisite component of classroom work and that its
development has the potential to raise the quality of achievement (Black &
William, 1998). In the same vein, Amoako (2018) indicates that formative
assessment has a great impact on students learning and has the potential to

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significantly raise pupils' performance. Oduro (2015) adds that formative assessment is a determining component of educational success at both the classroom and school levels. Therefore, it is anticipated that if teachers utilise formative assessment with the guidelines stipulated in the syllabus, the academic performance of students is likely to improve.

It has also become necessary to undertake this study because in the Ghanaian context, studies on formative assessment practices of teachers abound in subject domains such as mathematics (Amoako, Asamoah & Bortey, 2019; Oduro, 2015, Awoniyi, 2016) and social studies (Adam, Bekoe & Poatob, 2018; Bordoh, Bassaw and Eshun, 2013; Bekoe, Eshun and Bordoh, 2014; Asare, 2015; Eshun, Bordoh, Bassaw & Mensah, 2014) but studies on formative assessment practices of English language teachers seems to be scarce. There is therefore the need to investigate how English language teachers employ formative assessment practices to enhance learning and instruction to provide support to the learner to become more effective.

Purpose of the Study

The study seeks to explore how English language teachers assess students formatively to ensure academic achievement.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to examine:

i.   the formative assessment techniques frequently used by English language teachers in assessing students.

ii.   the nature of formative feedback strategies provided by English language teachers to their students.

iii. the perception of English language teachers of how their formative assessment practices contribute to students' academic achievement.

Research Questions

The following questions guide the study:

1. What are the formative assessments techniques frequently used by English language teachers in assessing students?

2. What is the nature of formative feedback strategies provided by English language teachers?

3. What are the perceptions of English language teachers on how their formative assessment practices contribute to students' academic achievement?

Significance of the Study

The findings of the study will be relevant to English language teachers, the Ghana Education Service, curriculum designers and fill the gap in the literature on formative assessment practices in Ghanaian classrooms.

First of all, the results of the study will be of help to teachers of the English language in the sense that they will reflect on their formative assessment practices and provide remedies where necessary.

Also, the outcome of this study will be significant to the Ghana Education Service/curriculum designers such that they will be able to determine weaknesses and strengths of the English language teacher's formative assessment practices to provide support to the teacher.

Finally, the study will fill the gap in the literature on formative assessment practices of English language teachers in senior high schools in Ghana and serve as a guide for other researchers.

Delimitations

Assessment in education comes in two forms: formative and summative assessments, each of which is an essential tool in gathering information on students' learning in every classroom. However, for this study, the emphasis is on only English language teachers' formative assessment practices in the three public senior high schools in the Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abrem Municipality.

Limitations

There were some issues that I encountered during this research. First of all, access to all respondents was not possible as the form one and form two students were not in school at the time of data collection. I, therefore, gathered data from SHS 3 students only which could affect the quality of responses. The

sample size and sampling method for teachers also made generalisation difficult. Results are however generalisable to the study area.

Definition of Terms

Assessment: Gathering information about students' learning to make judgments about instruction and learning.

Formative assessment: Assessment activities that teachers and students engage in to improve instruction and students' learning to address students' needs.

Assessment practices: Teacher's use and interpretation of assessment in the classroom. That is the ways and means used to acquire information on students' performance to meet students' needs.

Organization of the Study

Chapter one provides an introduction to the study, giving the background to the study, the purpose of the study, the objective of the study and indicates the statement of the problem. Chapter two of the study reviews related concepts of assessment and the theoretical and empirical literature. Chapter three highlights the research methodology. It includes the research design, population, sample and sampling procedure, research instrument, data collection and data analysis procedures and ethical considerations. Chapter four presents the results according to the research questions and discussion of the data collected for the study. Chapter five presents the summary, conclusions of the study and the recommendations based on the results from the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The study explores formative assessment practices of English language teachers. Given this, the chapter discusses issues related to formative assessment. Concepts under assessment that are reviewed include: assessment, purposes of assessment, types of assessment, formative feedback, and profile dimensions in English. The empirical literature is reviewed based on the research questions that guide the study.

Theoretical Framework

The study is based on the formative assessment framework by Wiliam and Thompson (2008), supported by the socio-cultural theory by Vygotsky (1978). The formative assessment framework is made up of five formative assessment strategies:

1. Clarifying and sharing learning intentions and criteria for success;

2. Engineering effective classroom discussions, questions and learning tasks;

3. Providing feedback that moves learners forward;

4. Activating students as instructional resources for one another; and

5. Activating students as the owners of their learning.

Among these five, two were selected to guide the study: "engineering effective classroom discussions, questions and learning tasks and providing feedback that moves learners forward" (Wiliam & Thompson (2008, p.15).

Formative Assessment Framework

The study adapted the formative assessment framework by William and Thompson (2008, p.15). The framework posits that formative assessment is a process where the teacher has to determine: "where the learner is going, where the learner is, and how to get there". In these processes, the teacher, learner and peers are active agents. First of all, in the aspect where the teacher establishes "where the learner is going", the teacher has the duty of clarifying and sharing learning intentions as well as success criteria with the students. This is to enable them know the end goal of what they are learning and what they are to achieve at the end of a lesson. The next process is where the teacher determines, "where the learner is" by engaging students in discussions, tasks and assessment activities that will provide him with evidence of what students have learnt or, in other words, the knowledge and skills acquired. At this stage of the process, the teacher should engage the learner and his peers in eliciting evidence of learning. The teacher here gives the opportunity to peers to assess and evaluate tasks and works of colleagues in groups or individually using guidelines and assessment rubrics. The learner also has a role to play as he is allowed to take responsibility for what he is learning and evaluate him/herself against a standard., the learner can do this through metacognition and monitoring of his learning. William (2011) states that at this stage, "the learner engages in actions to improve learning through remedial activities provided by the teacher, asking a peer for specific help or reflecting on different ways to move his/her learning forward." (p.12). After gathering information on students' learning through these means, the teacher has to provide

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timely, specific and constructive feedback to learners to determine their strengths and weaknesses. Peer and self-feedback are also relevant at this stage. The framework is illustrated in table 1:

Table 1: Formative Assessment Framework (adapted from William & Thompson, 2008)

	Where is the learner going?	Where is the learner now?	How to get there
Teacher	Clarifying learning intentions and criteria for success.	Engineering effective discussions, tasks and activities that elicit evidence of learning	Providing feedback that moves learners forward
Peer	Understanding learning intentions and criteria for success	Activating students as learning resources for one another	
Learner	Understanding learning intentions and criteria for success	Activating students as owners of their learning	

Socio-cultural Theory

The study is also guided by the Sociocultural Theory (SCT) by Vygotsky (1978). The theory posits a relationship between language, learning and society. Vygotsky's theory states that culture, social interaction and language influence one another as well as cognitive development. The relationship is such that society plays an important role in developing a child's mental ability. According to Pathan, Memon, Memon, Khoso and Bux (2017), SCT focuses on students' learning and provides solutions to their learning problems. The theory posits that children use cognitive tools which are created in their culture to understand their surroundings and the world. Learning, therefore, occurs in a social setting and it is

first of all between the teacher and the learner and then in the learner's mind. Some themes related to this theory are Zone of Proximal Development, Scaffolding, Mediation and Private Speech. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), however, is the main theme in Vygotsky's theory. Vygotsky terms it as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers." (p.16). This seems to imply that when the child finds himself in an environment with others who are more knowledgeable, there is the possibility that his learning would improve. In this regard, the role of the teacher becomes that of a mediator between the student and the content. The concept of ZPD is relevant in formative assessment in the sense that, through assessment information, the teacher would be able to determine students' grasp of the content or in other words determine what they have learnt against what they need to learn. With that, feedback can be provided to improve the instruction or performance of students.

In the domain of second language acquisition, the application of SCT is said to lie in the task-based approach where it has a great effect on teaching and learning (Pathan et al, 2017). In second language acquisition, research has shown that language is learnt in a social context where meaning is created through collaboration (Donato, as cited in Pathan et al, 2017). Lantolf and Thorne (2007) are of the view that evidence of development in a new language can be identified at two levels: "level of independent performance and the level where performance is mediated by someone else". They observed that "the second type of evidence

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will go undetected unless we keep in mind that development in the ZPD is understood as the difference between what an individual can do independently and what he or she can do with mediation" (p.12). This suggests that, in second language acquisition (SLA), the sociocultural theory plays a vital role in that language learning involves social interactions where the learner interacts with self, peers and others. SCT then becomes not only a tool for the learner but also for the teacher to create classroom activities that will facilitate language learning. This implies that, in the English language classroom, the teacher, through the use of formative assessment, should be able to identify the skills in the language that students have acquired and the ones they are yet to. In view of this, he/she should be in the position to provide appropriate and meaningful feedback to the students for them to achieve communicative competence and improve performance.

Conceptual Review

Under this section, concepts such as assessment, purposes of assessment, types of assessment, forms of assessment, formative feedback and profile dimensions of the English language are reviewed.

Concept of Assessment

To ascertain if learning has taken place as expected and to evaluate a curriculum or program, teachers and other stakeholders in education, corporate entities and individuals often engage in varied forms of assessment to achieve efficiency. Assessment in the field of education has been defined in various ways. According to Brown (as cited in Yambi, 2018), "assessment refers to a series of measures used to determine a difficult attribute of an individual or group of

individuals that entails gathering and interpreting information about students' level of attainment of learning goals". Brown further states that

"assessment is a process that includes four basic components: measuring improvement over time, motivating students to study, evaluating the teaching methods and ranking the students' capabilities in relation to the whole group evaluation" (Yambi, 2019, p. 2).

This is to show whether learning has been successful or not and to clarify the expectations of the teachers from the students. The Glossary of Education Reform (2014) also explains assessment as "the wide variety of methods or tools that educators use to evaluate, measure, and document the academic readiness, learning progress, skill acquisition or educational needs of students" (p.1). Cheng and Fox (2017) refer to assessment as an umbrella term that consists of everyday assessment practices and testing, that is externally designed and administered to students. Gathering from the above definitions of assessment, assessment is simply an activity that teachers and students engage in with the basic aim of improving instruction, student's learning and an educational program. At the classroom level, "teachers have to decide which knowledge, skills, behaviour, and beliefs that warrant assessment; at what point and for what purpose they should be assessed, which tools will best accomplish classroom assessments and determine what to use results for". (Cheng & Fox, 2017, p.2)

However, assessment is not all about collecting information on students. Gibbs and Simpson (2005) argue that "assessment works best to support student's

learning when a series of conditions are met" (p. 4). They classified four (4) conditions under assessment tasks and the other six (6) under feedback. On assessment, the conditions are that assessment tasks "capture sufficient study time and effort; are spread evenly across topics and weeks; lead to a productive learning activity (deep rather than surface learning) and communicate clear and high expectations" (p.6). Thus, teachers' assessment task needs to meet these conditions to support students' learning.

Assessment in education also takes different forms based on the purpose for which it is to be used. One can talk of high stakes assessment: standardized testing of students for accountability and judging overall performance; pre-assessment/diagnostic: administered before students begin a unit or course; interim assessment: to evaluate where students are in their learning; placement assessment: to place students into a course, level or educational program; and screening: to determine if students need special services.

Purposes of Assessment

Though the basic aim of assessing students is to improve teaching and learning, the assessment also serves other purposes in the classroom and outside of it. It is important not only to teachers and students but also to policymakers. To expound on the purposes of assessment, Oduro (2015) is of the view that assessment serves the purposes of helping teachers to enhance understanding, make instructional decisions and evaluate teaching methods. For students, assessment motivates them to learn, monitor their learning and evaluate their progress in learning. To policymakers, assessment is said to serve the purpose of

reinforcing teaching and learning and evaluating programs. About this, Cheng and Fox (2017) also are of the view that assessment serves three purposes, namely: instructional, student-centred and administrative purposes. They indicate that assessment for instructional purposes is the most important of an assessment practice where information is gathered about students' understanding, learning and skills acquired. For student-centred purposes, they indicate that teachers engage in assessment to identify individual students' strengths and weaknesses. This is a form of diagnostic assessment for either placement or remediation purposes to identify students' learning needs to provide support. For administrative purposes, Cheng and Fox (2017) are of the view that it involves grading where a student's achievement is summarized using a numerical or ordinal scale. This also entails making information available to students, parents and principals about what the student has achieved over time. Ghaicha (2016) holds that assessment enables instructors to make judgments about students' behaviour, academic performance and also to identify their strengths and weaknesses to make adjustments to teaching and learning. Assessment serves two broad purposes: to make adjustments to learning and instruction and to determine students' overall achievements. This leads to two main types of assessment: formative and summative respectively.

Peer Assessment (PA) and Self- Assessment (SA)

Logan (2009, p.1) has stated that "self and peer assessment can positively affect student learning by helping develop their reflective and critical thinking skills, as well as their self-confidence as learners". In defining PA, we refer to an

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alternative form of assessment that involves students evaluating the works of their colleagues and providing feedback to enhance learning. Karaca (2009) defines it as "students assessing students" (p.1). Topping (as cited in Karaca,2009) also defines PA as "an arrangement in which individuals consider the amount, level, value, worth, quality, or success of the products or outcomes of learning of peers of similar status" (p.1). From the definitions of PA, one gets the impression that it is relevant in the classroom and thus it is an effective tool in assessment. It enables students to be more critical and reflective as they learn from each other.

This form of assessment is highly recommended as it comes with some advantages. White (2009) indicates that PA plays a significant role in evaluating the works of colleagues. Chan (2010) states that this form of assessment enables students to learn how to criticize, evaluate and develop judgmental skills as they assess one another, it motivates students to participate in the assessment process which in turn reduces the teacher's assessment workload. It is also an avenue for students to provide more feedback as compared to that of only the teacher.

Though PA is essential, it comes with its disadvantages. Chan (2010) states that though it is very important in assessment, peer pressure and friendship can influence the assessment procedure. Secondly, students are not vexed in assessment procedures though they may be given criteria and therefore fairness may not be maintained thus affecting reliability. On the other hand, SA as defined by Chan (2010) is a process where students assess their performance using set criteria. Wride (2017) defines it as "the involvement of learners in making judgments about their achievements and the outcomes of their learning" (p.1). He

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adds that it is also a priceless path to support student learning when used formatively. It is an essential assessment technique as it motivates students to be responsible for their learning, helps students become autonomous learners, encourages students to critically reflect on their learning, and helps students to determine their strengths and weaknesses. On the negative side, SA may be time-consuming, subjective in nature and students may not be acquainted with the assessment criteria. Thus, peer and self-assessment are very efficient if used appropriately in the classroom. As listed among the disadvantages of these assessments, reliability and validity is of much concern. Therefore, the teacher has to make sure students understand the criteria they are using to evaluate and judge their peers as well as themselves.

Types of Assessment

As indicated earlier, assessment performs two functions: to evaluate the teaching and learning process at the end of an instructional period and to measure the performance of students at the end of a course. This comes in the form of formative and summative assessments respectively. The terms formative and summative assessments were originally proposed by Michael Scriven in 1967 to explain two different roles of evaluating curriculum. However, recently, the terms are applied to evaluating students' learning, which is currently called assessment. **Summative assessment** is to determine students' overall performance at the end of a course or unit of instruction. This implies reviewing how students have accomplished objectives but it does not point how to progress going forward. Yambi (2018) posits that "summative assessment is used primarily to make

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decisions for grading or determining readiness for progression" (p.3). He adds that formative assessment takes place at the end of an educational activity to evaluate the entire performance of students as well as to inform external stakeholders such as administrators and employers of students' abilities.

Furthermore, Gipps (as cited in Oduro, 2015) identifies two descriptions of summative assessment: "summing-up" and "checking-up". Gibbs explains "summing-up" as painting a picture of academic success based on original formative evidence, and 'checking-up' as tasks at the end of learning. Summative assessment involves judging the overall performance of students at the end of a program or educational activity which can be a final examination in a course or a general proficiency examination.

Formative assessment, on the other hand, involves gathering evidence of students' learning to modify instruction to meet students' needs (Black & William, 1998). MSDF (2016) defines formative assessment as an aggregation of formal and informal techniques used to compile prove of students' learning to improve learning. That is, it provides teachers and students with continuous information that informs and supports instruction. Wiliam (2011) also posits that formative assessment should not only be applied to minute by minute or day to day interactions between students and teachers. He claims that "the term, formative, should apply not to the assessment but to the function that the evidence generated by the assessment actually serves" (p. 5). That means formative assessment becomes effective if evidence generated is used to close the gap between instruction and learning. He goes on to give three key processes in

formative assessment: "where the learner is right now, where the learner needs to be and how to get there". To determine these, the teacher, learner and peers should be actively involved in the formative assessment process.

Heritage (2010) in the same vein explains that "formative assessment is not a test, nor an instrument, but rather an approach to teaching and learning that uses feedback as to its centrepiece in a supportive classroom context" (p.8). That is formative assessment is a continuous process that occurs during the course of teaching and learning to provide teachers and students with feedback to close the gap between current learning and expected goals. Heritage (2010) adds that "formative assessment is not a single test given to students to ascertain what they have learned for grading, placement, or classification. Instead, it is a process that occurs during teaching and learning and involves both teachers and students in gathering information so they can take steps to move learning forward to meet learning goals" (p.9). Cizek (as cited in NCTE, 2013) in relation to this identified 10 elements that researchers have noted as important features of formative assessment. He states that formative assessment:

1. Requires students to take responsibility for their learning;

2. Communicates clear, specific learning goals;

3. Focuses on goals that represent valuable educational outcomes with applicability beyond the learning context;

4. Identifies the student's current knowledge/skills and the necessary steps for reaching the desired goals;

5. Requires development of plans for attaining the desired goals;

6. Encourages students to self-monitor progress toward the learning goals;

7. Provides examples of learning goals including, when relevant, the specific grading criteria or rubrics that will be used to evaluate student's work;

8. Provides frequent assessment, including peer and student self-assessment and assessment embedded within learning activities;

9. Includes feedback that is non-evaluative, specific, timely, and related to the learning goals, and that provides opportunities for the student to revise and improve work products and deepen understandings and

10. Promotes metacognition and reflection by students on their work (NCTE 2013, p. 3).

Thus, formative assessment is basically an assessment procedure that teachers use to monitor the progress of students or the current level of what has been learnt to adjust teaching and learning. However, assessment is not only the duty of the teacher. Students and their peers can also be engaged to assess themselves and their peers using a rubric or checklist provided by the teacher. This leads to a discussion on peer and self-assessment.

Forms of Assessment

As discussed early on, assessment in education functions formatively and summatively. Therefore, in gathering evidence of students' learning for either summative or formative purposes, teachers employ varied methods in testing students. This comes in either traditional or an alternative form.

Traditional assessment is said to involve conventional means of testing where teachers make use of standardized, pen and paper modes of testing, multiple-choice and true or false test items to find out what students know. Letina (2015), for instance, views traditional assessment as an assessment method that is based on standards where students' scores are compared with their colleagues in ranking order and emphasis is placed on content knowledge and factual reproduction of knowledge. Though traditional assessment is easy to administer, score, and interpret, Letina (2015) posits that it cannot provide teachers with all the required information needed to make instructional decisions as well as decisions about the needs of students. Also, this form of assessment creates anxiety and competition in the classroom.

On the other hand, proponents of alternative assessment view learning as evident in the performance and application of knowledge. Here, students are required to engage in tasks that exhibit all they have learnt. According to Reeves (2000), alternative assessment comes in the form of performance/authentic and portfolio assessment. The former requires students to perform a task and the latter involves the collection of students' works to show learning progress over some time. Letina (2015) adds that "alternative assessment determines the ability of students' thinking and analysing their ability to apply knowledge in new situations and their understanding of the relationship between concepts" (p. 140). On the advantages of alternative assessment, it is student-centred, motivates students to be responsible and can be used to gather a multitude of information on students' learning. Quansah (2018) indicates that among traditional assessment

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and alternative assessment, none is paramount but they are complementary. Therefore, he suggests that the choice in selecting any should depend on the purpose of assessment because they are both appropriate for assessing learners.

Dikli (2003) however states that there has been a shift from traditional assessment to alternative assessment because "alternative assessment is used as a means for educational reform due to the increasing awareness of the influence of testing on curriculum and instruction" (p.8). Similarly, Reeves (2000) states that traditional assessment is being challenged by alternative assessment. From the foregoing, it seems alternative assessment has a better chance of improving instruction and students' learning. For instance, a study by Caliskan and Kasicki (2010), revealed that teachers paid more attention to traditional assessment than alternative assessment. As a result, the researchers recommended that teachers should focus on alternative assessment as it enables students to think critically in solving complex problems.

According to Bell and Cowie (as cited in Ruiz-Primo & Furtak, 2011), traditional and alternative assessments translate to formal and informal assessments in the classroom. To them, assessment can be formal to generate evidence about students' learning, or informal where evidence of learning is generated in the course of a teachers' day-to-day activities. On formal assessments, Brown (2004) posits that they are exercises or procedures designed to know students' skills and knowledge. Therefore, formal assessments are structured, organised techniques created to give teachers and students an assessment of students' progress in learning in which mastery is determined

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against certain standards. Yambi (2018) also states that "formal assessment occurs when students are aware that the task that they are doing is for assessment purposes" (p.3). These assessments include: essays, examinations, reports, projects, presentations, performances, workshops, quizzes and tests. On informal assessments, Brown (2004) postulates that it takes several forms, "starting with incidental, unplanned comments and responses, along with coaching and other impromptu feedback to students. Examples include expressions such as; nice job! good work! well done! excellent!" (p.4). He adds that a teacher's informal assessment is in classroom assignments to obtain information on students' academic achievement without recording results and making predetermined judgments about a student's competence. This also occurs during instruction where the teacher observes and monitors what students do. Examples are comments on papers and advice about how to better pronounce a word. This form of assessment is used anytime without interfering with instructional time. Yambi (2018) also adds that informal assessment is often used to give formative feedback and thus it is less threatening and less nerve-racking to students.

Formative Feedback

At the heart of formative assessment is the concept of feedback. As teachers are gathering information about their students through assessment, it is also an avenue for them to provide feedback to students on their classroom assessment. Teachers would have to engage students and help them to identify their weaknesses and strengths to identify areas that need improvement. In view of this, Black and William (1998, p.6) state that "feedback to any pupil should be

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about the particular qualities of his or her work, with advice on what he or she can do to improve, and should avoid comparisons with other pupils". Shute (as cited in Ozan & Kincal, 2018, p.87) also indicates that "formative feedback is information transmitted to students that allow or encourage them to organize their thoughts or behaviours to improve their learning". This implies that feedback, when provided through formative assessment becomes significant when the teacher helps or motivates students, reinforces their work, and provides them with a learning profile (Luckett & Sutherland as cited in Ozan & Kincal, 2018). Jones (2005) is also of the view that the value of feedback is dependent on the quality of feedback and how learners receive and ultimately use it. Ultimately, teachers need to possess the requisite knowledge and skills about assessment to make quality decisions about assessment to provide the needed feedback to students.

However, Ozan and Kincal (2018) add that feedback is not the duty of only the teacher. It can be given through self and peer assessment where students reflect on their learning or receive vital input from their colleagues. For feedback to be effective, Gibbs and Simpson (2005) posit that some seven (7) conditions have to be met to support students' learning. The conditions are that feedback: "is sufficient (in frequency, detail); is provided quickly enough to be useful, focuses on learning rather than marks; is linked to assessment criteria/expected learning outcomes; makes sense to students; is received by students and attended to, and, is acted upon to improve work and learn" (p. 10).

In the same vein, Hattie and Timperly (2007) conceptualize feedback as "information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, self,

experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding". (p.81). They further explained that "a teacher or parent can provide corrective information, a peer can provide an alternative strategy, a book can provide information to clarify ideas, a parent can encourage, and a learner can look up the answer to evaluate the correctness of a response" (p.82). This means that feedback can come from many sources apart from the teacher. For assessment to function formatively, Black and William (1998) are of the view that results have to be used to adjust teaching and learning. In this regard, Heritage (2010) categorizes formative feedback as formative feedback for teaching and learning. As teachers acquire information through assessment, it becomes feedback to them which they, in turn, feed into their instruction to improve students' learning. Feedback is also for learning as students use the feedback information provided by the teacher and peers and they also acquire feedback internally through self-monitoring.

Furthermore, to Hattie and Timperley (2007), feedback comes in four levels: feedback that is about a task or product (determining whether work is correct or not); feedback that is aimed at the process used to create a product or complete a task. This feedback is directed towards the processing of information, or learning processes that are required to complete a task. In addition, feedback to students can be focused at the self-regulation level, where the direction is given to students to assess what they have done as against what was learnt. They add that this kind of feedback influences the students' self-efficacy, self-regulation and self-belief. Lastly, feedback can be personal where such feedback is directed to the "self". They argue that this feedback is often not related to performance on the

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task. Examples of feedback directed to "self" include: "You are a great student", "That's an intelligent response", "well done". These levels of feedback are classified as "feedback about the task" (FT), "feedback about the processing of the task" (FP), "feedback about self-regulation" (FR), "feedback about the self as a person" (FS). Among these, Hattie and Timperley argue that FS is the least form of feedback as it is not related to the task because it only involves comments of praise to the individual. Feedback about the task (FT) is, however, the most powerful as it is corrective feedback that engages students more on the task or performance. From the foregoing, feedback can be said to be an effective tool that teachers can make use of in ensuring that teaching and learning run smoothly. Feedback provided to students has to be timely, constructive and meaningful.

Profile Dimensions in English language Instruction

The English language syllabus provides profile dimensions that must be used to guide teaching, learning and assessment. Profile dimensions are units that describe how an underlying behaviour of teaching, learning and assessment should be measured. According to the English language syllabus, they are psychological units that describe a certain learning behaviour (Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, 2007). These dimensions are "knowledge and understanding" and "the use of knowledge". Knowledge involves the ability to recall facts and materials already learned and thus it is the lowest level of learning. It entails "the ability to remember, recall, identify, define, describe, list, name, match, state, etc". With understanding, the student should be able to grasp or get the meaning of the material or content. It also involves "the ability to

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explain, summarize, translate, rewrite, paraphrase, give examples, generalize, estimate and predict". On the other hand, the use of knowledge is a higher level of learning that implores the learner to apply knowledge acquired. This dimension includes: (i) levels of application: application of rules, theories and methods to new situations; (ii) analysis: breaking into different components to differentiate, identify, outline, compare; (iii) synthesis: putting parts together to form something new: design, create, organize; and (iv) evaluation: to judge, criticize, support and contrast. These dimensions as stipulated in the syllabus go together with the skills of English language teaching: "listening, reading, speaking and writing". Among these skills, listening and reading are considered to be receptive skills such that it entails the acquisition of knowledge and on the other hand, speaking and writing are productive skills where knowledge is put to use. The syllabus recommends that a certain weight be given to these dimensions as well as the skills. This is illustrated further in Table 2.

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Table 2: Weight of Profile Dimension and Language Skills

Profile Dimension	Receptive Skills		Productive Skills		Total
	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	
Knowledge and understanding	10	30	–	–	40
Use of knowledge	–	–	30	30	60
Total	10	30	30	30	100

In Table 2, the receptive skills: listening and reading fall under the dimensions of knowledge and understanding with an accompanied weight of 10% and 30% respectively amounting to 40% for the dimension of knowledge and understanding. On the other hand, writing and speaking: productive skills are to be given a weight of 30% each amounting to 60% of the dimension, use of knowledge. The percentage of both dimensions: "knowledge and understanding" and "use of knowledge" have to add up to 100%. Hence, teachers are to make use of these in their assessments.

In assessment, the syllabus recommends that instruction and assessment be based on the profile dimensions provided. Hence, assessment tasks must elicit knowledge and understanding through assessing the receptive skills and on the application of knowledge, teachers must focus on the use of knowledge through

the productive skills of writing and speaking (75 marks each). In engaging in assessment, teachers are expected to first select specific objectives that will be able to assess a representative sample of the syllabus objectives. The syllabus indicates that "the assessment procedure used i.e., class test, homework, projects, etc. must be developed in a way that it will consist of a sample of the important objectives taught over the specified period" (Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, 2016, p. xiv).

Empirical Review

This section of the thesis reviews literature about formative assessment practices. That is studies that have been conducted in relation to formative assessment and formative assessment practices of teachers. This review is based on the research questions that guide the study.

Assessment Techniques Employed in Classrooms

In classrooms across the globe, researchers (Akom, 2010; Akyeampong, Pryor, & Ampiah, 2006; Dibu-Ojerinde, 2005 etc.) found out that teachers make use of varied assessments such as tests, questions, homework, quizzes, diagnostic tests and oral questioning, observation of students as they work, observation of students' facial expressions. Among these, oral questioning was found to be dominant (Perry, 2013).

Akom (2010) in his study explored Cameroonian teachers' formative assessment practices employing questionnaires, group discussions and observation guides as instruments. The most common formative assessment technique used by teachers was oral questioning with a percentage of 85.7%.

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Akom revealed that though teachers possessed knowledge of varied assessment methods, they did not employ these methods to gather information on students' learning. Other methods teachers used as identified by the researcher were: tests (78.6%), homework (71.4%), quizzes (46.4%), examinations (39.3%) and class activities and exercises (25.0%). Through observation, Akom found that three assessment practices occurred most frequently: oral questioning, observing students' complete independent work, and assigning homework, with oral questioning being the dominant assessment method. Constraints in the practice of formative assessment identified were large class sizes and lack of teaching materials. In conclusion, Akom recommended that the professional development of teachers should be ongoing and opportunities should also be provided for teachers to make use of new teaching methods.

In the same vein, a study by Dibu-Ojerinde (2005) on formative assessment practices of private secondary school teachers in Osun, Nigeria, revealed that teachers utilised a variety of formative assessment techniques in the classroom. These assessments were: tests, oral questioning, classwork, and examinations which are formal assessments. In the same study, teachers ranked formative assessment tools based on how frequently they used them in their classrooms. Dibu-Ojerinde (2005) found that 21% of teachers identified short written tests as the formative assessment tool they employed most often. Take-home assignments were used most frequently by 19% of teachers, oral questioning during teaching by 16%, end-of-session examinations by 13%, classwork by 11%, projects by 4% and group take-home assignments by 1%.

Hussain, Shaheen, Ahmad and Islam (2019) investigated teachers' classroom assessment practices: challenges and opportunities to classroom teachers in Pakistan. Data were collected from 235 English teachers through a questionnaire. Results revealed that most teachers were untrained in classroom assessment which led to false assessment beliefs of the teachers and an increase in the gap between what is recommended in the curriculum and what is applied. Findings also illustrated that teachers mostly employed traditional methods of assessment such as objective type tests, homework, questioning during instruction. Teachers, however, ignore alternate assessment practices such as presentation, group projects, self, peer and portfolio assessment practices. The researchers also reported that teachers faced challenges such as statistical analysis of students' performances, implementing self and peer assessment practices, exam anxiety and assessing large students in classrooms

Also, in investigating kindergarten teachers' assessment practices, Asare (2015) examined the modes of assessment and the reasons for choosing a particular mode of assessment. Asare employed the sequential mixed method design where quantitative data were gathered through questionnaires from teachers. The qualitative data were also derived through an interview guide from three participants. Results show that teachers frequently make use of the paper-and-pencil test mode of assessment which is formal in nature. She adds that teachers appear to use a mode of assessment to meet the expectations of parents and stakeholders in education without going by what the curriculum prescribes.

Asare concluded that teachers work within their comfort zone with much reliance on the traditional mode of assessment, the reasons for assessment were not based on learning and assessment theories and that teachers' assessment practices are likely to inhibit effective curriculum implementation. Given this, Asare (2015) recommended that in-service training be organized for parents, teachers, and stakeholders on the appropriate assessment practices. Findings from this study are an indication that teachers' assessment modes are not necessarily to meet the needs of only students but also to meet the satisfaction of parents and stakeholders in education.

From these studies, formal assessments or traditional modes of assessment were preferred more than informal assessments. The implication of using more formal procedures in assessment is that assessment will serve a summative purpose and not formative. The baffling issue here is why teachers avoid informal assessments as it also enhances teaching and learning. Thus, the need to explore what goes into the choice of an assessment technique.

Formative Feedback Strategies

On feedback used in classrooms, research reports that feedback to students comes in the form of grades, oral and written. For instance, Brown, Harris and Harnett (2015) are of the view that teachers' understanding of feedback is likely to influence their feedback given. As such, they sought to investigate teachers' beliefs and conception about feedback. Findings revealed that the conception of teachers about feedback was on using feedback to improve students' learning rather than enhancing their well-being or self-esteem. This comes in line with

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Hattie and Timberly's (2007) classification of feedback where they considered feedback about the task as of more value than that about students' self-esteem.

Akpinar (2018) also explored feedback strategies given to students by Social Sciences teachers. The study guided by phenomenology, a qualitative research method, revealed that teachers' feedback was mostly verbal which came at the beginning and end of lessons in line with learning outcomes. He noted that teachers preferred giving feedback individually because it was easy and more advantageous to students. He concluded that feedback given to students during the educational process increased students' motivation, informed them, made up for their deficiencies, and gave information about the knowledge levels of students. As a result of this conclusion, Akpinar (2018) recommended that "students should be given verbal and written feedback, feedback should be given at the beginning and the end of the lesson, students' level of success should be taken into consideration when giving feedback, it should be determined in advance whether feedback will be to the individual or a group". He adds that teachers should use clear and straightforward language and also have a positive attitude when providing feedback.

Rahman, Babu and Ashrafuzzaman (2011) explored "assessment and feedback practices in English language classrooms in Bangladesh". Data were collected through observation checklists, interview schedules and focus group discussions with students. The thematic analysis revealed that teachers assessed students' learning through closed-ended questioning and provided verbal feedback to students. However, the researchers observed that assessment and

feedback practised were not up to standard. One of the reasons stated was that "both English teachers and the headteachers did not have adequate knowledge about the English curriculum". The question, then, is: how do the teachers in this context teach without adequate knowledge of what the curriculum entails?

In the Bengali classroom, Roy (2015) investigated how feedback was implemented in English language classrooms of secondary schools. The study was guided by the mixed-method approach. Student survey questionnaires were used to obtain quantitative data while an interview guide was used to gather the qualitative data. The researcher compared results from government schools and non-government schools. The results revealed that teacher feedback to students was not enough due to the challenges of large class size and inadequate class time. Students stated that they preferred both verbal and written feedback. On the quality of teacher instruction and feedback, the study revealed that students received both positive and negative feedback and did understand teachers' comments or written feedback. Teachers perceived instant feedback in class to be relevant as it made students alert and increased their concentration. In addition, praise and grades were identified as not enough in giving feedback. Lastly, student-teacher engagement was found to be effective as it promoted students' learning. The current study also aims to find out what goes into teachers' feedback practices.

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Bahati, Tedre, Fors and Mukama (2016) also explored "the practices of feedback in formative assessment in University of Rwanda". Data were collected through interviews, student focus group discussions, and document analysis. Results indicated that feedback was mostly reduced to marks. Oral feedback was sometimes used where lecturers portrayed themselves as "information providers, mastery checkers, and performance appraisers". The paper also indicated that lecturers' written feedback was delayed and lacked clarity. This led students to just receive feedback and not use it to enhance their performance. From these findings, the researchers concluded that formative assessment and feedback was not understood and correctly used in the University of Rwanda. In this vein, they proposed that teachers learn to think outside the box and be creative, the practice of formative assessment should include students as it is a process for both teachers and students. Lastly, teachers should move away from using only course work and classroom assessment tasks in formative assessment and adopt peer and self-assessment. The current study is in line with this study. However, the approach to data collection and the research site differs. There is a need to explore the situation in the Ghanaian setting.

Contribution of Formative Assessment to Academic Achievement

In recent times there has been a growing interest in the study of formative assessment and its impact on academic achievement. According to Ozan and Kincal (2018), "formative assessment is ranked at the top of the list in studies comparing many teaching strategies, methods, and techniques in terms of the degree of impact on students' academic achievement" (p.90).

In Black and Williams' (1998) "Inside the Black Box", the authors sought to find out answers to three significant questions on formative assessment: "Is there evidence that improving formative assessment raises standards? Is there evidence that there is room for improvement? and is there evidence about how to improve formative assessment?" (p. 2). The answer provided for these questions was a clear "yes". Gathering evidence from 250 articles, the authors revealed that indeed improving formative assessment raises performance. On the second question, findings revealed three problems of formative assessment: 1) assessment methods teachers used were not effective in promoting good learning, 2) grading practices tended to emphasize competition rather than personal improvement, and 3) assessment feedback often had a negative impact, particularly on low-achieving students, who are led to believe that they lack 'ability' and so were not able to learn (Black & William, 1998, p.9).   On the last question, the researchers stated that the evidence provided many ideas for improvement but it lacked enough details that would enable teachers to implement those ideas in their classrooms.   It was from this study that other scholars in the field took the initiative to provide more evidence backing the review of Black and William.

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In a meta-analysis study on the effects of educational factors on students' academic achievement by Hattie (2009), results revealed that "formative assessment was the third most influential factor among 138 factors for students' achievement". Thus, there is strong evidence of formative assessment having a positive impact on academic achievement (Ozan & Kincal, 2018). It has therefore become necessary to explore and ascertain the views of teachers on how their assessment practices in the classroom influence teaching and learning.

Ozan and Kincal (2018) examined the effects of formative assessment practices on students' academic achievement, attitudes toward lessons, and self-regulation skills. Social studies performance tests, attitude inventories, self-regulatory learning skills scales, semi-structured interview guides, and observation guides were used as data collection instruments. Participants were a teacher and 45 students. Findings revealed that the experimental group had significantly higher academic achievement levels and better attitudes toward the class than students in the control group. Ozan and Kincal (2018) noted that formative assessment had a positive impact on students' self-regulation skills though the difference was not significant in both experimental and controlled groups. From the interview with the teacher, the researchers revealed that the teacher expressed positive views about formative assessment. He noted that formative assessment was a useful process in increasing learning and student achievement. On formative assessment practices, the teacher added that the following practices were useful: (i) sharing learning outcomes in discussion with the students; (ii) talking to students about their learning at the end of the class;

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(iii) sharing the success criteria in the homework or class activities with the students; (iv) conducting the lesson with group work; (v) frequent use of high level thinking questions; (vi) assessing homework, activities and quizzes with informative feedback instead of grades; (vii) rewarding students by their individual developments; (viii) self and peer assessment; and (ix) quiz examinations at the end of each topic (p.110). In view of these, some recommendations made by the researchers were that: formative assessment should be used as a prevalent assessment approach in primary and secondary schools, students should be assessed according to their level of development rather than being compared with others, feedback comments should be used in place of marks/grade when assessing tasks of students, and that lessons should be conducted through collaborative group work to improve dialogue between learners.

Alovor (2016) sought to investigate how teachers' perception of school climate and effective use of formative assessment practices impact students' learning. Through surveys and an e- interview, the researcher collected data from teachers. Findings indicated that formative assessment was used to improve learning outcomes especially for students experiencing learning difficulties. The results of the study also revealed that participants used the same formative assessment practices such as journaling, technology game and student/peer assessments. However, there were variations in their use of classroom discussion, questions and activities to monitor student learning. In addition, teachers indicated that utilizing formative assessment practices have helped them become more

organised in their instructional planning as a result of students' classroom grades/performance outcomes and all participants agreed that classroom grades/performance improvement has improved as a result of the formative assessment practices" (Alovor,2016, p. 103). In sum, Alovor's (2016) findings revealed that: (i) a good school climate can affect the effectiveness of formative assessment practices, and (ii) teachers also perceived that their use of formative assessment practices contributed to students' academic success.

Lastly, Oduro-Okyireh and Partey (2004) conducted a study on the topic: "Effects of Assessment on Classroom Learning in Senior High Schools in the Ashanti Mampong Municipality of the Ashanti Region of Ghana." Specifically, the study sought to investigate the degree to which assessment fostered effective teaching in the classroom and also affected classroom learning. Findings from the results revealed that assessment practices of teachers promote teaching. Also, teachers expressed their trust and confidence in their assessment results as they used such results to influence their teaching. In addition, students indicated that the assessment practices of their teachers influence their learning one way or the other. For instance, the study indicated that students view assessment practices as affecting their learning positively in the following ways: (i) instant and timely feedback from assessments motivates students to learn harder; (ii)assessment feedback to students shows the student's true strengths and weaknesses in a subject and directs him/her; (iii) regular assessment scores of a student reflect the student's level of intellectual ability; (iv) a plan of assessments compels students to learn consistently throughout; (v) there is a relationship between teachers'

teaching and assessment questions; (vi) assessments help to sustain students' concentration during instruction, and (vii) assessment is essential for teaching and learning.

As stipulated earlier through the various studies, assessment and formative assessment specifically contribute positively to academic achievement on the side of the teacher or the student. Therefore, its relevance in improving students learning and performance cannot be underestimated. Hence, integration of formative assessment with classroom instruction and the realization of the advantage that it holds for instruction and learning is a matter of necessity in the classroom to improve learning (Akyina and Oduro-Okyireh, 2019).

Assessment Practices of Teachers

Several studies have been conducted into formative assessment practices of teachers in various subjects and at all levels of education across the globe. Research shows that indeed teachers engage in assessment practices however, there were lapses in their practices. Under this section, I review some of these studies

On teachers' understanding of formative assessment, Arrafii and Sumarni (2018) revealed that teachers had inadequate knowledge on formative assessment and insufficient training in assessment. The results also indicated that teachers viewed assessment as serving accountability purposes and it involves examination/test-driven learning.

Amoako et al (2019) investigated senior high school Mathematics teachers' knowledge about formative assessment. Employing the census

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approach, 148 mathematics teachers were involved in the study. The findings of the study revealed that the majority of the respondents had inadequate knowledge of formative assessment. The researchers attributed this to the training the teachers had in the universities or colleges of education where teachers were exposed to a single assessment course. They argued that this may not be enough to offer teachers the necessary knowledge and skills to teach the subject. They add that this may also be due to the lack of in-service training given to teachers. The authors concluded that if teachers lacked knowledge about formative assessment, then it was likely that assessment for learning in the classroom came with a lot of flaws and inconsistencies. Awinyam (2018) also sought to find the relationship between the perception of teachers towards assessment and their assessment practices. Adopting a descriptive survey, a questionnaire and an observation guide were used for data collection from teachers. The study revealed that the perception of teachers about assessment in mathematics does not correspond with the current thinking of assessment. However, teachers had positive perceptions about assessment procedures. Like Amoako et al (2018), Awinyam (2018) also relate this to inadequate training of teachers in assessment. The study further revealed that teachers had professed positive assessment practices but their practice was not generally positive and there was a great difference between what the teachers professed about their assessment practices and their actual assessment practices. Awoniyi (2016) also conducted a study on the conception of mathematics teachers of school-based assessment (SBA). The study focused on the challenges teachers faced in managing assessment and ways of improving

assessment practices. Using 110 teachers as participants, a questionnaire and an interview schedule were used to collect data for the study. Findings revealed that teachers did not understand SBA guidelines and did not use them so they still practised the old continuous assessment.

On general assessment practices of teachers, studies indicate that indeed teachers engage in assessment practices as they are expected to. However, there were some lapses identified and reported in the practices of teachers across the globe.

Zhang and Burry-Stock (2003) in their study sought to investigate teachers' assessment practices across teaching levels and content areas, and to explore the self-perceived assessment skills of teachers. The collection of data was done through an assessment practices inventory developed by the researchers. On teachers' assessment practices, findings revealed that: as grade level increased, teachers tended to rely more on objective tests in classroom assessment and there was a concern for assessment quality across content areas. The authors indicated that teachers' assessment practices reflected the nature and importance of the subjects they taught. On self-perceived assessment skills of teachers, they disclosed that, regardless of teaching experience, teachers with training in measurement demonstrated a higher level of self-perceived assessment skills than those without training. The implication of the results as the researchers indicated was that measurement training programmes should be adjusted to meet the varied needs of teachers working in different content areas and grade levels.

Rodrigues (2007) also indicates that two key elements of a teacher's formative assessment practice in a United Kingdom English language classroom are questioning and feedback. On feedback, the researcher indicates that teacher's feedback praised students' efforts and correct answers; pointed out incorrect responses; and, more importantly, explained why specific responses were incorrect. Additionally, feedback extended pupils' learning when the teacher verbal prompts, visual clues and provides supplementary information. The researcher concludes that in the use of effective questioning and feedback for assessment purposes, there is a need for professional training and regular support for teachers so that teachers can use these assessment strategies in a formative way to improve students' learning in the classroom.

In Tanzania, Ndalichako (2014) examined classroom assessment practices of secondary school teachers The purpose of the study was to establish teachers' classroom assessment practices and determine the kind of support teachers received from school authorities in conducting the assessment. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse data and findings revealed that traditional methods of assessment were dominantly used in schools. The findings also indicate that teachers are overwhelmed with heavy teaching load and this makes it difficult for them to use different assessment strategies. A key recommendation was that there was the need to enhance teachers' competencies in assessing students and giving them the necessary resources and support to undertake classroom assessment.

Saefurrohman and Balinas (2016) investigated English language teachers' classroom assessment practices about the purposes of assessment and methods

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and procedures used in the assessment. The study was conducted using a mixed-method design with 48 Filipino and Indonesian junior high schools' English teachers as respondents. Data collection instruments were questionnaires, interview guides and observation guides. The study revealed that respondents from both countries used assessment for learning as the main purpose of assessment. The majority of Filipino Junior High School English teachers prepared and made their assessments, while Indonesian Junior High School English teachers used items textbooks as their primary source for constructing assessment items. The mode of feedback by the teachers was written comments. The authors concluded that the teachers in both countries used assessment for learning as their main purpose of assessment and the nature of feedback was written.

Rahman, Babu and Ashrafuzzaman (2011) also focused on the nature of English language assessment and feedback practised in junior high schools in Bangladesh. The study used the qualitative approach using classroom observation checklists, interview schedules and focus group discussions. Results revealed that teachers used closed-ended questioning in assessing students' learning. This questioning strategy was of a low cognitive level that did not enable students to think critically. In terms of feedback, the findings from the observation indicated that teachers gave only verbal feedback on a few occasions and students seemed to prefer written assessments. The conclusion reached by the researchers was that assessment and feedback were inseparable classroom practice. However, they were not up to standard. They, therefore, recommended that the curriculum be

studied intensively to better understand assessment in the classroom. Though the objectives of this study and the current study are similar, the context or study area is different.

In Malaysia, Veloo, Ramli and Khalid (2016) explored assessment practices of English Language teachers in secondary schools. Specifically, the study aimed to identify the assessment practices of English language teachers in implementing SBA based on constructing assessment instruments, use of types of assessment, scoring and grading, use of assessment information and assessment etiquette." An assessment practices inventory and a semi-structured interview were adapted and administered to 49 English teachers. The authors found out that classroom assessment practices were not of standard, although assessment was conducted in line with teaching and learning objectives. In addition, the researchers observed that teachers employed various types of assessment such as essays and open-ended questions suitable for the teaching of the English language. Also, the researchers found out that the use of alternative assessment was of average level and knowledge and skills in administering assessment were absent due to lack of training. Scoring and grading were also done without any bias or labelling of students. Though the current study is in the same field of discipline the context is different and the focus is on formative assessment and not on school-based assessment (SBA).

Investigating senior high school teachers' formative assessment practices, Akyina and Oduro-Okyireh (2019) sought to find answers to three research questions in the Ghanaian context: what is SHS teachers' knowledge of formative

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assessment?   what are SHS teachers' formative assessment practices? and how does formative assessment contribute to improvement in teaching and learning?

The researchers collected data through a questionnaire from a sample of 80 teachers. On research question one, the study revealed that about 44% of teachers lacked knowledge of formative assessment. Teachers were involved in certain practices that they saw as daily routines that were part of teaching and learning procedures. However, they did not know they were formative assessment practices. Findings on the second question revealed that teachers did not engage students in remediation based on feedback received from students' assessment tasks. On perception, the researchers revealed that teachers perceived their formative assessment practices as having the potential to contribute to teaching and learning. From the findings, the researchers recommended that pre-service teacher training must emphasize the theory and practice of formative assessment and in-service training activities should be organized for teachers to appreciate formative assessment as an effective tool in teaching and learning.

Eshun, Bordoh, Bassaw and Mensah (2014) evaluated students' learning in Social Studies using formative assessment. The study was carried out in three colleges of education in the Central Region of Ghana using a case study research design with observation and interview guides as data collection instruments. Findings revealed that, through formative assessment, evaluation in the classroom motivated tutor and student relationships. However, it was observed that most of the tutors were not using concrete evaluation feedbacks. The researchers indicated that the mere presence of feedback was not sufficient for judging the guidance of

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learning. Thus, emphasis should be placed on descriptive feedback than evaluative feedback in formative assessment. The authors concluded that formative assessment played a significant role as it helped inform teachers about whether the objectives of the lesson had been achieved.

Oduro (2012), through a qualitative study, explored assessment practices of teachers in Ghana. Specifically, the study was conducted to explore mathematics teachers' views and practices of assessment. Data were drawn through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews and document reviews. The study revealed that teachers use formal and informal assessments in mathematics classrooms although formal assessment dominates practice. Teachers' views about assessment and their conceptions of the nature of mathematics are related to their classroom practices. In addition, teachers who had higher educational backgrounds had positive attitudes towards the subject than those with lower educational backgrounds.

The above studies reviewed provide a picture that, though assessment practices are an essential course in teacher training, teachers seem to lack knowledge of the purposes of formative assessment and the processes involved. Assessment practices of teachers were identified as not in line with accepted standards. Feedback in most cases was not provided or in other instances, it was limited to grading and questioning. Studies in the Ghanaian context were in other subject areas like mathematics and social studies. That of English language classrooms seems to be absent in the Ghanaian literature, hence the need for this

study to be conducted as assessment practices are not the same in all contexts (Shaw, Johnson & Warwick, 2013).

Chapter Summary

The chapter reviewed related literature on formative assessment practices. The formative assessment framework and socio-cultural theory were reviewed. Concepts such as assessment, purposes of assessment, types and forms of assessment, peer and self-assessment, formative feedback and profile dimensions and skills assessed in the English language were reviewed. From the empirical literature, it was noted that teachers employed varied assessment techniques ranging from class exercises, homework, tests, questioning and many others which are formal assessments to the neglect of informal assessments. On formative feedback, feedback in classrooms comes in the form of verbal, written and grading with much emphasis on verbal and written in most classrooms. General studies on formative assessment practices of teachers reveal that teachers do not possess the requisite knowledge about formative assessment and thus their practices were not of standard and not in line with what the curriculum recommended. Researchers recommend that assessment courses for teacher trainees should be reviewed and in-service training organized for teachers.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

This section of the thesis explores issues relating to methods and procedures for data collection to address the research questions. Specifically, the issues presented are the research design, the population, the sample and sampling technique, research instrument, data collection procedure, data analysis procedure and ethical consideration.

Research Design

The study employed the mixed-method approach to data collection. According to Creswell (2008), the mixed method involves the collection and combination of both qualitative and quantitative data and integrating the two forms. Creswell adds that "the mixed method employs strategies of inquiry that involve collecting data either simultaneously or sequentially to best understand research problems". This mode of data collection involves gathering both numeric information as well as text information so that the final database represents both quantitative and qualitative information. Bian (2013) adds that "the mixed method is used when one data is not enough, initial results need to be further explained and when a second method is needed to enhance a primary method" (p.4)

First of all, the design was deemed appropriate for the study due to its advantage of being complementary. According to Leedy and Omrod (2015), though using a mixed-method approach can be time and energy-consuming, one of the reasons why researchers employ this design is that it enhances

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complementarity. This is in the sense that quantitative data can compensate for the weaknesses in the qualitative data and vice versa. Hence, employing a mixed method provided a better picture to get to the root of the formative assessment practices of English language teachers. Quantitative data taken from students was used to complement the qualitative data taken from teachers.

Also, the mixed method was considered for reasons of completeness. Using a qualitative design or quantitative design only might not fully address the research questions under study but when these two designs are merged, research questions would be fully addressed (Leedy & Omrod, 2015). This is because, in their responses to questions, teachers are likely to provide responses to favour and protect their interests. In view of this, they may not provide a clear and true picture of the processes involved in their formative assessment practices. However, responses of students through the quantitative data may provide additional information that teachers may leave out. Both data sets would provide a better response to the research questions. However, using a mixed-method comes with some demerits. Ary, Cheser and Sorensen (2006) are of the view that using a mixed-method can be difficult for a single researcher because it involves a lot of time if data are collected simultaneously and interpreting conflicting results may be difficult. Leedy and Omrod (2015) are also of the view that a mixed-method design takes much of the researchers' time and energy. Despite these weaknesses, it was deemed appropriate as qualitative results complemented the quantitative results and accounted for weaknesses.

Specifically, the convergent parallel design is employed for the study. Creswell (2008) is of the view that the purpose of using this design is to collect both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, merge the data and use results to address the research problem. A researcher in the use of this design strives for triangulation (a method used to increase the credibility and validity of research findings) giving the similar or same weight to the data sets. This is done to obtain related results from the different sources of data used (Leedy & Omrod, 2015). Creswell (2008) adds that convergent parallel design comes with providing the researcher with the advantages of qualitative and quantitative forms of data. The quantitative data allows for generalization and that of the qualitative provide information about the context. As such the design enabled me to gather varied information on formative practices of teachers from the sampled respondents through the questionnaire and interview guide simultaneously to determine if the results from the data sets relate or contradict. This is further illustrated in
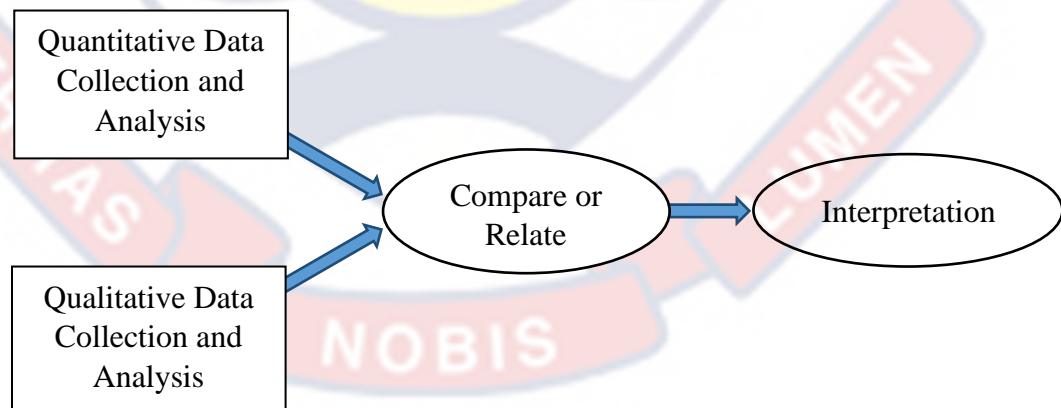
Figure 1.

Figure 1: Convergent Parallel Design (Creswell, 2008)

Study Area

The Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abrem Municipality (KEEA) is one of the 20 districts in the Central region of Ghana with Elmina as its capital. It is made up of four paramount seats: Komenda, Edina, Eguafo and Abrem. According to the 2010 Population and Housing Census, the population of KEEA is 144,705 representing 6.6 per cent of the region's total population. Males represent 48.2 % and females, 51.8 %. The Municipality is "surrounded on the South by the Atlantic Ocean (Gulf of Guinea), the East by the Cape Coast Metropolis, the North by the Twifo-Hemang-Lower Denkyira District and the West by the Mpohor – Wassa East District" (keema.gov.gh). The occupation of inhabitants is mostly agriculture, forestry and fishing (Population and Housing Census, 2010).

Population

The population of the study included all senior high school English language teachers and form three students in the KEEA Municipality. There are three public senior high schools in the Municipality. Due to ethical considerations, the schools were named school A, B and C. School A had 793 students and 16 teachers, School B had 667 students and 12 teachers and School C had 900 students and 10 teachers. In all, the student population was 2,360 and the teacher population was 38. Therefore, the population of the study was 2,398.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

Using convenience sampling, seven (7) English language teachers in the senior high schools in the KEEA Municipality participated in the study. Form three students from all three schools participated in the study. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size table was used to determine a sample size of 331 with a population of 2,360. Through this method, proportionate sampling (sampling determined based on the number of students in each school) was used to determine the sample size for each school. For instance, school A had a population of 793. This was divided by the total population which was 2,360 multiplied by the sample size (331). This was done with the other schools as well to ensure equal representativeness. Thus, School A had a sample of 111, School B, 94 and School C, 124. At the school level, the simple random technique was used to include students in the study. Therefore, the number of participants from each school was determined by their number relative to the entire population.

Data Collection Instruments

In the collection of data, a questionnaire and an interview guide were used. Instruments were developed and administered personally.

Questionnaire

A self-developed questionnaire was used to collect data from students. This was used to ascertain the formative practices of English language teachers. The questionnaire was suitable due to the anonymity advantage associated with it as students responded to questions without fear of victimization. This instrument

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gathered data on research questions 1 and 3. The questionnaire was in three sections. Section A looked at the demographic characteristics of respondents: gender, school, form and program of study. Section B was on teachers' frequency of use of assessment techniques. Section C covered the feedback strategies of teachers. All questions were close-ended in nature (see Appendix B).

Interview Guide

The interview guide was used to explore English language teachers' actual practices in the classroom. This was suitable as Frankel and Wallen (1996) state that interviews are conducted to find out from people things that cannot directly be observed or noticed. This guide addressed research questions 1, 2 and 3. The guide was semi-structured which enabled the researcher to ask probing questions. It was in four sections: Section A was on demographic characteristics of respondents, Section B posed questions regarding the assessment techniques frequently used by teachers, Section C was on the feedback strategies of teachers and Section D on the perceptions of English language teachers on how their formative assessment practices contributed to students' academic achievement (see Appendix A). The interview guide was used to enable the researcher to gather varied and enough information on the feedback practices of teachers. For instance, using a questionnaire would have limited responses of participants.

Validity and Reliability of Instruments

To guarantee the validity of the questionnaire, I sent the instrument to my supervisors to verify its face and content validity. Based on the comments, suggestions and corrections made by my supervisors, the questionnaire was restructured to ensure validity. To also ascertain the reliability of the instrument, it was pilot-tested in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The Cape Coast metropolis was used as it shared some features like language and occupation with Komenda-Edina-Eguafo Abrem Municipal. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability coefficient of the items on the questionnaire. The Cronbach's alpha was used as it measured the internal consistency of items (Kuder and Richardson, 1937). The pilot study enabled me to change the wording of some questions and to eliminate ambiguous and unnecessary questions. After the pilot study, a Cronbach's alpha of 0.73 was reported. According to George and Mallery (2003) and Kline (1999), a reliability coefficient greater than 0.70 specifies a homogeneous test. Therefore, the reliability coefficient of 0.73 recorded in this study indicates that the instrument was highly reliable for data collection.

To ensure the validity of the interview data, it was also pilot tested after which some questions were reframed to acquire the responses. Also, triangulation was used to ascertain what the formative assessment practices of teachers are as student perspective was also taken.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher obtained an introductory letter (see Appendix C) from the Department of Arts Education, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Education of the University of Cape Coast, before embarking on the data collection exercise. This letter was sent to the KEEA Education Directorate to seek permission to visit the schools under study. Another introductory letter was given which was forwarded to the Heads of the schools for approval to conduct the data collection exercise. During data collection, respondents were briefed on the purpose of the research and were assured of confidentiality. Data were collected concurrently using the instruments. I administered the questionnaire, giving the respondents ample time to complete the instruments and providing the necessary guidance to students in answering the questions. Also, during the interview sections, teachers were asked questions based on the interview guide as the conversation was being recorded.

Data Processing and Analysis

The data collected through the questionnaires were coded to reflect their corresponding categories by the following scoring keys or Likert scale: (strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) and Never (N), Sometimes (S), Not Often, Very Often (VO) and Always (A). Using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 22, descriptive statistics which were mainly means and standard deviation were used to analyse the quantitative data. On the other hand, the interviews were transcribed and analysed narratively to address the research questions.

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Ethical Consideration

All respondents were assured of their anonymity. Also, before the study was conducted, consent was sought from the participants through the heads of the schools to ensure that participation was voluntary. As such, they were assured of anonymity and confidentiality of the responses provided. All authors cited have been duly referenced in the reference section and in text. Due to ethical reasons as well, the schools involved in the study were given anonymised.

Chapter Summary

The chapter addressed the procedures employed for the research. The research design that guided the study was the convergent parallel mixed method design which enabled the combination of the qualitative and quantitative data to address the research questions. The population of the study was 2,398 comprising English language teachers and students in the KEEA Municipality. Teachers were conveniently sampled and students were proportionately and randomly sampled. Data collection instruments were questionnaires and interview guides.

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CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The focus of this study was to explore the formative assessment practices of English language teachers in senior high schools. The convergent parallel mixed method design was used to guide the study. A questionnaire and an interview guide were used to gather data from students and teachers respectively in the KEEA Municipality. Data were gathered from a sample of 338 respondents: 331 students and 7 English language teachers. This chapter presents results and discusses data that were gathered from the respondents. This is presented in line with the research questions. The chapter comes in four sections; section one is on biographic data of respondents, section two is on the assessment procedures teachers use, section three deals with the feedback strategies employed by teachers and the fourth section deals with the perception of teachers on how their formative assessment practices enhance instruction and academic achievement of students. Data collected through the questionnaire were analysed in frequency, percentages, means and standard deviations and those from the interview were transcribed and analysed qualitatively.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Background information was retrieved from students and teachers. For students, the information was gender and name of the school and for the teachers, it was gender, name of the school and teaching experience. The sample size for students was 331 and that of the teachers was 7. Data from the students are presented in Table 3.

Table 2: Biographic Data of Student Respondents

		Gender		
		Male	Female	Total
School	School A	4	107	111
	School B	50	44	94
	School C	41	85	126
Total		95	236	331

Source: Field Data, 2020

The data from the Table reveal that in School A, participants were 111 with 4 males and 107 females. The nature of student participants in this school was because the class that was available during the time of data collection was highly female populated. School B with 94 participants comprising 50 males and 44 females and School C with 126 respondents comprising 41 males and 85 females making a total of 331 respondents in all. The majority of the respondents 235(71.3%) were females while 95(28.7%) were males. Though the number of males seems to be low, this is not likely to affect the outcome of results as I was not interested in gender variation.

Table 4 presents the biographic data of the teacher respondents.

Table 3: Biographic Data of Teacher Respondents

Teacher	Gender	Educational Qualification	Teaching Experience
Teacher 1	Male	B. ED	4 years
Teacher 2	Male	B. ED	3 years
Teacher 3	Female	B. ED	5 years
Teacher 4	Male	B. ED	4 years
Teacher 5	Female	B. ED	3 years
Teacher 6	Male	B. ED	2 years
Teacher 7	Female	B. ED	6 years

Source: Field Data, 2020

The biographic data of the respondents from the interview data indicated that three (3) participants were female and four (4) were males making a total of 7 teacher participants. The professional qualification of the 7 teachers was a Bachelor of Education Degree (B. Ed). This implies that the teachers were professional teachers who should have requisite information on formative assessment practices. Their teaching experiences ranged from two (2) to six (6) years, an indication that they had adequate experiences with formative assessment as English language teachers.

Find**ings**

Research Question One: What are the forms of assessment techniques frequently used by English language teachers in senior high schools?

This question sought to investigate the assessment techniques frequently used by English language teachers in assessing students. Respondents to this question were both students and teachers. Regarding this research question, students had 7 items to respond to and teachers had 3 interview questions to respond to. The responses for students were on a five-point Likert scale format with categories from 'never' (scored 1) to 'always' (scored 5). However, in the analysis of results four cut-off points ranging from 'not often' (scored within a mean of 1.0 – 2.0), 'often' (scored within a mean score of 2.0 -3.0) to 'very often' (scored within a mean of 3.0 – 4.0) and 'always' (scored above a mean of 4.0) were used. Table 5 presents results from students, which are supported by the interview data which is presented narratively.

Table 4: Forms of Assessment Frequently Used by Teachers

Forms of Assessment Techniques	M	SD
Class test	3.21	1.30
Homework	3.47	2.60
Oral question	3.40	1.41
Group work	3.08	1.26
Project work	2.69	1.17
Class presentations	3.16	1.29
Class exercise	4.24	1.14

Source: Field Data, 2020

The Table shows that the majority of respondents from the schools indicated that their English language teachers always made use of class exercises which had a mean score of (M=4.24, SD=1.14) and the other techniques: Homework (M=3.47, SD=2.60); oral question (M=3.40, SD=1.41), class test (M=3.21, SD=1.30), class presentation (M=3.16, SD=1.29), group work (M=3.08, SD=1.26) were used very often. The least form of assessment used as indicated by students was project work with the least mean score (M=2.69, SD=1.17). Based on the computed mean scores, it was realised that class exercise, homework, class test as formal forms of assessment were frequently used as they recorded the highest mean scores. In addition, the results further indicate that oral questioning, an informal assessment technique was predominantly used as it recorded a high mean score of 3.40 and a standard deviation of 1.41.

To substantiate the quantitative results, results from the interview data are presented and discussed based on the research question. The purpose of the interview was to ascertain from teachers the assessment procedures they employed in assessing their students and the factors that influenced their choice of an assessment technique. This was necessary to identify the techniques they used as English language teachers in the classroom. From the responses, most teachers stated that they used class exercises, homework, and oral presentations. Teacher respondents had this to say:

Teacher 1:

I usually conduct class exercises, tests and assignments. However, for the literature aspect, to boost students' understanding, I sometimes use project work where students present their work before the class for the award of marks. I do give them take-home assignments and oral tests where students answer questions and I right away score them. The oral is also done in the form of reading depending on the topic being treated.

Teacher 2 indicated

Some of the forms I use are class tests, project work and class presentations. For the presentation, it is sometimes an oral or reading presentation.

Teacher 4 said:

> *In getting to know what I have taught has been grasped by the students, I usually give them exercises or I pose questions to them orally to determine if the understanding is there before I proceed to a different topic. I also use class tests but I do it when I have taught several topics and I need to assess the overall learning of students for recording. ... Homework does come in sometimes.*

From these respondents, apart from the main forms of assessment they use (class exercise, test and homework), they also make use of class presentations and oral questioning which they indicated depended on the topic and the aspect of the English language being treated. They choose a form of assessment depending on the aspect of the language (whether grammar, literature, composition and comprehension) to assess students. Another also said that the class test was given to serve continuous assessment purposes.

In addition, Teacher 6 stated:

> *For my students, I normally give my students class exercises, class test and homework. However, when it comes to group work, though I group students and assign work to them, it is not all the time.*

In contrast to the other participants who seem to prefer exercises and homework, Teacher 3 stated that she preferred oral questioning to the class exercises as it does not give room for students to solicit answers from their friends as compared to exercises.

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Teacher 3 had this to say:

>*I do make use of the class exercise and class test to acquire an accurate assessment of students' learning. However, as an individual, I do not like the class exercise that much because sometimes when you write the questions on the board, the students tend to ask friends but with the oral questioning, after teaching a topic I just call upon students to answer a question and I score him/her.*

Data from the other respondents revealed that they also make use of exercises, class test, oral questioning and homework. Teachers indicated they did not employ these: group work, class presentation and project work most of the time. This is in line with the responses from the students as the techniques with the highest mean scores were class exercise, homework, oral questioning and class test respectively. It should be noted that, apart from the School-Based Assessment (SBA) where teachers are required to make use of projects, mid-term tests, group exercises and end of term tests, teachers are also to use class exercises and homework to continually evaluate students' performance which is formative in nature. The practices of teachers are in line with what is stipulated in the syllabus regarding class exercises and homework but teachers do not make much use of group work, presentations and projects which are alternate/informal assessments in nature. In the same vein researchers (Hussain et al, 2019; Dibu-Ojerinde, 2005) found out that teachers tend to focus on formal modes of assessing students rather than the alternate forms. They attributed this to a lack of enough instructional time.

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In addition, I sought to find out from teachers, factors that influenced the mode of assessment they chose. From the responses, teachers stated that before they decided on the mode of assessment, they referred to the objectives of the lesson (expected learning outcome), content and aspect of the language taught and time available. On objectives of the lesson, teachers stated that before they decided to use any form of assessment, they revisited their objectives for the lesson taught such that it would guide the questions they posed to students. On the content, they indicated that if they taught a grammar lesson, they mostly assessed students through exercises and homework. However, if it was reading comprehension, they made use of oral questioning. Some respondents had this to say:

Teacher 4 responded that:

> *The objectives of the lesson come first for me. This is because my objectives determine what is to be achieved at the end of the lesson so it plays a major role in the form of assessment I choose and the kind of questions I ask my students.*

Teacher 1 indicated that:

> *I base my questions on the learning outcome that I want to achieve. So, for instance, if I want every student to read fluently, I assess my students through reading or class presentations. This helps me determine areas where students have difficulties whether it be with pronunciations or tone of voice during reading and how best to address it.*

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Teacher 7 also said:

The content determines how I choose to assess my students. This is in the sense that when I teach a grammar lesson, it is obvious I will use an exercise or give students something to work on when they get home. However, when it is a comprehension lesson or literature, I go for a reading assessment or presentation respectively….

This indicates that teachers do not just pick a mode of assessment out of preference but a lot of factors come into play when teachers decide to use a particular mode of assessment.

The implication of the above is that when much attention is paid to the traditional mode of assessment (such as class tests, homework and exercises), alternate assessments such as presentations and project work are ignored, or are less used, it encourages rote learning and limits the scope of assessment. This is because not all knowledge can be measured or assessed through testing. Some inputs received by students can only be measured through performance.

Also, much focus on traditional assessment is likely to impede formative assessment as monitoring of students' learning progress and closing the learning gap will be narrowed. In addition, with so much focus on the formal modes of assessment, much weight would be given to the profile dimension of knowledge and understanding (40% weight given as stipulated in the syllabus) instead of to the use of knowledge (60% weight given as stipulated in the syllabus). Also, the assessment would not be student centred.

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The current finding relates to that of Akom (2010) who revealed in his study that tests, homework, quizzes and oral questioning were most frequently used by teachers. Findings are also supported by a study by Dibu-Ojerinde (2005) which revealed that tests, homework, end of term examinations were employed frequently. However, exercises were used less frequently in this study. The current finding also confirms a study by Asare (2019) that teachers focus more on traditional assessment than alternate assessment. The finding further agrees with Hussain, Shaheen, Ahmad and Islam (2019) who state that teachers tend to ignore alternate assessment practices such as presentation, group projects, self, peer and portfolio assessment practices.

Research Question Two: What is the nature of formative feedback strategies provided by English language teachers to students?

The research question sought to explore the feedback practices teachers employed. This was made up of 4 items and 8 statements on feedback practices of teachers for students to respond to. The interview guide also had six sub-questions for teachers to respond to. This entailed the mode of feedback used when feedback was given, factors that influenced a mode of feedback, students' use of feedback and the relevance of feedback. The analysis of results was on four cut-off points ranging from 'not often' (scored within a mean of 1.0 – 2.0), 'often' (scored within a mean score of 2.0 -3.0) to 'very often' (scored within a mean of 3.0 – 4.0) and 'always' (scored above a mean of 4.0). Results from students are presented in Table 6.

Table 5: Forms of Feedback Used by Teachers

Forms of Feedback	M	SD
Grade	3.95	1.36
Written comments	3.01	1.41
Oral comments	3.29	1.37
Grade and written comments	3.22	1.37

Source: Field Data, 2020

The table above indicates that among the forms or modes of feedback English language teachers used, grades were used always as they had the highest mean score (M=3.95, SD = 1.36). Oral comments were also used very often (M=3.28, SD=1.37), both grade and written comments (M=3.22, SD=1.37) and written comments came with the least mean score of (M=3.01, SD=1.41) though they fall within the range of being used very often. From the data teachers make use of grades and oral comments more often than they do use written comments or grades and written comments combined.

In addition to this research question, students were presented with some statements regarding the feedback practices of teachers. The analysis of the results was on four cut-off points ranging from 'strongly disagree' (scored 1.0 – 2.0), 'disagree' (scored within a mean score of 2.0 -3.0) to 'agree' (scored within a mean of 3.0 – 4.0) and 'strongly agree' (scored above a mean of 4.0). This is presented in Table 7.

Table 6: Feedback Practices of Teachers

Statement	M	SD
Teacher marks and comments on my work after exercises	3.49	1.46
Teacher returns work on time	3.27	1.42
Teacher comments on exercises individually	3.06	1.40
Teacher comments on exercises collectively	3.43	1.41
I understand comments given by my teacher	3.40	1.43
I seek clarification from my teacher	3.25	1.42
I make use of comments given by my teacher	3.98	1.34
My teachers' comments and corrections (feedback) help me improve upon my learning	4.36	1.14

Source: Field Data, 2020

From Table 7, the majority of the students considered the feedback they received from their teachers as important. They strongly agreed to the statement that their teachers' comments and corrections helped them to improve upon their learning (M=4.36, SD= 1.14). They also agreed to the statement that their teachers marked and commented on their work after exercises (M=3.49, SD= 1.46). Results also show that teachers gave feedback collectively (M=3.43, SD=1.41) more than they did individually (M=3.06, SD=1.40).

To complement the quantitative data received from students, I also interviewed teachers about their feedback practices. The interview guide sought to find out from teachers the form of feedback they employed and the feedback practices they engaged in as English language teachers. Teachers were probed on

the forms their feedback took in ensuring that feedback was effective. Responses indicated that most teachers made use of grading and oral feedback and less of written feedback (except assessing essay tasks). On oral feedback, for instance, Teacher 3 stated that even though grading and written feedback were good, he preferred to use oral feedback.

The respondent had this to say:

I prefer to provide feedback to my students orally because I think it is the fastest way. Getting into contact with the students and discussing with them is far better than writing your suggestions down for them. This will allow them to ask further questions and address their weaknesses and other issues.

On grading, Teacher 5 stated that it was preferred for documentation and recording purposes to cater for students' continuous assessment. He stated that:

Most of the time use 1 grades as a way of providing feedback to students. This is to enable me to take a record of students' performance to document their performance

To this teacher, his assessment is serving a summative purpose rather than formative and this may affect the process of identifying learning gaps of students and subsequently addressing them. However, Teacher 2 sees it as the best way for him and students seem to appreciate it more. The respondent adds that:

I use scores more often in my assessment of students' learning as I find it easier and students seem to gain a better understanding and interpretation of the scores they are given.

Others indicated that they made use of grades, oral and written comments as ways of providing feedback to students. This, they stated, depended on the topic and the strength and weaknesses of students.

For me when I notice that the general performance of students is not good and the learning outcome seems to be the same, I decide to give my feedback orally to address the issues of students. This gives me the room to discuss what they did wrong or right and to also provide them with the opportunity to come clear on issues bothering them. (Teacher 6)

On written feedback, Teacher 1 commented that:

I make use of written comments mostly in assessing essay assignments. For instance, in essays, students make a lot of spelling errors thus in assessing their essay writing, I correct some of the spelling mistakes and also write comments if they do not do something right. With this when I return the books to them, I ask them to read and address the comments I had written and in case they need clarification, I make myself available.

Teacher 7 also stated that:

…written comments or feedback come in handy for me when I have to assess students' essays. This is because for the student to understand your

feedback on his/her writing, you will have to comment at large on the issues worth addressing. In this regard, just scoring would not be enough.

From the responses, it can be noticed that some teachers provide feedback based on what makes them comfortable. Though teachers provide feedback in varied forms either through grades, oral or written comments, on the whole, teachers seem to use more oral feedback and grades as modes of feedback.

Equally important was the issue of whether feedback was given individually or in groups. According to the students, teachers give feedback collectively (M=3.43, SD=1.41) more than they do individually (M=3.06, SD=1.40). Data from the teachers corroborate results from the students where teachers expressed that they mostly gave feedback collectively.

Teacher 3 had this to say:

Most often I assess in a group and sometimes one on one. One on one because for instance when you have some students who used to perform well and you realize their performance is declining or the student has a peculiar problem. So, in these instances, when you want to give feedback, you do not do it in a group. However, if it is about class performance you go to them and give feedback to the whole class to save time

Teacher 4 adds that:

I usually give feedback collectively after I have assessed their written work to address some relevant issues with the whole class and I sometimes call those who performed poorly and address their concerns or give them

some form of remedial lessons. I prefer the collective feedback because I

cannot do it individually due to time factor.

Teacher 6 remarked:

I will say equally collectively and individually. I like to provide feedback

collectively so that whatever I do, it would serve as an example to the

students and sometimes I do it individually when I feel the student in

question is going to be embarrassed in class and by so doing, he/she

feels secure.

From these responses, some look out for the individual needs of students

when giving feedback. Others too look out for the performance of the group or

class and determine whether to give feedback individually or in a group.

Teachers' responses converged with those of students indicating that they do give

feedback in groups more than they do individually. This, they stated, is contingent

on the general performance of students and the time factor. In addition, teachers

expressed that they provided feedback immediately after an assessment but when

it came to essay tasks, it was delayed.

 Respondents had this to say:

When it is exercise or homework, I make sure that I mark and give

students feedback in the next period. However, feedback comes

immediately when it is an oral response or assessment. (Teacher 3)

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When I give my students exercises, they get feedback as soon as I mark the scripts…. I don't keep the exercises or homework with me for a long period as it will increase my workload. (Teacher 2)

My feedback is delayed if I have to provide feedback on a written essay. This is because marking essays need patience and the number of students is large so that delays my feedback sometimes. (Teacher 6)

From responses, feedback is sometimes delayed but not always as teachers indicated that compiling tasks or scripts of students may also affect their marking workload.

Wiliam (2016) is of the view that "Feedback is only successful if students use it to improve their performance" (p. 1). Therefore, feedback does not end after it has been given to students. In this regard, teachers were probed on how they determined if students make use of the feedback information**.** Teacher respondents stated that after giving student's feedback and addressing their concerns, it did not end there. In subsequent work or assessment, they still investigated whether students had effected corrections made in previous work, including spelling mistakes, grammar rules or the format for writing essays. They stated that in assessing subsequent work of students after previous assessment and feedback, they assessed based on limitations of earlier works and expected a progressive change in attitude towards learning. Some respondents had this to say:

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*I particularly look for repetition of earlier mistakes such that I try to find out whether students have repeated mistakes in the earlier work where corrections were to be made. (*Teacher 1)

I expect that after I have given feedback to students, they make use of the feedback information and perform better in subsequent assignments or exercises. (Teacher 5)

*...I look out for improvement. That is a progressive change in attitude towards learning and this helps me as a teacher to know whether my feedback is received well or not. (*Teacher7)

Furthermore, teachers were probed on how important feedback is to both teachers and students. Teacher respondents asserted that feedback is a relevant part of the assessment to the teacher and the student. Feedback helps the teacher to determine the needs or strengths and weaknesses of students, to motivate and guide students, to ascertain if the content is being grasped, to utilize the appropriate methodology and to determine if objectives have been met. Teachers added that feedback enabled students to seek help appropriately, realize their difficulties and change their mode of learning.

For instance, Teacher 4 opined that:

I see feedback as very relevant because it enables me to ascertain whether my objectives have been achieved or not and to also change or modify my methodology to suit the needs of students.

Teacher 7 is also of the view that:

Feedback helps me to know whether students have understood what I taught in the classroom. In this way, I am in the position to fish out their strength and weaknesses and address them to help improve students' performance.

Teacher 6 also stated that:

Providing feedback will help the students to know whether they are doing well or not and it will also help the teacher to know what to do in the next lesson.

To Teacher 1:

Feedback is very important so that students will know their mistakes and avoid repeating them. It also enables them to sit up and perform better if they notice that the feedback from the teacher is not encouraging.

Participants were of the view that providing feedback enables them to assess their teaching and this enables them to make adjustments to teaching. On the other hand, feedback also helps students to self-assess their learning. Comparing the qualitative and the quantitative data revealed that when it came to feedback, students stated that teachers made use of grades most of the time. Results from the teachers also indicated that they varied providing grades and oral feedback depending on the general performance of students. Hence, there is no consensus between teachers and students regarding the form of feedback teachers use. However, results seem to be compatible when it comes to whether the

feedback is given collectively or individually. Here the results from students correlate with those of the teachers as feedback is mostly given in a group (to the whole class). As stated by William (2016), feedback is effective if students make use of it to improve performance. In this regard, it was realized that students did make use of feedback information to improve upon their learning and this was confirmed by teachers as well. According to Brown, Harris, & Harnett (2012), how feedback is given affects students' learning and as such teachers must use the appropriate mode of giving feedback to students in improving learning. Therefore, the use of just one or two modes of assessing students regularly may limit the students' and the teacher's ability to identify the learning needs of students. Again, when teachers provide feedback in a group, individuals who need much attention will be ignored and this can lead to poor performance of the low achieving students.

These findings support the findings of Bahati, Tedre, Fors and Mukama (2016) who found out that feedback to students was reduced to only grading. It also supports that of Rahman, Babu and Ashrafuzzaman (2011) and Roy (2015) where feedback was noted to be given verbally. Furthermore, it is said that verbal feedback is mostly privileged within an assessment for learning framework (Brown, Harris & Harnett, 2012) as it is more interactive in that teachers take notice and spontaneously respond to students' learning. Notwithstanding this, Kluger and DeNisi (1996) and Shute (2008) argue that written comments are favoured over verbal feedback as students can reconsider them. However, the current finding that feedback is given collectively because teachers do not have

enough time to give individual feedback is in contrast with Akpinar (2018) who found out that teachers gave feedback individually because it was easy and more advantageous to students.

Research Question Three 3: What are the perceptions of English language teachers on how their formative assessment practices contribute to students' academic achievement?

This research question sought to find out English language teachers' perceptions about how their formative assessment practices contributed to teaching and learning. Data were collected through an interview guide; hence the results are presented narratively. Teachers stated that they perceived formative assessment as contributing greatly to teaching and learning in the following ways: (i) students realise areas they have difficulties in when feedback is given promptly; (ii) it enables teachers to identify the strengths and weaknesses of students to scaffold learning and provide remedial teaching; (iii) it helps students to modify their learning strategies and acquire the needed materials to study effectively; (iv) it allows teachers to assess their teaching. Respondents had these to say with regards to how formative assessment aids students' learning:

From Teacher 5:

> *Through my assessment, students can do what is expected of them and find out for themselves whether or not they are improving. Naturally, students would not want to perform poorly all the time so based on the feedback I give them through assessment, they determine if they are improving and it*

puts them on their toes to self-assess and make the necessary changes to improve.

Teacher 2 adds that:

… Students realize areas they have difficulties in and seek assistance whether from a teacher, colleague or finding the appropriate textbooks to guide them in clarifying some content areas that may pose challenges to them in their learning.

From these respondents, assessment helps students to self-assess and learn from their mistakes. Wride (2017) confirms this assertion as he opines that self-assessment is a priceless approach to supporting student learning when used formatively. He further adds that it is an essential assessment technique as it enables students to take responsibility for their learning, helps students become autonomous learners, encourages students to reflect on their learning, and helps students to determine their strengths and weaknesses.

Teacher 4 states:

I sometimes as a way of feedback praise students or ask the class to clap or 'shine' for students who perform very well in a test or exercise and in doing this, it generates some form of competition among the students so when I do that it serves as a motivation to other students to also bring out their best.

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The teacher uses praise as a way to motivate students and encourage them to do more. Hattie and Timperley (2007) classify this form of feedback as directed to 'self' where it is not related to the performance but to the students' self-efficacy hence it does not have much effect on achievement. However, they add that "feedback to 'self' can have an impact on learning if it leads to changes in students' effort, engagement, or feelings of efficacy about the learning or to the strategies they use when attempting to understand tasks" (p.96). Though it is not related to the task, it generates competition among students as the teacher stated.

Teachers also expressed that formative assessment enables the teacher to be effective in his teaching in many ways. Participants had this to say:

As a teacher, I think formative assessment is one of the best ways of assessing teaching and learning so it should be encouraged. I say this because it serves as a guide as to how teaching and learning are going on in terms of what to teach and how to teach after an assessment of students learning. It helps me in identifying weak areas in my instruction through the feedback process. (Teacher 3)

Usually, having conducted an assessment, I identify the strength and weaknesses of my students. So, with regards to essay writing, when I realize my students are not good at it, I take my time to digest everything about the topic sentence with them. (Teacher 5*)*

Teacher 4 stated that:

After students' assessments, I use the feedback I receive to assess myself. Sometimes I ask myself if I am employing the right methodology or not and, in the end, I settle on what would work best for the students as they are the reason why I am there. ... so basically, assessing my students regularly and formatively helps me to take a second look at how best to present my content and vary my teaching when students are not performing very well.

Teacher 1 added:

When I receive feedback from my students through formative assessment, it guides me to identify the weaker ones in the class and provide the necessary support and remedy they may need to improve upon their performance'.

Teacher 7also had this to say:

When I assess my students and express their shortcomings to them it enables them to sit up and perform better and through that some of them approach you for further clarification on what they do not understand. Therefore, it is also a way of building the teacher-student relationship.

The above extracts were the general perceptions of teachers regarding how their formative assessment contributes to teaching and learning. According to Gallagher and Worth (2008), "the purposes of formative assessment are to help teachers target instructions that meet specific learning goals, support student

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learning, check for progress and detect learning gains, identify strengths and weaknesses, check for misconceptions following instruction, differentiate instruction, evaluate the effectiveness of instructional methods or programs, and transform curricula" (as cited in Madison-Harris, Muoneke & Times, 2012, p. 2).

The above-stated perceptions of teachers are consistent with what Gallagher and Worth (2008) enumerated above. Again, the views expressed by teachers are a signal that teachers use formative assessment data to adjust instruction. This buttresses the statement of Black and William (1998) who stated that for formative assessment to function accordingly, results from assessment tasks must be used to modify instruction. It is thus an indicator that when teachers' formative assessments are effectively implemented, it will contribute greatly to improving teaching and learning.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented results gathered from the data analysis and were subsequently discussed to address the research questions. The findings of the study are that teachers made frequent use of class exercises, homework, class test and oral questioning as assessment techniques. On the alternate forms of assessment, apart from oral questioning, teachers rarely made use of class presentation, project work and group work. Findings also indicate that feedback is provided mostly in the form of grades and verbal/oral and it was mostly given in groups rather than on an individual basis. Teachers also stated that effective feedback practices were relevant to both the student and the teacher in the following ways: feedback helps the teacher to determine the needs or strengths

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and weaknesses of students, to motivate and guide students, to ascertain if the content is being grasped, to utilize the appropriate methodology and to determine if objectives have been met. Feedback also enables students to seek help appropriately, realize their difficulties and change their mode of learning. On the last research question, teachers held the perception that their formative assessment contributed to teaching and student academic achievement, hence it needed to be encouraged.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This final chapter of the study presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations based on the key findings of the study. The chapter is in five sections: the first section summarizes the process of the research and presents the summary of the study. The second presents the key findings from the research questions. The third is made up of conclusions drawn from the study whilst the fourth outlines recommendations made. The last section focuses on suggestions for further research.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to investigate the formative assessment practices of English language teachers in senior high schools in the Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abrem Municipality in the Central region of Ghana. The research questions that guided the study were:

1. What are the formative assessment techniques frequently used by English language teachers in assessing students?

2. What is the nature of formative feedback strategies provided by English language teachers?

3. What are the perceptions of English language teachers on how their formative assessment practices contribute to teaching and students' academic achievement?

The study was guided by the convergent parallel mixed method design which made use of the quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection. Quantitative data were retrieved from students and qualitative data were from teachers. The sample for the study was 331 students and 7 English language teachers making a total of 338 respondents. The sample (331) student respondents were determined using the proportionate sampling technique and that of teachers was convenience sampling. Responses from students were analysed with statistical tools: means and standard deviations using the SPSS statistical software (v.22) and those of the teachers were transcribed and analysed qualitatively. Data from both sets were merged to answer research questions and discussed.

Key Findings

The following findings were made:

1. Teachers frequently made use of exercises, homework, class test and oral questions in assessing their students formatively. Techniques such as group work, presentations and project work were less frequently used.

2. Teachers employed varied feedback strategies and promptly gave feedback to students. However, feedback was provided to the entire class rather than to individual students and it was mostly done orally.

3. Teachers expressed positive perceptions on how their formative assessment practices contributed to instruction and students' academic achievement, indicating that indeed their practices contributed to teaching and students' academic achievements.

Conclusion

As a result of the findings, it can be concluded that teachers make use of varied assessment techniques in their assessment practices as stipulated in the syllabus. However, they tend to focus more on the formal modes of assessment: class tests, homework and class exercises than the informal ones or alternate assessment: project work, group work and presentations. This in itself could hinder students' scope of learning as they are assessed to recall and present facts instead of analysing and making deductions. In this regard, teachers are putting much weight on the profile dimension of knowledge and understanding and the skills of listening and reading instead of the use of knowledge (writing and speaking) as stated in the English language syllabus.

Also, concerning feedback practices of teachers, grades and oral feedback were given promptly and they were mostly given to the whole class. This, therefore, implies that teachers do not necessarily attend to individual needs in providing feedback to students. The result of this practice will be that low achieving students who need much attention will be neglected.

It could also be concluded that teachers perceive their formative assessment as contributing to teaching and students' academic achievement. Therefore, when teachers make use of formative assessment effectively, the academic achievement of students will improve and teachers will have the opportunity to assess themselves as well.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations are made to assist English language teachers in improving their formative assessment practices in senior high schools.

1. Teachers should research on and make equal use of varied assessment techniques in assessing students so that the thinking pattern of students will not be limited to only recall and presentation of knowledge.

2. English language teachers should give feedback in varied forms and alternate feedback techniques to enable students to make use of the feedback information effectively. Also, feedback should be directed at individual students instead of to the whole class to address the individual needs of students.

3. The Ghana Education Service should regularly organise in-service training for teachers on the current trends of formative assessment to enhance teaching and learning as it contributes greatly to academic achievement and instruction as well.

Suggestions for Further Research

The following are suggested for further research

1. The study gathered data through a questionnaire and interview guide. In this vein, the study can be replicated in other areas of the country making use of classroom observation and document analysis guide to either affirm or modify the findings I have made in this study.

2. The current study made use of parts of the formative assessment framework; hence, further studies can be carried out using the entire framework.

3. The implementation of the English language school-based assessment in senior high schools should be monitored and evaluated.
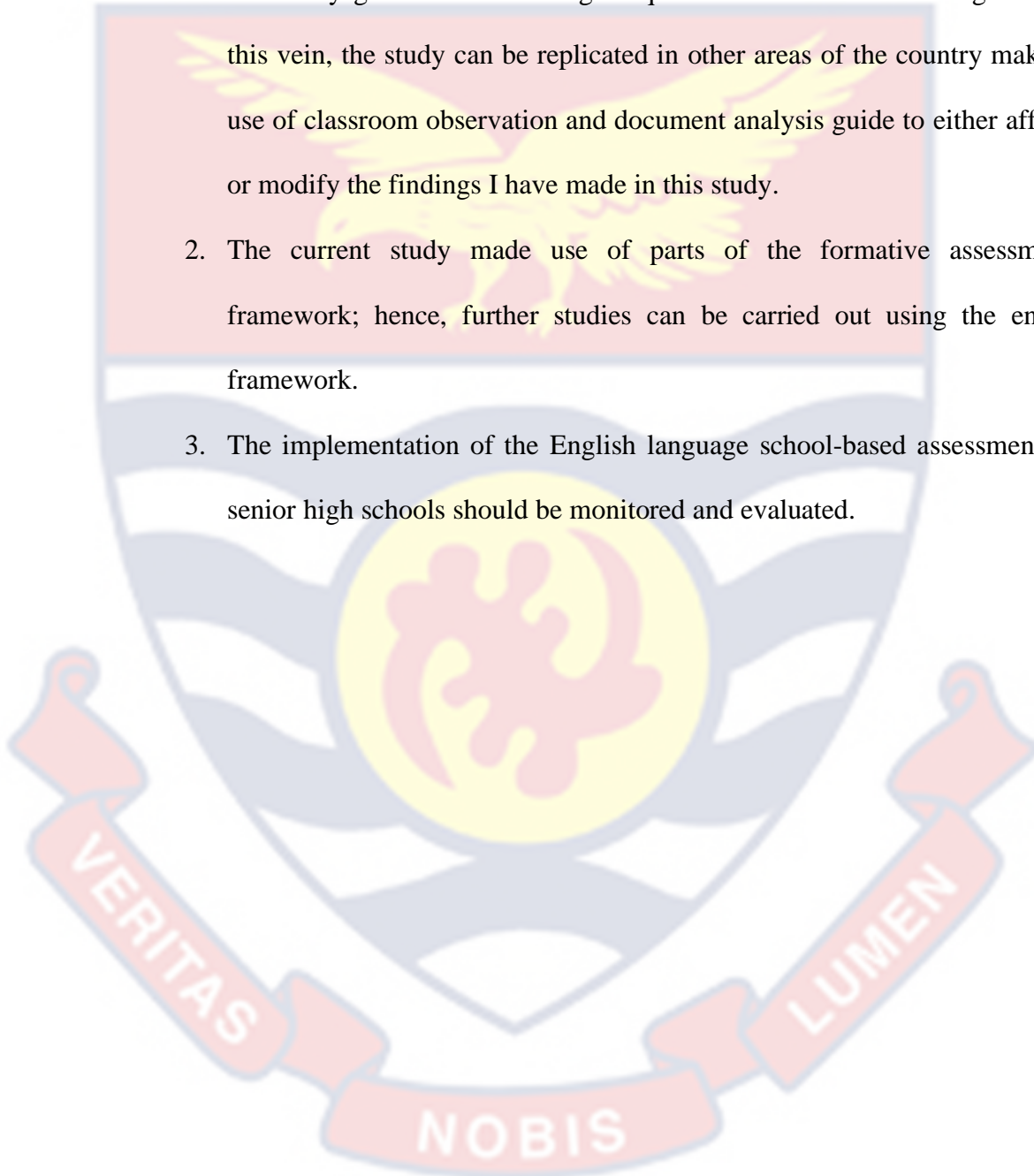
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES

FACULTY OF HUMANITY AND SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ARTS EDUCATION

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

The interview guide aids in gathering information on the topic: Formative assessment practices of English language teachers in Senior High Schools. The information needed is strictly for academic purposes as it is part of a Master's thesis. Your honest responses are solicited.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Name of School…………….

Gender: Male [   ]   Female [   ]

Professional Qualification:

Cert 'A' [ ]   B. Ed [   ]   BA [   ]

M. Ed. /MPhil (Education) [   ]   M. Ed. /MPhil others……………………..

SECTION B: FORMS OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

1. What are the formative assessment procedures frequently used by English language teachers?

    - What procedures do you use to assess students?

- How frequently do you use these procedures?

- What influence your choice of an assessment procedure?

SECTION D: FEEDBACK STRATEGIES

2. What is the nature of formative feedback strategies provided by English language teachers in Senior High Schools?

   - How long does it take for you to provide feedback after an assessment of students' learning?

   - What form does your feedback to students take? (Oral, grading or written)

   - When do you give feedback to students and why?

   - Do you give feedback individually or collectively?

   - Do students come to seek clarification on the feedback provided?

   - How do students make use of feedback given?

   - How do you make use of feedback received from students?

   - Do you find feedback relevant as a teacher?

SECTION E

3. What are the perceptions of English language teachers about how their formative assessment practices contribute to students' academic achievement?

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APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES

FACULTY OF HUMANITY AND SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ARTS EDUCATION

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

The questionnaire aids in gathering information on the topic: Formative assessment practices of English language teachers in Senior High Schools. The information needed is strictly for academic purposes as it is part of a Master's thesis. Your honest response is solicited.

Instruction: Please tick [√] the appropriate response as it applies to you.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

1. Sex: Male [ ]   Female [ ]

2. Name of school……………………………….

SECTION B

FORMS OF ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES FREQUENTLY USED BY

TEACHERS

Indicate which of the assessment techniques your teacher uses to assess your understanding of what he teaches

N - Never (*0-10% of the time)*

 S - Sometimes *(11 – 25% of the time)*

NO – Not Often *(26 – 50% of the time)*

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VO - Very Often *(51 – 75% of the time)*

A - Always *(more than 75% of the time)*

Techniques	Never	Sometimes	Not Often	Very Often	Always
3. Class Tests					
4. Homework					
5. Questions					
6. Group Work					
7. Projects					
8. Presentations					
9. Class exercise					

SECTION C: FEEDBACK STRATEGIES

Indicate the frequency with which your teacher uses the following feedback techniques.

Techniques	Never	Sometimes	Not Often	Very Often	Always
10. Grades/ Scores					
11. Written comments					
12. Oral comments					
13. Both grade and written comments					

Indicate by ticking the degree to which you agree to the following statements

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
14. My teacher marks and comments on my work after tests, exercises, homework etc.					
15. My teacher marks my exercises, tests and home works and returns them					

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within a short period.					
16. Teacher comments on exercises individually.					
17. Teacher comments on exercises collectively (to the whole class)					
18. I understand the written comments given by my teacher on my homework, class exercises and tests.					
19. I seek clarification from my teacher if I do not understand comments and corrections on my work					
20. I make use of the comments and corrections provided by my teacher.					
21. My teachers' comments and corrections help me to improve my learning and performance.					

APPENDIX C

Introductory Letters

TELEPHONE: +233 03321 35411/ +233 03321 32480/3
EXT. (268), Direct: +233 03321 35411.
Cape Coast, Ghana
Telegrams & Cables:
University, Cape Coast

University Post Office
Cape Coast, Ghana

OUR REF: DAsE/I
YOUR REF:

Date: 12ᵗʰ January, 2021.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN
(LETTER OF INTRODUCTION)

This is to certify that the understated name:

MSS JENNIFER SENAM ZANEY

is an M.Phil student in the Department of Arts Education of the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. She is required to carry out a research study on the topic **"FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT PRACTICES OF LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS".**

I would be grateful if you would offer her any assistance that she needs.

REV. PROF. SETH ASARE-DANSO (PhD)
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

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GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE

In case of reply the
Number and date of this
letter should be quoted
Tel No.: 03321-40025 /40048/40017
Tele/Fax: 03321-40016

E-mail-keea_edu@yahoo.com
Our Ref.: GES/CR/KEEA/UCC/V.II/60

Your Ref: ....

Republic of Ghana

Municipal Education Office
Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abrem Mun.
P. O. Box 13
Elmina

12th December, 2019

THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL
SCIENCE EDUCATION,
 DEPARTMENT OF ARTS EDUCATION,
CAPE COAST

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Reference is made to your request in the above subject dated 5th November, 2019.

Permission is granted to Ms. Jennifer Senam Zaney an M'Phil student in the Department of Arts Education of the University of Cape Coast, who is required to carry out a Research study on the topic "*FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK PRACTICES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS*" in the Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abrem (KEEA) Municipality.

For any further form of assistance in her work, she should consult **Mr. Isaac Mepenedo**, the officer in charge of Senior High Schools on **0201384173**.

Management will appreciate a summary feedback on the Research after completion to address lapses identified.

Count on our support in this regard.

....
CECILIA ABOAGYE (MS.)
MUNICIPAL DIRECTOR OF EDUC.
KEEA – ELMINA

cc: Ms. Jennifer Senam Zaney, Dept. of Arts Education, UCC, Cape Coast
    -    All the Senior High Schools, KEEA
    -    Mr. Isaac Mepenedo, MEO, Elmina

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