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Teachers' Perception of Alternative Assessment Practices in Public Senior High Schools in Sefwi Wiawso Municipality, Ghana

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This study explores teachers' perceptions of alternative assessment practices in public senior high schools in the Sefwi Wiawso Municipality, Ghana. The study is grounded in a positivist paradigm and informed by constructivist learning theory and cognitive development theory. A descriptive survey design and a quantitative approach were employed. The study population comprised 210 teachers from public senior high schools in the municipality, all of whom were selected using a census approach. Data were collected using a self-constructed questionnaire aligned with the research objectives, with reliability coefficients ranging from 0.88 to 0.97. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and inferential statistics (one-sample t-tests) were used to analyse the data. The findings revealed that teachers held favourable perceptions of alternative assessment. Additionally, teachers reported using the results of alternative assessments to design appropriate learning strategies, encourage students to take responsibility for their learning, and promote self-reflection. The study recommends improving the teacher-student ratio to reduce large class sizes, which make alternative assessment tasks time-consuming and challenging. Also, school authorities should allocate sufficient funds to heads of departments to procure essential logistics and resources, and to finance alternative assessment activities and projects that support students' knowledge and skills development.

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INTRODUCTION

Assessment is an integral component of classroom practices. It serves as a vital tool in teaching and learning, benefiting both teachers and students. Assessment provides teachers with important information concerning the effectiveness of their teaching methods, practices, and strategies used in the teaching and learning process. Assessment enables teachers to reflect and eliminate existing gaps in their teaching and learning procedures. While assessments provide teachers with valuable information that enhances teaching effectiveness and academic progress, they also offer significant benefits to their students. Teaching and learning assessment enable students to reflect on what is learned, promote critical thinking, and motivate students to get the best scores in tests (Nilimaa, 2023).

An assessment is a set of measurements designed to determine a multifaceted characteristic of an individual or group. This process involves gathering and analysing data that quantifies the extent to which students have achieved learning objectives (Salendab & Dapitanb, 2021; Mohan, 2023). Traditional and performance-based assessments are the main assessment methods commonly utilised in schools. The traditional and performance-based assessment methods normally concentrate on assessing the knowledge, skills, or abilities of students. However, they do so in different ways, focusing on learning. The traditional assessment method involves administering a standard test with multiple choice options, and/or short responses. However, with the performance-based assessment, students are given tests that require them to contribute their output in a real-world or practical context. The performance-based assessment

approach requires student learning in practical and purposeful ways.

Alternative assessment is a performance-based method of assessing students’ knowledge, skills or abilities. This assessment method emphasises active engagement, real-world application, and a more personalised approach to measuring students’ learning outcomes. Since the alternative assessment is a performance-based method, it requires learners to exhibit their comprehension and interpret their knowledge acquired from the classroom lessons. Research in this 21st century has established the use of alternative assessment procedures as the most effective assessment approach (Suskie, 2018). Bennett (2015) postulates that alternative assessment is a contemporary trend in educational assessment and involves presenting students with authentic or simulated real-world scenarios and evaluating their performance in response to the situations. Alternative assessment is a method that has several measurement tools for evaluating students’ performance. Alternative assessment tests usually capture learning, achievement, motivation, and attitudes regarding activities that are relevant to instruction (Saher et al., 2022).

Problem Statement

Historically, educational institutions relied heavily on traditional standardised testing to assess students. However, this traditional approach has been found to limit students’ ability to demonstrate a broader range of skills and competencies (Sa’diyah, 2020). As a result, there has been a growing emphasis on performance-based assessment practices, including alternative assessment methods. Alternative assessment has become the subject of greater discussion in recent

educational discourse as either an addition or replacement practice to traditional methods of assessment. Several studies have explored the alternative assessment practices in education from different perspectives, including alternative assessment in entrepreneurship education (Katjiteo & Simasiku, 2024), digital alternative assessment tools in education (Sukis, Muhamad, & Borham, 2023), and advantages of alternative assessment in higher education (Gabriel, 2024). However, there is a noticeable gap that exists for which this current study seeks to fill.

Katjiteo and Simasiku (2024) conducted a literature-based study to examine the possibilities and directions of embedding alternative forms of assessment in entrepreneurship education: business simulations, case studies, and experiential projects. Their research reveals limitations of the norm-referenced testing and advocates the possibility of other methods to develop the sense of creativity, personal judgment, and critical thinking. The study, however, has three significant limitations: first, it relies solely on a systematic review without gathering any empirical evidence from educators; second, it focuses exclusively on entrepreneurship as a discipline; and third, it examines higher education rather than secondary education. Therefore, their study does not provide information regarding the understanding of how alternative assessment is perceived or utilised by teachers in senior high school (SHS) settings, either in general subject areas. Akin, Sukis, Muhamad, and Borham (2023) examined the implementation of digital alternative assessment among teachers of Islamic education in primary schools in Malaysia. Their study revealed a descriptive idea of digital tools and platforms like Kahoot, Quizizz, Google Classroom, and e-portfolios for assessment. However, their study utilised an informative source of data regarding the issue of digital innovations in assessment; it lacks empirical detail and is confined to the sphere of primary education on a subject matter. Moreover, the study's context differs significantly from that of Ghanaian SHSs, which

face distinct challenges such as resource constraints, exam-oriented curricula, and large class sizes. The fact that they only provide a literature survey of Islamic education and online provision also contributes to the lack of adoption of their findings in other academic areas and education levels. Gabriel's (2024) study also investigated how an alternative assessment is changing the academic achievement and mental health of students in colleges. The study employed literature reviews, surveys, and interviews with college tutors and students to support an argument regarding the psychological and academic benefits of non-traditional assessment. However, the study lacks views of teachers at the pre-tertiary level, specifically at the senior high school level. The perceptions of teachers regarding alternative assessment strategies, their implementations, and the challenges associated with them were not highlighted as significant components of the assessment reform. Instead, the primary focus was on student outcomes. Collectively, these studies reveal that there is increasing interest in the use of alternative assessment practices in education, yet the dearth of empirical evidence among teachers at the secondary school level is limited.

Numerous studies within the Ghanaian context have focused on the knowledge, conceptions, and practices of teachers with regard to classroom assessment. Notable among these studies are the works of Erzoah et al. (2022), Ochour et al. (2022), and Oppong et al. (2023), which provide insights into how assessment is practised in schools in Ghana. While these studies are useful in the prospects of assessment practices, there are several gaps that this current study aims to address. Erzoah et al.'s (2022) study was carried out in the Ellembele District to explore the knowledge and practices of teachers regarding classroom assessments. The study concluded that teachers demonstrated a high level of knowledge and positive assessment practices. However, the study approached assessment from a general classroom perspective, without isolating or critically

investigating alternative assessment strategies such as portfolios, project-based assessment, peer assessment, performance tasks, or self-assessment from teachers. Their study used a mixed sample of teachers from different levels of education but did not particularly emphasise teachers from senior high schools, where assessment requirements are demanding and curriculum pressures are notably higher due to high-stakes examinations.

Ochour et al.'s (2022) study on formative assessment practices at the Techiman Municipality in Ghana focused on the junior high school (JHS) level and included social studies teachers in the study. Although their findings indicated that the teachers had clear conceptions of formative assessment, they excluded other assessment methods, including alternative assessment methods. Additionally, their findings point to external pressures, such as administrative demand for continuous assessment scores, as a hindrance to true assessment practice, highlighting the need for a broader study that not only investigates teacher conceptions of assessment practices but also explores their perceptions of implementation challenges and systemic constraints, particularly at the senior high school level. This current study seeks to bridge this gap by further exploring the teachers' perceptions of alternative assessment practices, challenges, and their implementation strategies in senior high schools.

Similarly, Oppong et al.'s (2023) study also emphasises teachers' confidence in classroom assessment in basic schools. This again suggests a limitation in educational level focus, as it excludes senior high schools where teaching and assessment are often content-heavy, time-constrained, and examination-driven. Another tendency that exists in their study is the generalisation of assessment practice without separating the personal perceptions, professional preparation, and classroom realities facing teachers who prepare to employ alternative assessments into daily classroom activity. These lacunae necessitate a study where the

focus is on teachers' understanding, acceptance, and experience in implementing alternative assessment methods, particularly in the senior high school setting in Ghana, where the situation is so competitive. Despite the increasing global emphasis on alternative assessment methods aiming at fostering a comprehensive and inclusive evaluation of student learning, empirical evidence regarding teachers' perceptions towards alternative assessment tasks in senior high schools in the Western-North region is lacking. It is against this backdrop that this study aims to explore the perceptions of teachers towards alternative assessment practices in the Sefwi Wiawso Municipality.

Research Questions

- What are teachers' perceptions of alternative assessment practices in public Senior High Schools in the Sefwi Wiawso Municipality?
- What kinds of alternative assessment strategies do teachers use to evaluate their students' learning outcomes in public Senior High Schools in Sefwi Wiawso Municipality?
- What are the challenges teachers face in the use of alternative assessments in the public Senior High Schools in Sefwi Wiawso Municipality?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored in the principles of Constructivist Learning Theory, which posits that learners actively construct their knowledge through reflection on experiences and engagement with their environment (Chuang, 2021; Allen, 2022). Constructivism positions the learner as an active learner within the learning process, similar to a scientist who attempts, hypothesises, and seeks evidence for proving or disproving their hypotheses. Such a perspective gives importance to learner-centred approaches, where prior knowledge and experience of life serve as the foundation for building understanding. The constructivist belief is

that learning is more effective and simpler when students are actively involved in knowledge construction. Through the use of their current knowledge and making their meaning, students have a higher probability of success.

Jean Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory supplements this constructivist model, with a focus on cognitive development occurring through the interaction with the environment in an active way. Piaget proposed that kids build knowledge through adapting new knowledge into what is already there in cognition schemas and modifying these schemas as they experience new, challenging situations (Piaget, 1952 cited in Waite-Stupiansky, 2022). His model highlights that learning is active and ongoing, with people building knowledge structures by interacting with the world. This perspective supports the notion of learners being active participants in learning.

In the framework of alternative assessment strategies, the theoretical orientation presented suggests that alternative assessments are consistent with constructivist strategies in that they promote active student engagement, consideration, and incorporation of prior knowledge. In contrast to more traditional assessments that are more likely to emphasise memorisation and standardised test-taking, alternative assessments such as portfolios, performance tasks, and self-assessment require learners to demonstrate their knowledge through meaningful, real-world contexts. These approaches make it easier to engage more deeply, enabling learners to transfer learning into real-life situations and to think about their learning processes.

Furthermore, teachers' beliefs on these alternative assessment practices are crucial as their attitudes and perceptions influence their enactment. Teachers are likely to enact and adapt these processes to facilitate learner-centred, reflective, and experiential learning settings when they have positive perceptions towards alternative assessments. The development of these beliefs provides an explanation for how constructivist

principles become enacted within classrooms and influence the evolution of constructive assessment approaches that allow learners to actively build knowledge.

Concept of Alternative Assessment

Alternative assessment is valued as a means of achieving goals that are significant to the learner rather than as an end in itself (Alderson & Banerjee, 2001; Nasab, 2015). According to Nasab, an assessment that asks students to evaluate their overall learning to decide what knowledge and abilities they will need to use to solve a particular issue is an alternative assessment. Alternative assessments can emphasise "real-life" abilities like problem-solving and decision-making to better prepare students for the job.

Supportively, Awad and Al Adwan (2024) viewed alternative assessment as a direct indicator of how well students performed on real-world tasks after acquiring the necessary information and abilities through formal education. Alternative assessments, as opposed to conventional tests, look at higher-level reasoning abilities. In a variety of different contexts, students can show what they are capable of. The success and growth of the students are measured by these kinds of assessment tools. Abramovich et al. (2015) also describe alternative assessment as a sort of assessment tool that gauges students' development and performance. The teacher also has the chance to gauge the student's strengths and flaws in a variety of subjects and circumstances because alternative assessment is created in context and over time (Nasri et al., 2010).

According to Sa'diyah (2020), alternative assessment seeks to evaluate the reasoning and interpretation skills of students, their capacity to adapt expertise in different contexts, and their comprehension of the link between concepts. Sa'diyah later states that, since it enables them to interpret, support, or justify their responses, students can provide a wealth of information about their comprehension. The assessment is student-

centred and seeks to allow students to take on and monitor the learning process. According to Ghaleb (2024), to create students who are physically, emotionally, and cognitively strong, emphasis must be placed on their total abilities, including their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills.

Teachers need to assess content as well as knowledge and skills, including how to create, reflect, solve issues, gather information, and use it (Nasri et al., 2010). According to Nasri et al. (2010), for a student, having only knowledge and little to no skill is like a curse because their performance consistently falls short of their information. This kind of knowledge, combined with little to no skill, is also a sign of poor educational quality. It is not a better education if a student is unable to apply their information to real-world situations. The present assessment system in use in schools needs to be re-examined to ensure the quality of education, since modifications to the assessment system may result in modifications to instructional strategies. Alternative assessment places more emphasis on "doing" than "knowing" compared to traditional paper and pencil tests, as was already stated. The quality of education is demonstrated in the behaviours of the students if skills are practised and evaluated alongside information (Nasri et al., 2010).

According to Purić (2020), Students must participate more actively, keep moving, and complete activities that are relevant to their lives. The conventional hierarchical model of power and control in the classroom is disregarded in such a method. However, alternative assessments are more satisfying for students. They tend to be more appreciative of them and are eager to get sufficient feedback and details about the outcomes of their work. However, according to Purić (2020), because examination is primarily a teacher's responsibility, students are not happy with this reality. The students might feel that their grades were unfairly assigned as a consequence of this. As a result, the complexity of each student's personality and unique contributions to the class should be taken into

account when evaluating them in the classroom. Students could feel more engaged in assessing their learning progress by using a variety of realisation models, providing them with clear information about the progress, and involving them (Purić, 2020). Alternative assessment also offers pupils more insightful feedback. It engages students more effectively in both the learning and assessment processes, which, when supported by alternative methods, becomes an integral part of continuous learning. In this way, alternative assessment addresses both short-term and long-term educational objectives.

Jean et al. (2022) acknowledged the need for constructive alignment between Instruction, Learning, and Assessment (ILA) to achieve educational objectives. Educational institutions, particularly in Europe, place robust importance on the development of capable students and prospective workers (Carayannis & Morawska-Jancelewicz, 2022). The current educational goals focus on the development of competent students and future employees. Instruction that emphasises learning and the development of competence, learning-centred on reflective-active information building, and assessment that is contextualised, explanatory, and performance-based are the ILA practices that define these objectives (Attom, 2017). A unique key component of alternative assessment that meets modern educational objectives is the requirement to contextualise assessments in engaging, authentic, real-world tasks (Purpura, 2021). The objectives of alternative assessments include the evaluation of the application of genuine knowledge in a real-world situation. Özpınar and Arslan (2023) contend that obtaining the professional level of problem-solving is dependent upon the validity of the evaluation tasks. Additionally, raising an assessment's authenticity is anticipated to have a positive effect on student learning and motivation (Swaffield, 2017).

Alternative assessment is a continuous evaluation that takes place in an expressive learning atmosphere and reflects real, valuable learning skills that can be recorded through reflection, work samples, journals, logs, portfolios, text, experiments, presentations, projects, and other techniques (Martin et al., 2016). Individual and group activities may be a part of alternative assessment. Instead of relying on responses based on the recall of discrete information, the focus is on self-reflection, understanding, and growth (Martin et al., 2016). Practically speaking, an alternative assessment task is solitary in which students are given enough time to plan, finish the task, reflect on their work, make revisions, and consult with others. Alternative assessments must be evaluated using the same standards or criteria that are given to evaluate the performance of adults on a similar task. Shohamy (2014) makes the case that test creators from various backgrounds are coming up with more complex assessment tasks that, if closely connected to curriculum and teaching, could provide a more accurate picture of student learning. It was added that these assessments are being developed to evaluate the urgently required 21st-century skills and to determine whether a child is prepared for the challenges that lie ahead. If these examinations are successful, they may not only yield more accurate results regarding how prepared students are for the real world, but they may also encourage teachers to follow their preferences: Teaching students to be well-rounded individuals and lifelong learners should be done in engaging ways rather than drilling them with monotonous exam preparation (Shohamy, 2014).

Alternative Assessment Tasks and Strategies

According to Irons and Elkington (2021), to give students the chance to practice and complete meaningful tasks that are representative of life outside of the classroom, alternative assessment tools must be carefully chosen. Mohan (2023) also emphasised that teachers must align assessment procedures with objectives or expected results.

When choosing alternative assessment techniques, teachers should take the following factors into account: Do we need to assess what we want to assess? What will we do with the findings once we have assessed them? How should we assess? How can we obtain the data we require? How can we test without having negative effects?

Alwaely et al. (2023) assert that students should be given a complete view of their development and accomplishment, teachers should employ a diversity of assessment strategies and procedures. According to Kankam et al. (2014), students who are assessed using effective assessment strategies can examine their strengths and weaknesses, which enhances instructional methods. When alternative and authentic tasks are included in the teaching and learning process, students understand lessons more effectively. Portfolios, learning logs/journals, role play, evaluation of work samples, peer assessment, self-assessment, collaborative testing, open-response items, report writing, experiments/demonstrations, and presentations are a few among the various alternative assessment tasks/strategies used in various schools.

Challenges of Using Alternative Assessment

The expense and time needed to create and administer alternative assessments is one barrier to their use in classrooms. These new kinds of evaluation require training for teachers to develop and evaluate, which might take up important time that teachers may not have (DeMonte, 2013). Furthermore, because of the nature of alternative assessments, they may require more time than regular examinations, which might be problematic if there are not enough resources for the evaluation. While efforts to construct and score alternative assessment tasks manually may be commendable, the expense and time involved may render it unfeasible for large-scale testing of greater complexity. As a result, artificial intelligence is expected to play a significant part in the scoring of examinations of this nature.

Lack of uniformity in alternative assessments is another difficulty. Compared to standard assessments, alternative assessments are more subjective, which results in varied judgments among teachers and classrooms (Bowers & Davis, 2012). Students' educational experiences and outcomes may be impacted by the subjectivity of alternative assessments and the resulting inconsistent grading procedures. As they significantly rely on the teacher's judgment and interpretation of the data, alternative evaluations are subjective, according to Song et al. (2020). In contrast to standardised examinations, alternative assessments lack a predetermined grading scheme, and students' results may differ based on how their teachers perceive their work (Song et al., 2020).

One of the challenges, according to Kassa et al. (2024), is making sure that students have the knowledge and skills needed to properly complete alternative assessments. For instance, students must be proficient writers and critical thinkers to pass the portfolio examination. Public speaking and effective communication skills are prerequisites for students taking presentation examinations. Students cannot be sufficiently prepared to pass the evaluation task if these skills are not taught and developed during the course. All students must be fairly assessed despite these obstacles, and assessment procedures that enable students to take charge of their education and develop into independent thinkers should be welcomed.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A descriptive survey design, anchored in a positivist paradigm, was adopted for the study. We chose a descriptive survey design due to its ability to systematically explore and gather quantitative data about a phenomenon. The design also has a unique strength of providing a more realistic description of events, individual perceptions, behaviours, and experiences (Fife-Schaw, 2020).

Population

The schools included in the accessible population for this study are Sefwi Wiawso Senior High School, Sefwi Wiawso Senior High/Tech School, Asawinso Senior High School, and St. Joseph Senior High School. The study's population includes all teachers at the four public senior high schools in the Sefwi Wiawso Municipal area, totalling 210 teachers.

Sampling and Sampling Technique

Two hundred and ten (210) senior high school teachers from the Sefwi Wiawso municipality covered the study's sample size. The sample size was determined based on data obtained from the schools regarding the total population of teachers relevant to the study. Since the entire population of 210 teachers was relatively manageable and accessible, the researchers adopted a census sampling technique in selecting the teachers, meaning all teachers working in public senior high schools in the Sefwi Wiawso Municipality were included in the study.

Data Collection Instruments

The questionnaire was designed by the researchers to align with the research objectives. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions, and the study's closed-ended items were of the four-point Likert scale type. The four-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree) was employed to gauge the level of agreement. Questionnaire was employed to gather data from participants due to its ability to facilitate the sampling of opinions from a larger population and its capacity to efficiently gather a substantial volume of data at a cost-efficient option (Taherdoost, 2021).

The questionnaire consisted of four sections. Section A gathered demographic characteristics of participants, including gender and years of experience. Section B focused on teachers' perceptions of alternative assessment, which

involves students developing their responses rather than selecting from a list of available options. Section C asked about the tasks/strategies of alternative assessments Senior High School teachers employ to evaluate their students, such as evaluating work samples and experiments/demonstrations. Lastly, Section D explored the challenges that teachers encounter when implementing alternative assessments during teaching and learning in the classroom, such as difficulties arising from the school assessment system.

Reliability and Validity

In order for a method of data collection to be effective, two crucial aspects must be considered: validity and reliability (Chenge et al., 2017). To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was submitted for expert review and feedback. The suggestions given were used to enhance the instrument and thereby helped to create face and content validity. Also, the reliability of the instrument was ensured through pretesting. The questionnaire underwent a preliminary evaluation. The pre-testing process took place in two public senior high schools in the Bia West District due to the fact that the teaching staff at these institutions share comparable attributes in terms of academic qualifications, professional training, job responsibilities, and curriculum utilised in the school. During the preliminary evaluation, the level of difficulty and any ambiguities in the interpretation of each item were ascertained. Following the pre-test, Cronbach's alpha was employed to gauge the internal consistency of the research instrument. The composite items demonstrated effectiveness, as evidenced by the obtained reliability coefficients of 0.89, 0.97, and 0.88 for the research objectives 1, 2, and 3, respectively.

Ethical Considerations

Permission was sought from the appropriate authorities. Participant consent was sought. The

researchers explained to participants the rationale for conducting this study and gave them assurance that the information they provided would be kept confidential. Again, the participant's physical, sociological, and psychological wellness was not adversely affected by the research, as far as was reasonably possible. Trust and respect were prioritised to ensure a positive rapport between the researchers and participants. The researchers took precautions to avoid doing anything that would negatively affect other researchers or other disciplines. Additionally, personal information relating to participants was kept private and secure, and participants' identities and privacy were protected. In the process of documenting and reporting the data obtained in this study, the researchers exhibited a high degree of seriousness, caution, impartiality, and honesty. These qualities ensured the accuracy and integrity of the data analysis and interpretation.

Data Processing and Analysis

Upon acquiring the necessary data through a survey design, it underwent coding, editing, and input into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 for processing and analysis. The data was subsequently cleaned to remove any unintended errors. Descriptive statistics, specifically frequencies and percentages, were employed to analyse the participants' background information due to their ability to facilitate meaningful interpretation, findings, and data recommendations. The questionnaires were categorised, edited, and coded before data analysis was conducted using 173 fully completed responses, representing a return rate of 82.4%. This response rate is in line with the expectation of at least 80.0% for survey research (Yang et al., 2021). Inferential statistics, specifically one-sample t-tests, were also utilised to analyse the obtained data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Data of Respondents

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	112	64.7
Female	61	35.3
Total	173	100.0

Field Survey (2024)

Table 1 reveals that the majority of the Senior High School teachers participating in this study were male, accounting for 112 individuals (64.7%), while the remaining 61 teachers (35.3%) were female. This reflects the gender distribution among public

senior high school teachers in the Sefwi Wiawso Municipality. This suggests that the municipality has a higher proportion of male teachers compared to their female counterparts.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Years of Teaching

Years	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1-5	68	39.3
6-10	81	46.8
11-15	21	12.1
16-above	3	1.7
Total	173	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Table 2 revealed that the largest group of participants, comprising 81 individuals (46.8%), have been teaching for a period of 6 to 10 years. The second-largest group, consisting of 68 participants (39.3%), have been teaching for a period of 1 to 5 years. The third-largest group, consisting of 21 participants (12.1%), has been teaching for a period of 11 to 15 years, while the smallest group, comprising 3 participants (1.7%), has been teaching for a period of 16 years and above. The data indicate that the majority of the participants are highly experienced. The inclusion of participants with many years of experience strengthens the credibility and reliability of the data gathered. Also, their familiarity with evidence-based practices such as the alternative assessment practices ensures that the data reflects well-grounded perspectives, thereby enhancing the validity of the findings.

Research Question One

What are teachers' perceptions of alternative assessment practices in public Senior High Schools in the Sefwi Wiawso Municipality?

Exploring teachers' perceptions of alternative assessment practices was the first objective of the study. Participants were presented with a list of twelve statements about their opinions on alternative assessment practices and were asked to indicate their level of agreement by choosing from the Likert scale options: strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. A four-point Likert scale was used to record the responses. The researchers determined the criterion value for this scale by adding the values of all four options ($4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = 10$) and then dividing by 4 ($10 / 4 = 2.50$). We used this criterion value to determine whether participants' responses aligned with the range of agreement or disagreement with the given statements. Table 3 shows the results.

Table 3: Result of One-Sample t-Test of Teachers' Perception of Alternative Assessment

Items	N	M	SD	T	df	P
1. In an alternative assessment, students must develop their own responses rather than choosing from a list of available responses.	173	3.40	.559	80.161	172	.000
2. Alternative assessment methods encourage higher-order thinking	173	3.62	.531	89.699	172	.000
3. Alternative assessment directly evaluates how the final result was created	173	3.20	.616	68.226	172	.000
4. Alternative assessment promotes collaboration	173	3.29	.550	78.842	172	.000
5. Alternative assessment evaluates projects	173	3.20	.577	72.832	172	.000
6. Alternative assessment teaches students how to analyse their own work using predefined criteria	173	3.28	.553	77.892	172	.000
7. An alternative assessment method makes advantage of cumulative student work.	173	3.08	.499	81.172	172	.000
8. Alternative assessment relies on certain standards that are communicated to students	173	3.07	.501	80.585	172	.000
9. Alternative assessment enables a given assignment to produce multiple ratings across various subject domains.	173	3.35	.536	82.206	172	.000
10. Alternative assessment entails assessing performance variations over time.	173	3.34	.565	77.798	172	.000
11. Alternative assessments demand that students integrate knowledge from several fields.	173	3.45	.584	77.547	172	.000
12. Alternative assessment demonstrates how well students can use their knowledge and cognitive abilities to complete substantial, meaningful activities	173	3.34	.563	77.893	172	.000

Source: *Field Survey (2024)*

Table 3 reveals that teachers in the public senior high schools in the Sefwi Wiawso Municipality generally hold favourable opinions regarding alternative assessments. This is evident from the fact that all the mean scores fell above the predetermined cut-off value of 2.50 on the four-point Likert scale, indicating that participants' responses were significant. The following are the major items that public Senior High School teachers have a positive perception of alternative assessment: (1) In an alternative assessment, students must develop their responses rather than choosing from a list of available responses (M=3.40), (2) Alternative assessment methods encourage higher-order thinking (M=3.62), (3) Alternative assessment encourages collaboration to resolve issues (M=3.29). (4) Alternative assessment teaches students how to analyse their own work using

predefined criteria (3.28), (5) Alternative assessment enables a given assignment to produce multiple ratings across various subject domains (M=3.35), (6) Alternative assessment entails assessing performance variations over time (M=3.34), (7) Alternative assessments demand that students integrate knowledge from several fields (M=3.45), (8) Alternative assessment demonstrates how well students can use their knowledge and reasoning skills to complete substantial, meaningful activities (M=3.34).

Firstly, participants showed a strong perception that alternative assessment engages students in generating their own responses (M=3.40) instead of selecting from given alternatives. This supports the belief that alternative assessments are student-centred and encourage student autonomy and

creativity, challenging learners to think independently and critically (Sa'diyah, 2020). Such tasks are open-ended and context-based, enabling students to apply knowledge in more realistic scenarios. Also, the high mean score (M=3.62) for the statement that alternative assessments promote higher-order thinking means that participants acknowledge that alternative assessment practice enables students to utilise their intellectual abilities beyond rote memorisation. This is consistent with Chauvin's (2012) assertion that the application of performance-based measures in analysing, evaluating, and synthesising students' abilities and performance is a key element of higher-order thinking abilities. In addition, the statement "alternative assessments promote collaboration" had a mean score of 3.29. This highlights that alternative assessment enables students to develop 21st-century skills, such as teamwork and communication. Care and Griffin (2014) posit that collaborative assessments reflect actual settings where problem-solving occurs and prepare learners for advanced social and professional contexts.

Participants also agreed that alternative assessment teaches students to evaluate their work using a pre-determined criterion (M=3.28). This finding supports the assertion of Jensen et al. (2018) that self-assessment supports the development of metacognitive knowledge and enhances learners' sense of responsibility for learning, which is a key tenet of alternative assessment practices. Moreover,

participants agreed that alternative assessments allow multiple ratings across various subject domains (M=3.35). This also supports Awad and Al Adwan's (2024) contention that alternative assessments are interdisciplinary and multidimensional, which allow students to attain competency in a range of skills and knowledge areas. Participants also perceived that alternative assessment involves tracking performance over time (M=3.34). This mean score implies that participants are of the view that alternative assessment is dynamic and longitudinal in nature. This aligns with Abramovich et al's (2015) suggestion that meaningful assessment must account for growth and learning processes, not just outcomes.

The perception that alternative assessments integrate knowledge from multiple fields (M=3.45) reinforces the interdisciplinary potential of the assessment approaches. According to Dare et al. (2021), integrated tasks challenge students to draw on knowledge from various subjects, promoting a holistic understanding of concepts. Finally, the statement that alternative assessment shows how students apply knowledge and reasoning to meaningful tasks (M=3.34) confirms its practical and applied nature. Alternative assessments mirror real-world challenges, making learning more relevant and motivating for students (Bennett, 2015).

Table 4: Results of Overall One-Sample t-Test for Respondents' Perception of Alternative Assessment

Perception	N	Test value =30				
		M	SD	T	Df	Sig
	173	39.62	6.634	93.30	172	.000

Source: *Field Survey (2024)*

Table 4 displays the average score reflecting respondents' views on alternative assessment. Teachers reported a total mean score of 39.62 concerning their perception of alternative assessment. A benchmark score of 30 was established by multiplying the 12 questionnaire

items by the Likert scale threshold of 2.50. This benchmark was used to assess the teachers' responses. Since the overall mean score of 39.62 exceeded the benchmark, it suggests that the teachers held more favourable average views,

showing strong agreement with the statements related to alternative assessment methods.

Research Question Two

What kinds of alternative assessment strategies do teachers use to evaluate their students' learning outcomes in public Senior High Schools in Sefwi Wiawso Municipality?

The purpose of this research question was to explore the different types of alternative assessment tasks

and methods used by Senior High School teachers to assess student learning. To gather the necessary data, participants responded to 12 items designed on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from "Never = 1" to "Always = 4". The responses were grouped into two main categories: "Never/Occasionally" and "Most of the time/Always". Frequencies and percentages were used to analyse and present the data. Table 5 shows clearer picture of how often teachers implement various alternative assessment strategies.

Table 5: Results of Kinds of Alternative Assessment Used to Assess Students' Outcomes

Alternative Assessment Tasks	Never/Occasionally		Most of the time/Always	
	Freq	(%)	Freq	(%)
1. Evaluating work samples	5	2.9	168	97.1
2. Experiments/Demonstrations	11	6.3	162	93.7
3. Projects	31	17.9	142	82.1
4. Role-play	48	27.7	125	72.2
5. Open-Response Items	24	13.9	149	86.1
6. Report writing	109	63	64	37
7. Collaborative Testing	149	86.1	24	13.9
8. Portfolios	52	30	121	70
9. Learning Logs / Journals	97	56.1	76	43.9
10. Peer-Assessment	23	13.3	150	86.7
11. Self-Assessment	18	10.4	155	89.6
12. Presentations	12	7	161	93

Source: *Field Survey (2024)*

Table 5 reveals that the majority of Senior High School teachers frequently utilise evaluating work samples (97.1%), experiments or demonstrations (93.7%), projects (82.1%), and role-play (72.2%) as alternative assessment strategies. The results indicate that a significant proportion of respondents (86.1%) frequently utilise open-response items, and 70% frequently utilise portfolios. The remaining results, which represent the frequencies with which participants utilise peer assessment (86.7%), self-assessment (89.6%), and presentations (93%), demonstrate that these assessment techniques are commonly employed by teachers to evaluate students' learning outcomes. In contrast, the data suggests that report writing, learning logs/journals, and collaborative testing tasks are infrequently or

never utilised by teachers as alternative assessment strategies.

The high percentage of teachers using experiments/demonstrations and presentations reflects science-oriented or practical classroom settings, where students are actively involved in demonstrating knowledge. According to Devaki (2024), alternative assessment methods foster deep learning and provide evidence of students' ability to apply, analyse, and communicate ideas effectively. Moreover, the strong presence of self- and peer-assessment (89.6% and 86.7%, respectively) supports alternative assessment strategies, which enhance metacognition, self-regulation, and collaborative learning (Jensen et al., 2018). These practices help learners become active participants in

the learning process, a hallmark of constructivist pedagogy. The moderate application of projects and portfolios (82.1% and 70%) points to an effort to integrate long-term, integrative assessments. Portfolios, in particular, offer a comprehensive view of student progress over time and across disciplines. However, their management and grading can be time-consuming, which may limit consistent use. Role-play, though pedagogically rich in promoting empathy and perspective-taking, may be underutilised due to logistical challenges or subject-matter relevance. The low usage of collaborative testing (13.9%) and learning journals/logs (43.9%) is notable. While collaborative assessments can promote peer interaction and collective problem-solving, they are often viewed as challenging to manage in terms of grading fairness (Zhu & Ergulec, 2023). Similarly, journals and learning logs, although valuable for reflection and growth, require consistent monitoring and support, which

may not always be feasible. Report writing, used by only 37% of respondents regularly, might suffer due to students' weak writing skills or lack of emphasis in science- and practice-heavy curricula.

Research Question Three

What are the challenges teachers face in the use of alternative assessments in the public Senior High Schools in Sefwi Wiawso Municipality?

This research question sought to explore the challenges teachers face in applying alternative assessment methods across different subject areas. To investigate this, participants responded to eight structured statements on a four-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree = 1" to "Strongly Agree = 4". For analysis purposes, the responses were grouped into two main categories: "Agree" and "Disagree". The findings, summarised in Table 6, are presented using frequencies and percentages.

Table 6: Results of Challenges Teachers Face When Using Alternative Assessment

Statement	Agree		Disagree	
	Freq	(%)	Freq	(%)
The school assessment system makes using alternative assessments challenging	156	90.2	17	9.8
Lack of motivation on the part of school officials	162	93.6	11	6.4
Lack of facilities and logistical support from the school administration	169	97.7	4	2.3
Creating alternative assessment tasks is challenging	113	65.3	60	34.7
The timetable's inadequate allotments for different subjects prevent the use of alternative assessments	146	84.4	27	15.6
Insufficient time to obtain the data and materials needed for the alternative assessment	152	87.9	21	12.2
Using alternative assessment methods is challenging in large class sizes	155	89.6	18	10.4
Certain topics are challenging to evaluate using alternative assessment methods	150	86.7	23	13.3

Source: *Field Survey (2024)*

The results from Table 6 reveal significant systemic and structural challenges that hinder the effective implementation of alternative assessment, despite teachers' generally positive perceptions of its value (as discussed in earlier findings). The overwhelming agreement (97.7%) regarding the lack of logistical and facility support from schools

indicates a key limitation in resources in the educational settings within the municipality. According to Maki (2023), the successful implementation of assessment depends heavily on institutional commitment, including administrative backing, training, and provision of materials. In a developing country like Ghana, inadequate physical

resources such as science labs, project materials, or even classroom space can severely limit alternative assessment opportunities (Attia et al, 2023). Similarly, the lack of motivation or support from school officials (93.6%) aligns with earlier studies indicating that leadership attitudes directly influence pedagogical innovation (Bhuttah et al, 2024; Zhang et al., 2024). When school leaders are not actively involved in promoting assessment reform, teachers may feel unsupported and discouraged from experimenting with non-traditional assessment methods.

A significant proportion of teachers indicated that timetable constraints (84.4%) and insufficient time to gather data/materials (87.9%) hinder their use of alternative assessments. These findings support the view that overloaded curricula and rigid schedules leave little room for open-ended, reflective, or project-based assessments, which often require more instructional time (DeMonte, 2013). It is important to note that when assessment practices are rushed, they risk losing depth, authenticity, and validity.

The challenge posed by large class sizes (89.6%) is a particularly pressing issue in many public schools in the municipality. Alternative assessments often require individualised feedback, group facilitation, and observation tasks that are significantly more difficult in crowded classrooms (Kelley & Knowles, 2016). Teachers may default to traditional, easily graded tests due to sheer practicality. Also, the finding that certain topics are hard to assess alternatively (86.7%) suggests that not all curriculum content lends itself well to alternative or performance-based evaluation. While 65.3% of teachers found it challenging to create alternative assessment tasks, the relatively lower percentage compared to other challenges suggests some level of pedagogical confidence. This is encouraging, but still highlights the need for professional development in designing, validating, and aligning alternative assessments with learning objectives (Salendab & Dapitanb, 2021; Mohan, 2023). It is

worth stating that when teachers are not trained to design appropriate assessment tasks, even the best intentions may result in a lack of reliability or fairness.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that public senior high school teachers in the Sefwi Wiawso Municipality had positive perceptions of alternative assessment. Teachers practised alternative assessment in several ways, which included asking students to develop and arrange ideas for a specific reason and also demonstrating their capacity for effective concept organisation, reflecting on the way they learn, and enhancing their stories with relevant details. Teachers used alternative assessment results to design learning strategies that were appropriate for students. They encouraged students to take responsibility for their learning and practice self-reflection. They also enhanced and developed learning and teaching.

The study also concludes that evaluation of work samples, experiments/demonstrations, projects, role-play, open-response items, peer assessment, self-assessment, and presentations are the most frequently used alternative assessment tasks utilised by public senior high school teachers of the Sefwi Wiawso Municipality in assessing students' outcomes.

The study further concludes that the implementation of alternative assessment tasks in the Sefwi Wiawso senior high schools faces several challenges. These include difficulty in creating alternative assessment tasks, inadequate time allotments for different subjects, insufficient time to obtain data and materials, large class sizes, topics that seem difficult to evaluate using alternative assessment methods, and a lack of motivation from school leaders.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and conclusions drawn from them, the following recommendations are made.

- The study recommends that heads of departments in senior high schools motivate their teachers to use portfolios, projects, collaborative testing, and presentations for student assessment. These alternative assessment tasks require students to think critically to produce suitable answers to specific problems and enhance their learning.
- To enhance the implementation of alternative assessment methods in senior high schools, it is recommended that regular in-service training, workshops, and seminars be organised on assessment practices for senior high school teachers. These events will provide opportunities for teachers to familiarise themselves with current issues related to alternative assessment methods. This will ultimately contribute to the widespread adoption of alternative assessment practices in senior high schools.
- The study further recommends that the Ministry of Education ensure that senior high schools comply with UNESCO's (2007) recommendation of a maximum of 24 students per teacher, as large class sizes hinder the effective implementation of alternative assessments.
- It is also recommended that heads of senior high schools adjust the teaching timetable to ensure sufficient time for instruction for teachers. This would create a sense of confidence and calm in teachers, rather than causing them to feel uneasy when applying alternative assessments.
- To promote the improvement of students' conceptual understanding, school authorities should allocate a sufficient portion of their internally generated funds to the heads of departments. This financial support will enable departmental heads to procure necessary logistics and resources, as well as to finance projects and activities that enhance students' understanding of concepts. This will ultimately

contribute to the overall academic development and success of the school.

Ethical Approval

This study adhered to all regulations outlined in the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive." None of the actions specified in the second section of the directive, "Actions Against Scientific Research and Publication Ethics," were implemented.

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