

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

**SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL HISTORY TEACHERS'
EPISTEMOLOGICAL BELIEFS AND PERCEIVED
INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES IN THE MFANTSIMAN
MUNICIPALITY**

GABRIEL DONKOH

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MUNICIPALITY**

**BY
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and Social Sciences Education of the College of Education Studies, University
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Master of Philosophy in Arts Education.

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DECLARATIONS

Candidate's Declaration

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

Candidate's Signature Date

Name: Gabriel Donkoh

Supervisors' Declaration

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

Principal Supervisor's Signature Date

Name: Prof. Charles Adabo Oppong

Co-Supervisor's Signature Date

Name: Dr. Isaac Atta Kwenin

ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate history teachers' epistemological beliefs and their perceived instructional practices in Senior High Schools within the Mfantseman Municipality. The interpretive phenomenological design of the qualitative research approach was used to gather data from seven (7) history teachers in five public Senior High Schools. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews and analysed through the inductive thematic analysis approach. Analyses of the data revealed that history teachers hold nuanced epistemological beliefs that historical knowledge changes through new evidence, changing circumstances, and the dynamic nature of society. History teachers' epistemological beliefs also integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including interpretational, experiential, and contextual understanding, moving beyond the notion of history as fixed or authority-driven. Based on these beliefs, they prioritised instructional strategies that pave the way for students to read and discuss different books, watch videos, and visit historical sites to create knowledge on topics taught in class. Moreover, they consider critical thinking skills, aligning their assessment questions with their lesson objectives, the size of their class and the levels of their students. Finally, history teachers consider contemporary issues, instructional techniques, topics, and the timeframe of historical events before selecting instructional materials. Research and professional training were then recommended to make history teachers innovative enough to introduce different instructional strategies. Further, history teachers must implement assessment techniques that promote thinking, analysis, investigation and problem-solving activities. Lastly, history instructional resource centres should be provided in schools to support interactive history teaching.

KEYWORDS

Epistemological Beliefs

Developmental Epistemological Beliefs Model

Multidimensional Epistemological Beliefs Model

Instructional Practices



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DEDICATION

To my dearest parents: Mr. Alex Wilberforce Donkoh and Mrs. Mary Donkoh



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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Overview

This chapter presented the background information of the problem from the global perspective to the study's context by addressing the variables of history teachers' epistemological beliefs and instructional practices. The chapter further addressed the problem statement, the purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, and the significance of the study. Lastly, the chapter explained the study's limitations, delimitation, and organisation.

Background to the Study

Epistemological beliefs incorporate people's judgments on knowledge composition, its origins, and how information is acquired (Feutch, 2010; Stoel, Logtenberg & Nitsche, 2022). The concept of epistemological beliefs is rooted in psychology and philosophy, where scholars have made several attempts to understand the nature of knowledge (Hofer, 2016). For over four decades, epistemological beliefs have gradually gained dominance in studies related to teacher education programmes, subject disciplines, and classroom practices. Research in these areas abounds in Canada, China, Netherlands, Belgium, Turkey, Greece, Croatia, South Africa, Uganda, and Tanzania. In the research contexts mentioned above, conceptual and theoretical interpretations of students' epistemological beliefs have been well-researched (Dorsah, Shahadu & Kpemuonye, 2020; Koutsianou & Emvalotis, 2021; Letina, 2022; Wilke, Depaepe & Nieuwenhuyse, 2022).

Conceptually, teachers' epistemological beliefs can be explained through three central elements: structure, process, and transmission of knowledge (Lee, Zhang, Song & Huang, 2013; Hennessey, Karen & Kulikowich, 2013; Buehl & Fives, 2016). Firstly, "Structure" connotes what knowledge is considered to be. Secondly, "Process" deals with the procedures through which knowledge is comprehended. The "Process" also incorporates two sub-concepts: source of knowledge and justification of knowing. While the former connotes the extent to which reliable knowledge is personally or externally deduced, the latter entails the rules and criteria binding the evaluation of knowledge claims. Thirdly, the "Transmission" of knowledge refers to the pedagogical conduits through which knowledge is imparted to students in the classroom.

Theoretically, studies in the Western contexts address epistemological beliefs through developmental (unidimensional) and multi-dimensional models (VanSledright & Maggioni, 2016). In psychology, the explanation of epistemological beliefs commenced with the unidimensional approach (Letina, 2022). William Perry is known to be the proponent of the unidimensional or the developmental model. In Schommer's (2019) work, epistemological beliefs are developmental because individuals progress from the position of absolutism to the position of multiplism where they perceive knowledge differently. From the latter position, they transit to the position of relativism and then finally to the position called commitment within relativism. Thus, an individual's beliefs progress with time (Soleimani, 2018). Therefore, teachers' judgments about knowledge in the dualistic position will not necessarily remain the same when they advance to the relativist or evaluative position.

In Africa, research from Tanzania and Uganda highlights persistent challenges in implementing learner-centred pedagogies in African education systems. In Tanzania, Tarmo (2016) found that despite government initiatives through education master plans (1998 and 2000), teachers pre-established epistemic beliefs—formed in teacher-centred educational backgrounds—create resistance to inquiry-based and student-centred approaches. Tanzanian teacher trainees graduate from a school system dominated by the teacher-centred transmission of fixed and incorruptible facts. Hence, they have formed their pre-established epistemic identities through such educational backgrounds. The teachers' pre-established epistemic beliefs contribute to why Tanzanian teachers consider it a 'tug of war' to embrace pedagogical reforms modelled on inquiry and student-based pedagogies. Namamba and Rao (2016) attributed this to insufficient professional development programmes, leaving teachers to rely on their personal teaching philosophies. Thus, teachers depend solely on their personal epistemologies due to the absence of professional programmes to enlighten them on new curriculum demands and their associated pedagogies.

Similarly, in Uganda, Sheehy, Kasule, and Chamberlain (2021) identified that teachers struggle to adopt constructive pedagogical approaches due to both epistemological and cultural factors. Teachers remain rooted in traditional knowledge transfer methods, viewing student-centred approaches as culturally inappropriate and impractical. These challenges have hindered both countries from achieving their curriculum reform goals, with teaching practices remaining predominantly teacher-centred despite policy efforts to promote more interactive, learner-centred approaches. Epistemological problems

similarly focus on instructional practices but extend further to cultural considerations in the Ghanaian context.

In Ghana, Manu, Osei-Bonsu, and Atta (2015) opined that teachers' personal beliefs about the nature of knowledge and the procedures of acquiring knowledge creep into their instructional decisions. Studies on epistemological beliefs help to understand the instructional decisions of teachers and how students perceive knowledge and succeed in creating their meanings. Additionally, Borti (2019) investigated the epistemological issues in the Ghanaian context from a cultural point of view. For Borti, teachers form their epistemologies from the cultural thoughts and practices of the indigenous Ghanaian traditional systems.

The Ghanaian cultural thoughts and practices have always remained that knowledge is imparted through folktales, and proverbs, from the one in authority to the younger generation. Thus, the learner receives the valued knowledge systems from their authorities. Borti described this as the indigenous Ghanaian knowledge system. This form of cultural instruction tends to impact the thinking patterns of individuals as they go through college education. Consequently, it also informs teachers' beliefs about how knowledge should be constructed and passed on to the younger generations. Teachers, one way or the other, bring such belief systems into the classroom. Furthermore, Manu, Osei-Bonsu, and Atta (2015) further pointed out that teachers' epistemological beliefs connect with various instructional processes. These instructional processes, according to Bosu (2017) include lesson planning, classroom management strategies, assessment practices, and teachers' level of knowledge of content and pedagogy.

Despite the above studies, it seems studies on personal epistemologies in tandem with history teachers' instructional practices are very scarce in history education. Manu et al., (2015) attested to the preceding fact that teachers make certain decisions that affect the teaching and learning processes due to the absence of enlightenment on their epistemological realities. Theoretically, a study on history teachers' epistemological beliefs is pertinent since it addresses their perspectives on teaching, pedagogical choices, and classroom behaviours. Therefore, it is empirically essential for an investigation to be conducted into the epistemological beliefs of history teachers to understand why history teachers make certain instructional decisions in the classroom. The present study, therefore, explored history teachers' epistemological beliefs and reflections on the perceived teaching practices in the Mfantseman Municipality.

Statement of the Problem

The place of epistemological beliefs in history instruction cannot be underestimated. Teachers' epistemological beliefs influence how they teach, allowing students to engage more actively in history and improving their thinking about the subject (Buehl & Fives, 2016; Boadu, 2020). Epistemological beliefs also address the understanding of history teacher's knowledge of history, and historical concepts, and how they make certain decisions about their instructional practices (Wilke, Depaepe & Nieuwenhuyse, 2022). Epistemological decisions about instructional practices largely revolve around instructional methods, assessment strategies, and instructional materials (Letina, 2022).

Notwithstanding the foregoing, teachers' epistemological beliefs appear not to reflect their classroom practices adequately. For instance, Wilke et al.

(2022) established that it is not certain how teachers' epistemological beliefs translate into their teaching practices due to the influence of other beliefs such as beliefs about their students, the classroom environment, and the school curriculum. This evidence resonates with that of Kwaah (2021) who established that basic school teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality held beliefs inconsistent with their reported classroom practices as their classroom delivery patterns were transmissive-oriented.

In Ghana, research on epistemological beliefs has focused mainly on basic school teachers and student teachers (Manu, 2014; Manu, et al., 2015; Dorsah et al. 2020). Boadu, Donnelly, and Sharp (2020) also established that history teachers in the Central Region pedagogically reason with a constructive approach to teaching. However, this reasoning does not reflect their history lessons. Instead, history teachers were didactic in their instructional strategies and narratively taught history. Even though this evidence was established on teachers' instructional reasoning in the classroom, it was not established in line with their epistemological beliefs. Consequently, empirical evidence on epistemological beliefs at the Senior High School level is diminutive. The absence of such epistemological orientation is what contributes to history teachers' inappropriate instructional practices at the senior high school level.

Further, other studies (Manu, 2014; Manu, Osei-Bonsu & Atta, 2015; Dorsah, Shahadu & Kpemuonye, 2020; Kwaah, 2021; Wilke et al., 2022) have established that there are discrepancies between teachers' epistemological beliefs and their instructional practices. However, few studies seem to be on how history teachers' epistemological beliefs influence their instructional practices. Therefore, the novelty of this study, lies in the researcher's quest to

address this aspect of history teachers' beliefs and how such beliefs inform the selection of instructional strategies, assessment strategies and instructional materials.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate how history teachers' epistemological beliefs inform their perceived instructional practices in the Mfantsiman Municipality.

Research Objectives

The following specific objectives guided the study. The study sought to:

1. explore the epistemological beliefs of history teachers.
2. find out how history teachers' epistemological beliefs influence their selection of instructional strategies.
3. establish how history teachers' epistemological beliefs inform their assessment strategies in the classroom.
4. ascertain how history teachers' epistemological beliefs influence their choice of instructional materials in history instructions.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to accomplish the objectives of the study;

1. What epistemological beliefs do Senior High School history teachers hold in the Mfantsiman Municipality?
2. How do Senior High School history teachers' epistemological beliefs influence their perceived choice of instructional strategies within the Mfantsiman Municipality?

3. How do Senior High School history teachers' epistemological beliefs inform their perceived classroom assessment strategies within the Mfantsiman Municipality?
4. How do Senior High School history teachers' epistemological beliefs influence their perceived selection of instructional materials within the Mfantsiman Municipality?

Significance of the Study

This study has some significance. First, this study highlights the epistemological beliefs held by Senior High School history teachers. The beliefs of history teachers have strong basis for mapping out effective classroom practices hence curriculum developers (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment) will be informed to consider such beliefs in their future review or design critically. This is because such beliefs align with constructive principles embedded in the school curriculum that history teachers are supposed to implement.

Second, this study has unearthed Senior High School history teachers preferred instructional practices. It will help history teachers to reconsider their belief systems regarding the teaching of historical knowledge.

Delimitations of the Study

First, the study's scope was delimited to investigating the epistemic beliefs of history teachers, history teachers' instructional strategies, assessment practices, and the selection of instructional materials. Second, regarding the geographical scope, the Mfantsiman Municipality Senior High Schools were the only ones included in the study, focusing specifically on history teachers from whom comprehensive data were obtained.

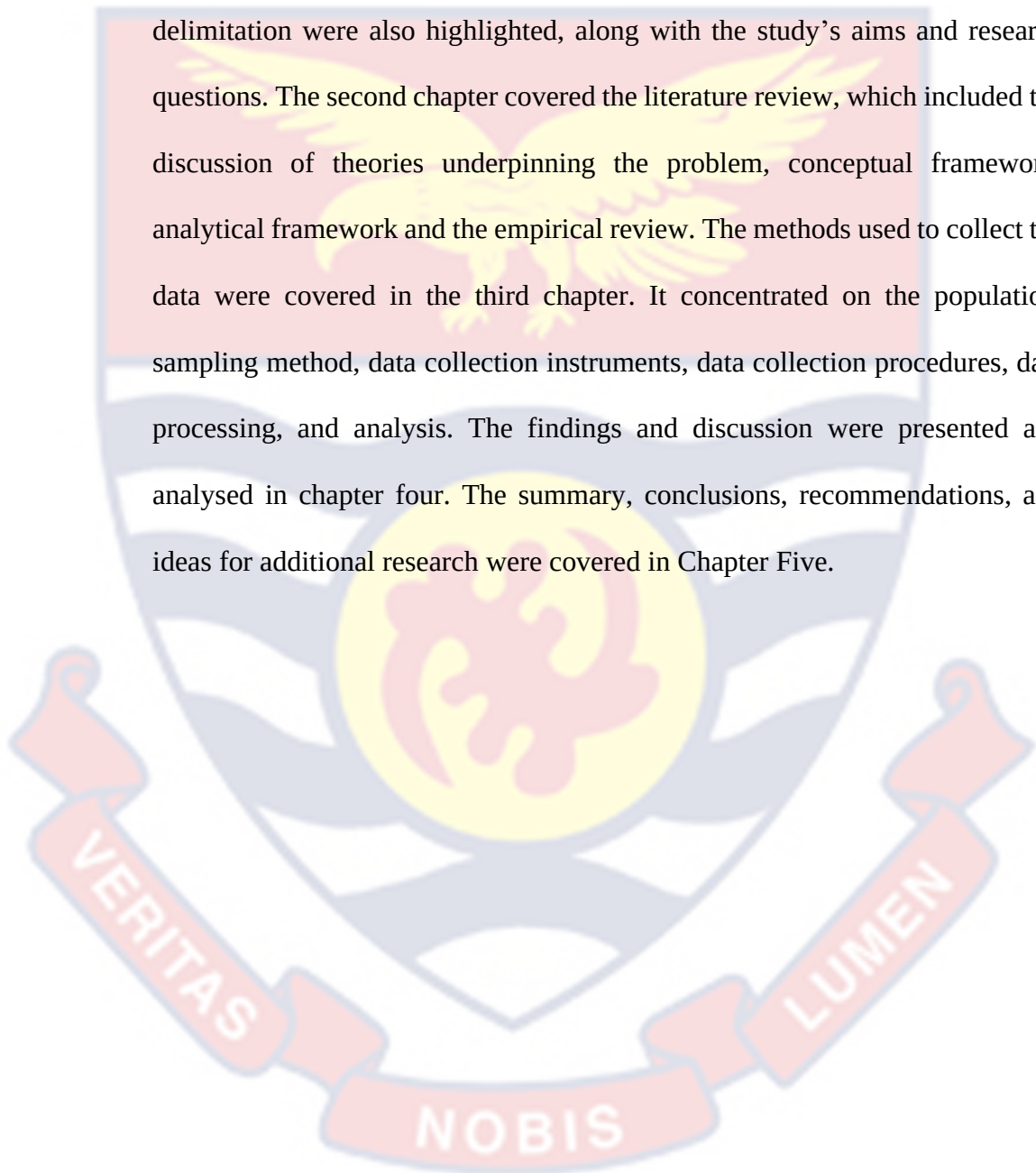
Limitations of the Study

The limitation of the study related to how the study's data was gathered. At some point, participants were reluctant to furnish the researcher with certain highly required information such as their understanding of knowledge in history, interpretation, and instructional choices. This could affect the interpretation of the data to reveal the true perspectives shared by participants in answering the research questions. Also, some participants appeared to have been digressing from some of the questions posed when responding. Given these, the researcher had to take his time to explain some of the issues to the level of participants' understanding. For one participant, the interview was partially completed. This could have potentially affected how the data would be presented and analysed. However, the researcher later returned to convince the participant, after which the interview was completed. This intervention enabled the researcher to have complete understanding of the participant's perspectives, experiences or opinions on all the study's objectives. Also, without the intervention, the participant's incomplete responses could have possibly compelled the researcher to add his assumptions to the interpretation of the results.

The strength of the data lay in the semi-structured nature of the interviews. The researcher was able to probe further to elicit responses from participants on their real-time experiences and what they do in the classroom. Thus, the rigorous nature of the interview helped in covering wide range of information about history teachers' instructional practices. However, if the researcher had added observation data, it would have helped in eliciting detailed findings on the actual classroom instructional practices of history teachers.

Organisation of the Study

Five chapters made up the organisation of this work. The context of the study, the problem statement, and the study's research objectives were the main themes covered in Chapter One. The study's significance, limitation, and delimitation were also highlighted, along with the study's aims and research questions. The second chapter covered the literature review, which included the discussion of theories underpinning the problem, conceptual framework, analytical framework and the empirical review. The methods used to collect the data were covered in the third chapter. It concentrated on the population, sampling method, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, data processing, and analysis. The findings and discussion were presented and analysed in chapter four. The summary, conclusions, recommendations, and ideas for additional research were covered in Chapter Five.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter dealt with the theoretical, conceptual framework, and empirical studies relevant to the study. The objective of the empirical review was to evaluate the results established by other researchers by comparing the findings of this study with those of related investigations. The key concepts reviewed include epistemology and history teaching, epistemological beliefs, and instructional practices in history. This study's instructional practices revolve around instructional strategies, materials and assessment strategies.

Theoretical Review

The three main theories of learning: behaviourism, cognitivism, and constructivism informed this study given their implications for instructional practices. Woollard (2010) stresses that the theories are not only learning theories but also considered philosophies and pedagogies that find their place in interpreting knowledge in various disciplines. Additionally, these theories are relevant to this study because of their epistemic perspectives on what knowledge is considered to be, and their connections to teaching (Yilmaz, 2011). Fosnot (2013) also established that these theories address the nature of knowledge by considering what “knowing” is and “how one comes to know”. Further, the theories offer snapshots of history teachers' epistemic orientations and their beliefs about students' learning. The succeeding section discusses selected theories of learning.

Behaviourism

In the period before the 20th century, the theory of behaviourism dominated the fields of psychology, education, and science (Yilmaz, 2011). Early scholars who have advanced this theory include Hobbes, Hume, Hull, Ebbinghaus, Pavlov, Edward Watson, Thorndike, and Skinner. Edward B. Watson initiated this field by establishing that the only subject matter worthy of studying is the one that can be observed, measured, and quantified (Moore, 2011; Yilmaz, 2011). The theory explains learning as a connected set of an individual's behavioural responses emanating from external triggers or environmental conditions that trap individuals in learning situations (Fosnot, 2013). Fosnot (2013) continued to re-establish that behaviourist are very concerned with the consequences of continuous practice, external motivation, and reinforcement of connected associations and learned behaviours.

Ivan Pavlov, extended the behaviourism theory through his stimulus and response theory, by using an animal in an experiment to interpret the learning processes of humans. The overriding logic of Pavlov's theory was dependent on stimulus and response principles, experiences from the external environment, the emphasis on overt behaviours and the opposition to hidden or internal behaviours of students (Ertmer & Newby, 2013). Further, behaviourism was illuminated in B.F Skinner's operant conditioning theory (Fosnot, 2013). This theory explains the logic of behaviourism through the notion of positive and negative reinforcements. Thus, when there is positive reinforcement, learning continues but when there is negative reinforcement, learning comes to a halt (Alahmad, 2020). Negative reinforcements demotivate learners while positive reinforcements compel them to continue with their learning processes.

The foregoing arguments indicates that behaviourists believe that learning occurs only when there is a strong connection between external triggers and a corresponding reaction (Yilmaz, 2011). Behaviourists are also interested in tangible behaviours and the effects of the environment on the learner. As postulated by Ertmer and Newby (2013) and Alahmad (2020), the assumptions of behaviourism manifest in history teachers' epistemological perspectives and classroom practices. First, behaviourists perceive learners as passive recipients of knowledge and they learn mainly through experiences. Also, learners are reactive beings and not active beings. They further believe learners learn through reinforcements, continued practice, motivation, and association. Lastly, learners can successfully learn when the curriculum is well-structured.

Under these assumptions about students, history teachers with the behaviourist orientation believe in direct transmission, sequenced instruction, and mastery learning as the best instructional approaches to delivering historical knowledge. Direct transmission relates to the situation whereby history teachers transfer pre-established knowledge to learners with minimal perspectives and feedback from learners (Fosnot, 2013). Sequenced instruction, on the other hand, refers to how the curriculum is structured and how facts or concepts are systematically broken down into sub-skills for students to acquire (Fosnot, 2013). Mastery learning is also based on the idea that complex knowledge can be broken down into sub-skills for students and the needs of learners must be repeatedly catered for until mastery is gained (Ertmer et al., 2013).

The objective tradition influences history teachers with the behaviourists' school of thought (Hassad, 2011). In epistemology and pedagogy, such teachers are categorised as absolutists or dualists (Buehl &

Fives, 2016; VanSledright & Maggioni, 2016, Stoel et al., 2017, Letina, 2022). They perceive knowledge in history as pre-established, certain and inflexible. Further, behaviourists believe that knowledge is the chronological arrangement of isolated facts and concepts that are not questionable. Moreover, they believe that knowledge contains a single interpretation; history teachers are experts or authorities and students are passive receivers. In the context of assessment, they also believe assessment tasks must be standardized (Alahmad, 2020; Ibrahimu, 2022).

Notwithstanding the above, the behaviourists faced several criticisms as highlighted by Alahmad (2020). In the first place, the idea that learning is derived from reinforcement limits instructions and learning becomes impossible without reinforcement. Secondly, the theory is considered one-dimensional and does not account for learners' free will and internal processes. Thirdly, it has been criticized that the theory explains behaviour superficially and learning is not possible through experience alone. Further, the theory rejects biological factors in human behaviour. These are natural factors that contribute to students' learning. The principle of operant and classical conditioning defies spontaneous behaviours in humans. It does not also provide room for new knowledge to be considered. Lastly, the theory compels teachers to place much emphasis on rote learning.

Cognitivism

The theory of cognitivism is premised on the assumption that knowledge and mental processes interfere with external factors and the corresponding reactions of students. The leading proponent of this theory was Edward Chase Tolman, who opposed the static assumptions of behaviourism about learning

(Misra, 2021). The cognitivism theory was introduced to ensure an epistemological shift in teachers' beliefs from an objective perspective to a more subjective and evaluative one (Yilmaz, 2011). Proponents of this theory place a premium on what occurs inside the learner's head (mental behaviour) and understand that knowledge is the ability to suppose, believe, and perceive. According to them, knowledge is actively constructed based on learners' existing cognitive structures hence, comprehending students' existing intellectual frameworks as central to learning (Ertmer & Newby, 2013). Cognitivists believe knowledge comprises articulated structures of deliberate cognitive representations deduced from previous learning experiences. Thus, students explain such experiences and information based on their prior knowledge, level of cognitive development, cultural orientations, and the person's background.

With cognitivism, students must actively transmit knowledge, acquire and merge concepts (Ertmer et al., 2013). Also, knowledge from the cognitivist perspective is obtained through a rational process that incorporates the learner's inherent arrangement and coding of behaviours (Yilmaz, 2011). Cognitive theorists also emphasize the pre-existing knowledge of learners and the avenues through which they assimilate new ones with what they already know (Yilmaz, 2011). Additionally, cognitivism supports making knowledge comprehensible, assisting learners in assembling and linking fresh evidence to previous information in the mind. Lastly, the cognitive school of thought hinges on rational activities such as observation, imagination, memory, judgment, problem-solving, and selective attention (Ertmer & Newby, 2013).

Koutsianou and Emvalotis (2021) argue that this theory integrates with the principles of multiplism which influence history teachers regarding their epistemic rationalizations in history teaching. Consequently, they perceive historical knowledge as an ever-changing and ever-evolving set of personal and subjective opinions (Koutsianou & Emvalotis, 2021). Again, cognitivist history teachers opine that historical knowledge is driven by human minds and is formed based on innate sources. This means that knowledge about the past is only true to the knower and may be subjected to other interpretations by others. Lastly, cognitive history teachers hold that knowledge must be justified and evidence is required before historical information can be accepted. These principles underlying the cognitive theory have implications for classroom instruction. For instance, cognitivists believe instruction should depend on cognitive principles and improve students' internal behaviours. Also, there should be a well-resourced classroom environment where students act as constructors of knowledge through available and relevant materials. In addition, instruction should be connected to the needs, interests, and backgrounds and teachers must construct knowledge in meaningful contexts.

Further, learning should occur through receiving, storing, and retrieving information. The theory also proposes that emphasis should be placed on understanding the characteristics of learners, analysing instructional materials, and activating schema for learning. Besides, teachers should emphasize the employment of mental approaches like outlining, summaries, and synthesis among others (Yilmaz, 2011). Cognitive facilitators continue to hold that knowledge does not have any bearing on the external reality but is a cognitive

representation of actions, principles, concepts, etc. They also believe knowledge construction is based on innate or fixed abilities and eternally remains abstract.

Regardless of the above-indicated implications, the theory has been criticized for several reasons. First, the theory is believed to explain learning behaviours in their abstract context which makes it challenging to explain them. Also, the use of an animal experiment to explain the mental behaviours of humans and knowledge construction is just a repetition of the flaw of behaviourism. Lastly, the theory is criticized because it is impossible to measure mental behaviours (Yilmaz, 2011). The cognitivism theory's shortcomings saw the evolution of the constructivism theory to augment our understanding of history teachers' belief systems.

Constructivism

Constructivism describes the processes of knowing (epistemology) and how one comes to know (Fosnot, 2013). Given its relevance, it has been applied to philosophy, psychology, sociology, and education (Bada & Olusegun, 2015). It regards knowledge as emerging, developmental, non-objective and requires veritable explanations. Besides, it stresses the construction of knowledge through personal experience and interaction with the environment (Yilmaz, 2011). The theory is grounded in Dewey's conceptualisation that "education is a constant reorganization or reconstruction of experience" (Huiling, 2014, p. 23). Constructivists believe that knowledge exists beyond our minds. Also, knowledge is not fixed and absolute but it is constructed based on experiences (Bada & Olusegun, 2015). Other assumptions of the constructivist's theory are explained below.

First, constructivists do not accept knowledge as authoritative but as individuals establish contact with the world, knowledge is properly constructed (Yilmaz, 2011). For constructivists, learning should not be a stimulus-response phenomenon but an adaptive activity, and an active process of knowledge construction. Also, instructions must incorporate prior experiences, beliefs, cultural histories, and worldviews in the classroom (Martell, 2014; Alahmad, 2020). Furthermore, instruction must be developmental and not follow prescribed procedures for designing a learning activity. The theory stresses the involvement of students in active inquiry and exploration thereby facilitating their construction of knowledge.

Fosnot (2013) admits this theory rejects the perspective that knowledge is fixed. It also rejects teachers' notions that students must accept exact copies of information and that concepts can be taught out of context. Martell (2014) maintains that it offers an instructional model that allows students to contextualise experience comprehensively, ask questions, interpret and defend perspectives and ideas. Further, the classroom is viewed as a mini-society where learners are involved in activity, justification, interpretation, and reflection (Fosnot, 2013). Teachers assume a more collaborative or assistive role, while students take charge of the instruction. Evidence of a high level of autonomy, mutual reciprocity of social relations, and empowerment centralize teachers' instruction (Fosnot, 2013). Bada and Olusegun (2015) summarized these assumptions similarly into twelve principles that underpin the theory of constructivism by explaining it in the context of instruction.

The first principle indicates that the brain processes knowledge in an analogous pattern. It processes diverse forms of information, thoughts,

emotions, and cultural knowledge concurrently. Also, the incorporation of diverse learning approaches constitutes effective and efficient instruction. Second, learning considers every aspect of the students and not the mind alone. Moreover, the search for meaning is inherent. Thus, the principles of effective teaching depend on students' understanding and genuine experiences. As mentioned above, effective teaching involves sequentially merging unrelated concepts with worldwide concepts and themes. It is also stipulated that emotions, feelings, and attitudes have some impact on learning and the brain simultaneously processes parts and wholes. When either parts or wholes are disregarded, people become confused. Following this principle, it is indicated that students learn by paying close attention and using their peripheral vision. The environment, culture, and climate significantly influence students' learning processes.

Apart from the above principle, both voluntary and involuntary processes are involved in persistent learning. The 'how' and 'what' of what they have learnt must always be processed by students, who need time for it. It is further indicated that at a minimum, there are two distinct forms of students' memory. They are a spatial memory system and a set of systems for rote learning. Teaching emphasising rote learning does not promote spatial, experienced learning and can inhibit understanding. More to the above, the next principle says when facts and skills are combined in natural and spatial memory, students comprehend and recall information correctly. Also, the most desired and important form of learning is experience. Additionally, when students are challenged, learning becomes effective. The classroom environment should challenge students but should not intimidate them. Constructivists continue to

postulate that students' cognitive operations are exceptional hence instruction must be multidimensional to cater to the heterogeneity of learners.

In consonance with their belief about knowledge, constructivists pedagogically believe in knowledge that is tentative, flexible, subjective and not abstractly constructed. Also, cultural and social factors mediate the construction of knowledge. Given this, students are constructors of their knowledge. Constructivists further believe the interplay between prior knowledge, belief, and experiences produces new knowledge. Also, they posit that instructions should be based on learners' abilities. Finally, teachers are not authorities on what students should know.

Pedagogically, Bada and Olusegun (2015) establish that teachers who endorse the constructivist school of thought create a classroom environment where they share knowledge with their learners, act as facilitators, and assemble students with distinct learning abilities to work on tasks. Bada and Olusegun (2015) further explained that history teachers must plan instruction based on allowing students to determine knowledge, embrace their multiple perspectives, situate learning in real contexts, entertain students' ownership and allow their voice to dominate the learning process and encourage the use of multiple modes of representation. From the epistemological standpoint, these theories provide a lens through which one can categorise history teachers.

Epistemological Beliefs of History Teachers

Epistemological beliefs have caught the attention of scholars in recent times due to their relevance to teaching (Stoel et al, 2017; Wansink, Akkerman, Vermunt, Haenen & Wubbels, 2017; Wilke et al., 2022). The endless arguments that historians and history educators offer about knowledge have yielded

different interpretations of knowledge in history (Wansink, Akkerman, Vermunt, Haenen & Wubbels, 2017). Some researchers describe epistemological beliefs as personal epistemologies while others describe them using terms such as epistemic cognitions, and epistemic beliefs (Tarmo, 2016; Soleimani, 2018; Dorsah, Shahadu & Kpemuonye, 2020). For instance, Lee, Zhang, Song and Huang (2013) explained epistemological beliefs as an individual's belief in knowledge, how it is acquired, and the modes of knowledge. This definition portrays three major issues underlying history teachers' epistemological beliefs. They are the structure of historical knowledge, the procedures involved in acquiring it, and the sources of historical knowledge. Lee et al.'s (2013) definition appears to be very narrow in outlook by omitting other important aspects of historical knowledge such as its constructive, interpretive, and evaluative nature.

Dorsah, Shahadu, and Kpemuonye (2020) also conceptualised epistemological beliefs as one's viewpoint on the nature of knowledge, how it is created, and how it is supported. This definition aligns with Wilke et al. (2022) who explained epistemological beliefs as the belief in knowledge's nature, its degree of certainty or uncertainty, how knowledge is acquired, the reasoning, and the justifications thereof. The two conceptualisations above offer an extended explanation of epistemological beliefs compared to Lee et al.'s definition. Here, the researchers have eyes for the structure of knowledge and the interrogations individuals perceive about the nature of knowledge. Also, emphasising justification brings to mind, researchers' notion of offering reasons for constructing and evaluating the knowledge of the past.

Wansink et al. (2017) explained epistemological beliefs in the context of history teaching as those beliefs about how history teachers comprehend the nature of historical evidence, concepts and knowledge. Nitsche and Waldis (2022) also explained epistemological beliefs as teachers' understanding of the subjective ideas about what it means to know something and how knowledge is organised about the past. They further explained such beliefs through three distinctive assumptions. First, the understanding that history and the past are readily available in sources and accounts. Second, knowledge of history is just an expression of past opinions. Third, history is just a form of narrative about the past. Miguel-Revilla, Snachez-Augusti, Carril-Merino (2022) also conceptualised epistemological beliefs in history from four standpoints. They include the nature of history, its interpretation, the roles of objectivity and subjectivity, and the use of evidence. The nature of history hints at what narratives of the past look like while interpretation in history relates to the fluidity, the multiplicity and the possibility of knowledge of the past. Lastly, the role of evidence relates to what history teachers achieve with evidence of the past. From the above definitions, it can be deduced that epistemological beliefs have been adequately addressed in their versatile forms. This may be due to scholars' keen interest in understanding the structure of knowledge through distinct disciplines such as philosophy and psychology.

Analytical Framework

The study is designed within the framework of epistemological beliefs and instructional practices of history teachers. Two epistemological belief models have been explained namely; the developmental and multidimensional models. William Perry proposed the developmental model, where individuals' epistemological beliefs range from a simple position (reasoning like the absolutists) to a more advanced position (exhibiting the assumptions of multiplism, relativism and commitment within relativism). On the other hand, the multidimensional model, propounded by Marlene Schommer, explains epistemological beliefs in six different ways. They include simple knowledge, innate or fixed ability, certainty of knowledge, omniscient authority, quick instruction and teaching efforts or processes (Stoel et al., 2017; Soleimani, 2020; Wilke et al., 2022). These models have been explained in detail under the subsequent themes.

Unidimensional Model

The study of individuals' epistemological beliefs began in the field of psychology. In this field, research began with the unidimensional model (Letina, 2022). William Perry is known to be the proponent of the unidimensional or the developmental model. Brownlee (2004) explains that the developmental dimension of an individual's epistemological beliefs relates to the assertion that one's epistemological beliefs gradually progress from a more superficial position to a more advanced position. This can be explained in the context of history education that, as history teachers gain more instructional experiences, their beliefs about historical knowledge become richer and more expansive thereby graduating from the naive level to the more expert level in

their instructional delivery (Voet & De Wever, 2016; Soleimani, 2018). This progression occurs in four distinct developmental positions. These include dualism, multiplism, relativism, and commitment (Letina, 2022). Teachers consider knowledge to be absolute, certain, and unchanging in the dualistic position. Additionally, dualistic teachers believe that knowledge is transferred to the less informed (students) from an expert or authority which entails gathering isolated facts that should not be questioned.

On the continuum, the second position of epistemological beliefs is multiplism. Compared to the dualistic position, Tanriverdi (2012) has it that it is a position where teachers' beliefs about knowledge gradually advance. From the multiplist's perspective, teachers concede that knowledge blends absolute truths and personal opinions. Also, Stoel, Logtenberg, Wansink, Huijgen, van Boxtel, and van Drie, (2017) indicate that under multiplism, teachers do not put their trust solely in sources from authorities but consider information as tentative. The tentativeness brings to the students' awareness that distinct perspectives are associated with knowledge but this does not necessarily mean that previous evidence is unacceptable. Thirdly, beyond the multiplist's position is the position of relativism. Relativists hold different perspectives about knowledge which is an upgrade of multiplism. Hofer and Pintrich (2012) assert that relativist teachers consider the curriculum as dynamic and student-centred. Roth and Weinstock (2013) also emphasise that students' involvement and support are central to instruction for such teachers.

Further, they hold that knowledge must be consistent with the realities of our modern world, and teachers must adapt the curriculum to the immediate needs of their students (Soleimani, 2020). Again, teachers explain knowledge

as uncertain but change persistently based on personal and subjective opinions (Koutsianou & Emvalotis, 2021). The last position of teachers' beliefs is a "commitment within relativism." Here, teachers begin to think that knowledge is created subjectively and that what is accepted as the truth of the past is based on everyone's presumptions. In light of this, teachers are more likely to believe that knowledge is procedural, evaluative, constructive, and individually formed (Koutsianou & Emvalotis, 2021). While the developmental dimension was criticised for its progressive assumptions, the multidimensional perspective of epistemological beliefs of teachers emerged (Lee et al., 2013; Letina, 2022).

Multidimensional Model

Marlene Schommer introduced the multidimensional model in 1970 (Letina, 2022). Letina (2022) reiterated that epistemological beliefs are independent and multifaceted but not progressive. The multidimensional model instead explains epistemological beliefs through five main independent perspectives: certainty of knowledge, simplicity of knowledge, innate or fixed abilities, learning efforts or processes, and omniscient authority. In the first place, when knowledge is said to be in its certain form, it entails the tendency where knowledge is said to be inflexible against its fluidity and its changeability. Further, it relates to teachers' beliefs about knowledge being what it is and how evidence of yesterday remains as it is today (Stoel, Logtenberg & Nitsche, 2022). Also, knowledge in its simple form is regarded as the tendency where knowledge is viewed as an amalgamation of isolated ideas against its complexity and interrelatedness. It also connotes knowledge being authoritative. Therefore, teachers only create an environment where students passively receive information without justification. Besides, innate or

fixed abilities relate to the belief that knowledge is inherent and not constructed. In light of this, teachers believe that their capacity to instruct is predetermined and that their ability to do so will determine their lessons' success (Lee, Zhang, Song & Huang, 2013). Learning efforts or processes also connote beliefs about knowledge being constructed through the continuous efforts of an individual and not their fixed abilities. The concept of omniscient authority illustrates the assumption that teachers are the exclusive sources of all knowledge and that textbooks are the most trustworthy sources of information. Also, evidence from textbooks cannot be contended by students therefore it must be accepted as it is. In practice, it implies that teachers independently exhibit these belief systems. It further indicates that teachers teach based on how they conceive the nature of knowledge, evidence, and sources.

The differences in the epistemological constructs necessitate the integration of the models so that detailed findings can be ascertained. Also, these models of epistemological beliefs have been experimented well in the Western context yielding diverse teacher beliefs about what knowledge of the past must be delivered. For decades, the nature of knowing aspect of epistemological beliefs has been extensively researched. This implies that epistemological beliefs have been well addressed in terms of students' learning. The strength of this study lies in the researcher's attempt to establish evidence on epistemological beliefs based on instructional practices within the Ghanaian context and to expand the knowledge on epistemology.

Instructional Practices

In this study, the instructional practices of history teachers are discussed, as well as teachers' instructional strategies, assessment strategies and instructional materials.

Epistemology and History Teaching

The study of epistemology has a long and complex history, with its roots in both philosophy and psychology (Jovanović, 2010). It was through the study of epistemology that its associated belief systems (epistemological beliefs) were deduced. The works of Barbara Hofer and Paul Pintrich, Marcia Baxter Magolda, King and Kitchener, Marlene Schommer among others, have been instrumental in advancing the understanding of how epistemological beliefs impact learning (Hofer & Bendixen, 2012). However, the concept was first studied in the 1960s, through the pioneering work of William Perry who categorised college students' epistemological beliefs into dualism, multiplism, relativism, and commitment (Wansink, Akkerman, Vermunt, Haenen & Wubbels, 2017). In recent times, related studies on epistemology have continued to be an active area of research in psychology and education used to understand realities emanating from human minds that are reflected in their actions or daily activities (Matthews, 2022).

The area of philosophy known as epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge and how we can acquire it (Tolk, 2015). It concerns itself with what knowledge is, the processes of acquiring it, the limitations and the processes of knowing. In the context of historical knowledge, epistemology is particularly important because it raises questions about how we can know about the past, given that we were not there to witness it ourselves (Boadu, 2015).

Historical knowledge is based on evidence that has survived from the past, including documents, artefacts, and other sources. However, this evidence is often incomplete, biased, or subject to interpretation, which raises questions about the reliability and objectivity of historical knowledge (Boadu, 2020).

Historians have developed a range of epistemological approaches to address these questions. Some historians take a more objective approach emphasising the importance of empirical evidence and seeking to uncover the objective facts of history (Koutsianou & Emvalotis, 2021). Others take a more constructive approach and recognise that historical knowledge is always mediated by interpretation and perspective (Wilke et al., 2022). Constructivist teachers seek to understand how different historical actors and groups have constructed their knowledge of the past.

Regardless of the approaches taken, history educators are expected to apply these psycho-philosophical illuminations to their fields of work and be transparent about how they construct historical knowledge. This can involve acknowledging the limitations of the available evidence, being aware of one's own biases and perspectives, and engaging in critical dialogue with what historians produce as a reference for teaching. This will help challenge and refine history teachers' understanding of the past. Ultimately, a robust and self-reflective approach to epistemology is essential for producing reliable and meaningful interpretations as well as delivering historical knowledge in the classroom (Soleimani, 2020).

Epistemological beliefs and the selection of Instructional Strategies

Teachers' epistemological beliefs meander through their decisions on which instructional strategy to adopt in teaching (Soleimani, 2020). Teachers' instructional strategies are an exhibition of the inherent assumptions and beliefs about what they intend to do and what not to do in the classroom, the workload to be covered, the materials to be selected and the nature of one's interaction with students (Soleimani, 2020). History teachers adopt instructional strategies by considering what they perceive knowledge in history to be and how it must be delivered. Dickson and Agyemang (2016) explain instructional strategy as a consciously planned series of actions the teacher aims to implement to ensure successful teaching and learning activities. Soleimani (2020) define instructional strategy as the "generalized lesson plan and teachers' behaviour in terms of goals of instruction" (p. 2). Deductively, instructional strategies can be considered as the procedures through which teachers handle subject content during the implementation phase of their lesson.

There is a pool of instructional strategies that teachers select for teaching and learning activities. These are the lecture, discussion, project, deductive, inductive, communicative, source, constructive, collaborative, and field trip methods. These strategies are adopted based on the educational goals or objectives the teacher intends to achieve. In choosing any of the strategies above, Giangreco and Cravedo (2007) outlined certain factors that teachers must consider. These factors include; the suitability of the method to the learner and the topic to be treated, the interest of students, teachers' mastery or ability to apply the method properly, the maturity level of the learner and the heterogeneous nature of the classroom environment. Among these principles or

factors, what is left out is what teachers consider to be knowledge in their discipline. It is within this gap that the study pays attention to. Researchers have indicated that, in selecting instructional strategies, teachers' epistemological beliefs of the subject are very pertinent (Stoel et al., 2017; Wilke et al., 2022; Soleimani, 2020).

Epistemologically, researchers in history education, categorise the instructional strategies that teachers adopt into two (Stoel et al., 2017; Wansink, Akkerman, Vermunt, Haenen & Wubbels, 2017; Soleimani, 2018; Wilke et al., 2022). They are direct-teaching strategies and interactive or constructive teaching strategies. History teachers who adopt direct-teaching strategies regard knowledge in history as isolated facts assembled to be taught. Also, these teachers possess dualistic views about history thereby describing knowledge of the past as unchanging, stable and unquestionable. These teachers therefore adopt strategies such as lecture methods, storytelling, demonstrations and narrations. These strategies are sometimes regarded as the traditional approach to teaching history (Boadu, 2015; Boadu, 2020). Letina (2022) also considers the direct-teaching approaches as low-level strategies as compared to the interpretative or constructive approaches.

VanSledright & Maggioni (2016) also consider those teachers to hold objective views about history. They explain that objectivist teachers perceive knowledge as a preoccupation to the knower and emphasize the importance of transmission of knowledge from the informed to the less informed. Teachers dominate the class and consider students as listeners, note-takers and recipients of bulk information. Wilke et al. (2022) describe such views as fundamental beliefs about what knowledge in history entails. They also do not consider

knowledge constructive therefore, evidence of the past is not critically assessed and textbook information is untouchable. Lastly, such teachers believe in mastery instruction, where they only understand their content properly and deliver to their students in the classroom.

Contrary to the above, other instructional strategies are considered interactive or constructive in teaching history (Voet & De Wever, 2016). These strategies include discussion, project, dramatizations, source, collaboration, constructive, simulation, scaffolding and feedback approaches. These instructional strategies are classified as approaches reflecting a more advanced belief about knowledge of the past. These strategies mainly promote interactions, ensure active learning and mostly engage students' abilities and perspectives during instruction (Lammasaari, Hietajarvi, Lonka, Chen & Tsai, 2021). Researchers (Soleimani, 2020; Koustianou et al., 2021; Wilke et al., 2022) in the area of epistemological beliefs establish that history teachers who adopt these instructional strategies in teaching are those whose beliefs about knowledge in history are relativistic, multiplistic and evaluative (Roth & Weinstock, 2013; Letina, 2022). These teachers also believe that historical knowledge is constructive. Interactive instructional strategies help students to question issues, examine primary sources, advance debates, challenge existing knowledge with new evidence, solve practical problems and understand the past beyond text materials (Lee & Spratly, 2010).

Letina (2022) pointed out that constructive-oriented teachers place students at the centre of instruction and help them through the interaction process to construct their knowledge. They also view knowledge as constructed through individual experiences and interaction with the environment. They

further emphasise the importance of personal meaning-making and use student-centred and inquiry-based teaching methods. They tend to use group work and discussion-based methods in their teaching. Generally, a wide range of instructional strategies available for the history teacher to select. History teachers select these instructional strategies based on how they perceive knowledge of history and the best way through which knowledge of the past can be effectively implemented.

Epistemological Beliefs and Selection of Assessment Strategies in History

Assessment strategies relate to the various means through which teachers measure students' levels of understanding before, during, and after lessons in the classroom (Fogo, 2014). Teachers' assessment decisions largely depend on their epistemological beliefs about history and their perceptions of the subject's objectives (Wansink, Akkerman, Vermunt, Haenen & Wubbels, 2017). Researchers share distinct views on what assessment strategy is germane for monitoring students' learning in history (Voet & De Wever, 2016; Carrasco & Martinez, 2016; Wilke et al., 2022). While others believe in constructive assessment activities, some believe in fact-based assessment activities.

Fogo (2014) differentiated between authentic and traditional assessment strategies. For authentic assessment, students demonstrate their understanding of historical concepts and skills through real-world tasks or projects such as creating historical exhibits, conducting historical research, or presenting historical arguments. Griffin, Wiley & Thiede (2019) also explain authentic assessment strategies as activities that foster in-depth comprehension rather than activities that only stir students' recalling, description, and summary skills on what they read. They describe authentic assessment activities as activity-

based. It engages students in inquiry tasks such as comparing past evidence from different sources, integrating relevant information, assessing historical documents, and following certain task instructions to debate, assess, analyse, infer and interpret evidence. Griffen et al. (2019) added that document-based questions in history instruction reflect disciplinary practices and engage students' thinking.

In traditional assessment strategies, on the other hand, teachers prioritise activities that prompt students to recall, memorise and assimilate factual evidence of the past (Griffin et al., 2019). Traditional assessment strategies encourage textbook-based knowledge and textbook-based questions. According to Breakstone (2014), multiple-choice questions feature traditional assessment activities because students only recall bubbles of past evidence. It is devoid of activities that compel the thinking of students but students always resort to evidence in reference materials as the only acceptable information for understanding the past. These forms of assessment in the classroom are believed to be driven by teachers' epistemological beliefs (Soleimani, 2020). Teachers with nuanced epistemological beliefs always have a preference for authentic assessment strategies while teachers with less-advanced epistemological beliefs embark on assessment activities that are found within the framework of traditional assessment strategies (Stoel et al., 2017; Soleimani, 2020).

Epistemological Beliefs and Selection of Instructional Materials in History

Instructional materials are relevant for every classroom instruction (Acquah-Doughan, 2015). An efficient and effective teacher is determined based on his or her ability to deploy the needed materials to actualize the specific instructional objectives (Acquah-Doughan, 2015). A teacher devises

several strategies for which instructional materials are pivotal. Biney (2018) conceptualised instructional materials as aids teachers use to deliver every subject's content. This explanation reveals that instructional materials serve as the channels through which teachers deliver their subject matter appropriately.

In the teaching of history, teaching and learning materials are physical objects, pictures, charts, television, radio, filmstrips, newspapers, maps, images, books, illustrations, audiotapes, and slide projectors (Dar, Kudare, Dar & Mohammed, 2022).

Acquah-Doughan (2015) also reiterated that instructional materials are essential because they serve as the gateway for learners to gain knowledge and skills within a discipline. The use of instructional materials in every subject attracts students' attention and enhances their progress in both formative and summative tasks in the school. In a closely related sense, Biney (2018) explained instructional materials as the diverse teaching aids that an instructor uses to implement stated objectives in the school syllabus. Also, instructional materials can concretize concepts and principles during instruction (Koko & Nkpolu-Orowoniko, 2016).

Instructional materials can be categorised into print and non-print items. The printed materials include textbooks, journal articles, instructor manuals and guides, student workbooks, and assignments (Tuomi, 2013). On the other hand, printed materials include radio, television, slides, audiotapes, electronic videos, and filmstrips. Internet resources and interactive multimedia teaching elements are also considered non-printed materials (Mtebe & Raisamo, 2014). The potency of these materials lies in teachers' ability to adapt them to the needs and abilities of the learner. Distinct forms of instructional materials diversify

teaching and learning, provide a wide range of materials for teachers to use in their instructions and increase students' understanding.

According to Dar et al. (2022), instructional materials can be classified into three. That is, based on time, sense organs, projected and non-projected aids. First and foremost, based on time, instructional materials can be grouped into traditional and modern teaching aids (Utibe-Abasi, 2015). Ordinarily, teachers relied solely on the use of chalk and blackboard when complex materials and technology-assisted aids such as charts, models, and laptops were unavailable. However, with the advent of technology and its progress, modern teaching aids have improved teaching and learning. These contemporary materials include computers, interactive whiteboards, LCD projectors, televisions, tablets, Android phones, and accessories like USB cables (Allen, 2019). Other materials include charts, posters, pictorial materials, models, PowerPoint presentations, slides, film strips, film-strip projectors, films, transparencies, and overhead projectors. (Acquah-Doughan, 2015). They offer fresh experiences and make learners active participants in history instructions.

For Dar et al. (2022), the three main categories of educational resources are visual, auditory, and audio-visual. Visual teaching and learning tools include paintings, graphic novels, pictures, maps, sketches, timelines, schematics, tables, charts, and diagrams (Acquah-Doughan, 2015). Additionally, textual documents, including poetry, prose, and scientific and technical writings, are all visual aids. Additionally, some written versions of these visual teaching and learning aids exist. Textbooks, manuals, curricula, documents, laws, statutes, orders, magazines, fragments of scientific works, fiction, and poetry are among them. The opposite is true for audio materials, including audio recordings of

political speeches, witness testimony, different musical compositions, radio programmes, and more.

The last classification based on senses is audio-visual materials. Audio-visuals ensure dynamism and flexibility in history teaching. Through audio-visuals, history instructions become lively and the representations of events, people and settings in history teaching tend to be very easy (Dar et al., 2022). This relevance is attained because audio-visuals merge sounds, images and texts. All three categories put together, aid history teachers' constructive activities. History teachers with constructive beliefs can achieve practical instructions when these materials are readily available. History teachers are guided by what knowledge is essential to teach before they choose any of the above-mentioned instructional materials explained. Analytically, it can be argued that irrespective of the stances of history teachers in terms of their epistemological beliefs, their choice of instructional materials may depend on what is readily available for use (Soleimani, 2018).

Akungu (2014) asserted that instructional materials do not constitute only objects but also humans who can serve as resourceful means of teaching. On this basis, they classified instructional materials into resources containing the subject content such as graphs, charts, audio-recordings, tools and equipment, and print materials. Second, the materials used for presenting content include boards, bulletins, flannel boards, slides on projectors, television, and computers (Dar et al., 2022). The third type is the human resource which comprises individuals who are well-rooted in the knowledge and content to be taught. They also discussed projected, electronic and software materials such as video tapes, audio tapes, transparencies, filmstrips, etc. Deductively, the above-

indicated categorisations attest that instructional materials coupled with improvised teaching materials can be interpreted from multiple perspectives depending on how, when, where and what the history teacher wants to use them for.

In selecting any of the classifications of the above-explained instructional materials, the epistemological beliefs of history teachers remain paramount. This is so because history teachers whose epistemic belief systems are found within the frameworks of dualism, simplicity of knowledge, certainty of knowledge and authoritative knowledge tend to select transmission-based materials. Classified above, materials such as printed materials (textbooks, teachers' guide, handouts, slides etc) and traditional materials (charts, models, pictures, whiteboards, etc) are selected by those teachers whose instructional activities can be judged on naïve beliefs (Stoel et al., 2017). On the other hand, teachers who possess well-advanced beliefs about knowledge in history, tend to adopt interactive materials that will engage students (Wilke et al., 2022). Admittedly, the nature and purpose of using any of the above instructional materials will determine its place in the epistemological perspectives held by history teachers.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 below illustrates the theoretical perspectives explained above and how the epistemological theories meander through the belief systems of history teachers on knowledge and how they reflect in their instructional activities. The three theories explained were behaviourism, cognitivism and constructivism.

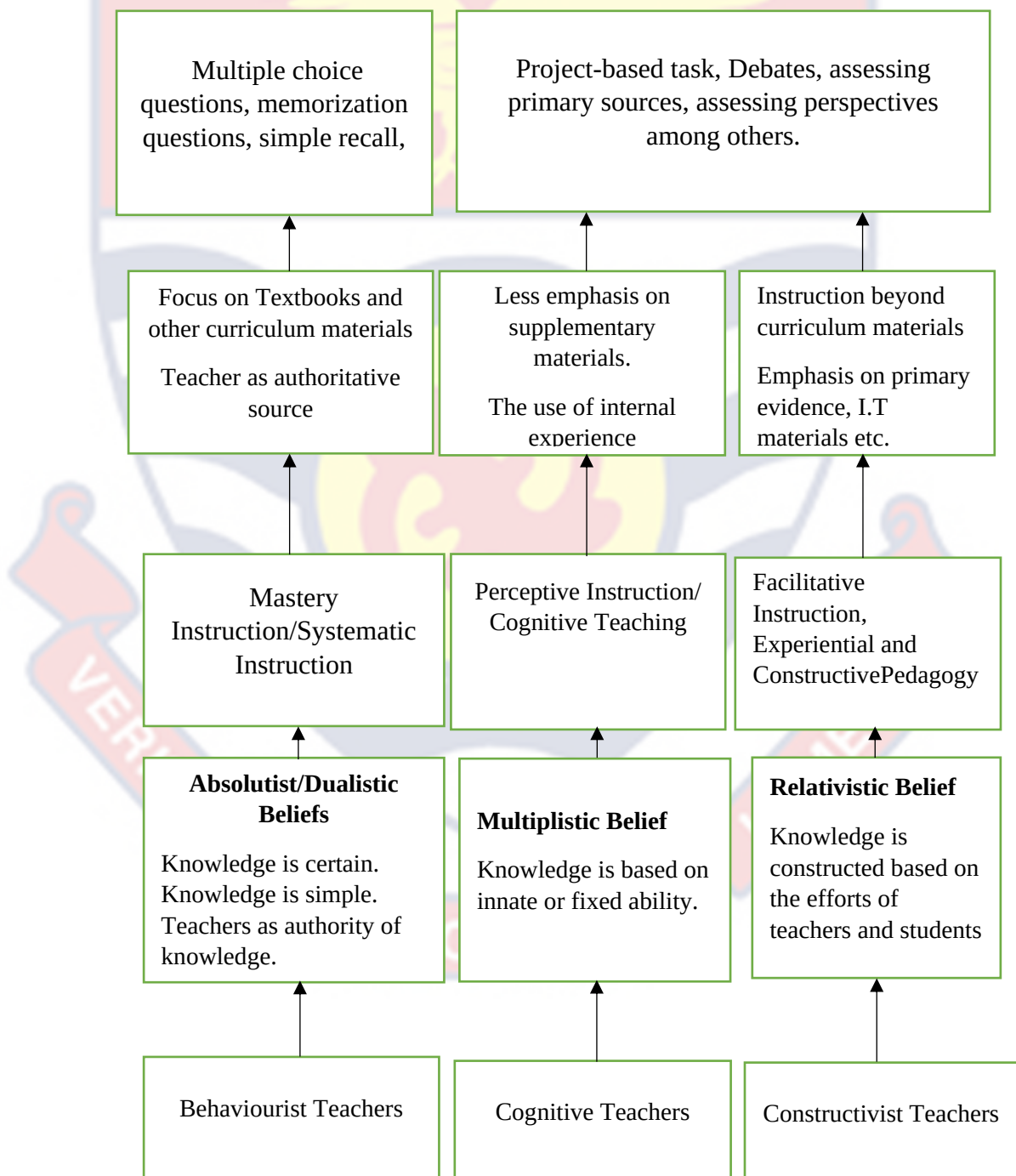


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework on History Teachers' Epistemological Beliefs and Instructional Practices

Source: Author's Construct (2024).

Figure 1 displays the three theories underpinning teachers' distinct epistemological beliefs and how they represent them in terms of instruction. The illustration shows that the framework's base portrays the three theoretical assumptions held by history teachers (behaviourists, cognitivists and constructivists). These teachers have different beliefs about knowledge in history owing to their distinct theoretical assumptions about knowledge. Hence, the arrows point to the epistemological beliefs of history teachers. The behaviourists are the absolutists, the cognitivists also express their beliefs in the realms of multiplism and the constructivists are those who hold relative beliefs about knowledge and its justifications (Brownlee, 2004; Koutsianou et al., 2021; Letina, 2022).

Further, these beliefs held by history teachers permeate their instructional strategies. First, behaviourist history teachers believe in mastery instruction and systematic presentation of knowledge of the past. Their perceptions about these forms of instruction culminate into their beliefs that knowledge is certain, simple and see themselves as the repository of all knowledge of the past. Behaviourist history teachers further depend largely on curriculum materials as the sole instructional materials for teaching and they remain authorities of information about the past. Their instructional preferences predict that such teachers normally depend on assessment practices that do not encourage thinking and problem-solving thereby, utilising the objective tests and memorised questions, students reproduce facts.

On the other hand, the cognitivist history teachers believe in perceptual teaching; hence, knowledge exists in the mind and is formed based on innate abilities. Constructivist history teachers believe in experiential instruction, facilitation and reconstruction of knowledge in history. Cognitive and constructive history teachers consider the teaching of history beyond textbooks; hence they place a premium on using experiences, current issues, primary evidence, videos and other interactive resources for teaching history. Consequently, they prefer assessment tasks such as project-based tasks, inquiry tasks, debates, and examining primary sources.

The framework above significantly created a synergy between the epistemological beliefs of history teachers, instructional strategies, materials and assessment strategies. It also created connections between the assumptions under the three theories explained in the context of knowledge beliefs and the developmental as well as the multidimensional epistemological models. However, the framework was only explained in the context of instructions implying that it can only be understood within that confinement. Despite this focus, it can be explained by examining other variables such as learning, and motivation.

Empirical Review

This section reviewed pertinent studies that were linked to the investigation. This was carried out following the study's objectives and to compare the results.

Epistemological Beliefs of History Teachers

Teachers' epistemological beliefs are important for understanding how they approach their daily instructions. Several empirical studies have been conducted on the epistemological beliefs of history teachers. For instance, Lee et al., (2013) examined in-service teachers' beliefs on the nature of knowledge, knowledge acquisition and how these epistemic pillars influence their instructional classroom practices in junior secondary schools. The researchers used the exploratory research design. Through this quantitative approach, a standardized epistemological beliefs questionnaire was used in the data collection processes. Participants were junior secondary school teachers. The data were analysed through structural Equation Modeling. It was revealed that only the concept of learning effort/process is highly prioritised among Chinese in-service teachers. Pedagogically, it was also revealed that the constructivist approach is the most prioritised at the junior high school level. This study focused on one important aspect of an instructor's epistemological beliefs: learning efforts or processes. This reflects the facilitative role of history teachers in terms of practices. However, the learning effort or process is just an aspect of the set of beliefs that teachers exhibit in their practices. Also, it could be deduced that the study gave enough weight to items under the learning effort or process variable due to a particular interest in such variable, which was against the kind of conclusions they intended to draw. The present study intends to open

up and seek respondents' perspectives themselves without referring to a particular aspect of history teachers' epistemological beliefs.

Additionally, Dinc and Uztemur (2017) investigated student teachers' conceptions in Social Studies using Schommer's multifaceted structure of individuals' epistemological beliefs. The study aimed to describe student teachers' epistemological views and conceptions of social studies. It also sought to determine how different perceptions of social studies teachers are from their epistemic philosophies. The research used a sequential explanatory mixed research design. Six hundred and twenty inexperienced teachers were sampled for the study and employed in the quantitative data gathering stage. Qualitatively, 17 student teachers were considered for participation. The two main instruments used were the Epistemic Belief Inventory and a semi-structured interview schedule. Researchers found that novice instructors hold more nuanced epistemological beliefs based on the domains of "knowledge accessibility, knowledge acquisition, the certainty of knowledge and control of knowledge". Also, the researchers reported that the participants exhibited a normalized sophisticated belief according to the hierarchies of the knowledge dimension. Lastly, the researchers established from the qualitative data that participants perceived social studies as life and their conceptions differed based on the dimensions of the inventory.

Moreover, Soleimani (2020) explored the epistemological perspectives of English language teachers and the potential connections between these factors. Data from both quantitative and qualitative sources were collected throughout the study's mixed-methods research methodology, which the researcher used. The epistemological beliefs scale and the teaching style

assessment were modified as instruments for data collection. The researcher also sampled 200 English Language tutors to respond to survey questions while 20 teachers were involved in the semi-structured interview processes. It was revealed that the facilitator-based teaching approach was the most emphasized among other instruction styles for teaching and students did not perceive teachers as repositories of knowledge but used different resources to learn the language. This evidence has been firmly established among English Language teachers but little to no evidence is known among history teachers in Ghana. The researchers also ran regression analyses on the data and integrated it with their interview results. They then established that their epistemological beliefs inform the teacher's teaching style. The findings further indicated that history teachers held a combination of socially generated and objective ideas regarding the nature of historical knowledge and offered differing explanations to their students. These forms of beliefs could emanate from several factors such as the kind of educational demands that history teachers are supposed to meet in the country, school culture and the departmental demands for history teachers. Critically, pre-service teachers and basic school teachers have investigated the evidence established by the study above. This implies that much attention and emphasis have been placed on teachers at the basic and higher education levels, leaving a gap at the senior high school level. In my context, the study intends to look at the evidence from a different methodological perspective, level and context. There is a need to explore these forms of beliefs from the perspectives of history teachers at the senior high school level through sustained interactions with my intended participants.

In the work of Miguel-Revilla, Sanchez-Agusti and Carril-Merino (2022), the epistemic perspectives on history and the teaching of history held by prospective social studies teachers were further examined. There were 59 pre-service Spanish teachers included. A strategy for working with historical thinking notions was unveiled. The researchers used a pre-test and post-test quasi-experimental methodology to perform the study. Beliefs about History Questionnaire was employed as the research tool. According to the study, pre-service instructors showed more sophisticated ideas regarding historical knowledge. Pre-service primary and secondary teachers rejected the copier and borrower orientations about historical knowledge and instead embraced the 'criterialist' perspective. On the other hand, employing social studies teachers to investigate distinct epistemological beliefs about historical knowledge is not the most appropriate. This is because each discipline has its orientation therefore using social studies teachers in this context, is not a firm basis for accepting such evidence. Also, for all the empirical works reviewed, it appears they all seek to concentrate on students and pre-service teachers despite the different contexts in which the problem has been investigated or explored. Therefore, a minimal attempt has been made to investigate epistemological beliefs concerning teachers beyond the pre-service stage. It is therefore within these two gaps that the present study lies. The study intends to explore epistemological beliefs among history teachers in the field.

Lastly, Wilke et al. (2022) used a case study research design to establish the relationship between teachers' formal and practical epistemologies, their understanding of historical thinking and their instructional practice. The researchers conducted the study in Flanders, Belgium and included twenty-one

teachers as participants. Data were collected through an online questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide. It was found that teachers acknowledged the interpretative and constructive activities as the core elements driving history but they did not transmit them into their attempts to explain or describe historical thinking. Also, it was found that other beliefs of teachers and contextual factors are always at play. In as much as this study investigated epistemological beliefs, it was streamlined towards only an aspect of instructional practices: the promotion of historical thinking. It therefore suggests that little evidence is known about the overall instructional practices of history teachers. Also, the study considered some focused groups of history teachers with common characteristics regarding what they believe history is and how it should be taught. However, different evidence could have been attained concerning other history teachers in other school settings and contexts.

History Teachers' Epistemological Beliefs and Their Selection of Instructional Strategies

The epistemological beliefs of history teachers inform teachers' selection of instructional strategies. Several studies in distinct disciplines have established this evidence. Below are some of the empirical studies discussed.

Firstly, Yilmaz and Sahin (2011) examined pre-service teachers' opinions towards teaching and how those opinions related to gender and epistemological viewpoints. Data were gathered using the Constructivist Teaching Scale and two basic instructional scales: standard teaching and constructivism. Four hundred and ninety pre-service teachers from different teacher education programmes in Turkey comprised the participants. The study established that pre-graduating teachers opted for activity-based teaching

approaches at the expense of transmissive approaches. Also, their views manifested in the kinds of beliefs they exhibited. Based on gender, males dominated the employment of constructivist teaching approaches. Regarding subject areas, teachers pursuing the English language adopted transmissive teaching strategies compared to other strategies. It appears the findings of this study were pre-established because the researchers adapted scales to ascertain teachers' epistemological beliefs. Also, the explicit stratification of the instrument into traditional and constructivist teaching could provide a clue to respondents who may respond to the questions in a certain direction.

Secondly, Huiling (2014) investigated how science instructors' personal epistemological views affect how they regard the substance of science lectures and the practices that go along with them in the classroom. The study's methodology was a mixed-method approach. The participants were sixth-grade physical science instructors from the Southeastern United. Eighteen conventional middle schools were used to choose the participants. The tools utilised were Epistemological Belief Online Survey Questionnaire, Classroom Observation Guide, Artefacts Collection, and Semi-structured Interview Guide. Data from interviews, classroom observations, artefact gathering, and survey results were triangulated to examine the data. A Pearson Correlation Coefficient of 0.62 was obtained in terms of the relationship between variables. It was established that the epistemological beliefs of individuals are central to classroom practices. However, this study was limited to science teachers alone and in terms of context, it was conducted only within the Western context. The study was not emphatic and precise in its conclusions regarding methods and data analysis. It could not ascertain whether the science teachers'

epistemological beliefs were constructive or transmissive. This may stem from the multiple instruments used without a single methodological focus. Therefore, the present study focuses on a single methodological perspective to determine whether new finding could be ascertained or not.

Thirdly, Manu (2014) conducted a quantitative study in Ghana to find out the nexus between knowledge-based beliefs and teaching practices of prospective teachers and practising teachers. The study used a discipline-focused epistemological beliefs questionnaire and instructional practice scale to gather data. Also, prospective teachers and practising teachers were purposively selected to respond to the survey questions. According to the researcher, the difference in epistemological beliefs between the two groups of teachers was negligible. However, the four components of epistemological beliefs namely; certainty of knowing, source of knowledge, justification of knowledge, and attainment of truth were shown to differ significantly. Evidence also established that teachers do not possess the same level of epistemological development in tandem with the measured four dimensions. Further, other investigations revealed that the constructivist in-service teachers' epistemological beliefs did not reflect in their instructional practices due to challenges like workload, mandated testing, and Common Core Standards. The study's findings indicated that both teachers were unlikely to support traditional learning pedagogies. However, for behaviourist in-service teachers, their epistemological beliefs correlated with their instructional practices. The researchers admitted that, while teachers consciously employ teaching and learning strategies such as, authentic, learner-centred, project-based and context-based teaching, the realities in school contexts push teachers to adopt traditional approaches. In

terms of scope, the study was very narrow because the evidence was established only among pre-service and in-service teachers, and it lost sight of what was going on in the senior high school contexts. This is where the strength of the present study lies in building up knowledge regarding epistemological beliefs in the senior high school context.

Furthermore, Manu, Osei-Bonsu, and Atta (2015) investigated the epistemological beliefs of student-teachers in a private university in Ghana and how these beliefs inform their expected instructional practices. The research design employed was a case study research design where the researchers focused on a single private university. The study was conducted quantitatively to survey one hundred and seven student-teachers. These participants were purposively sampled. The study collected data through a discipline-focused epistemological beliefs questionnaire. The study's findings revealed that student-teachers in Ghana had partially developed their epistemological belief system.

Also, only certainty or simplicity of knowledge construct correlated with teachers' instructional practices. This implies that since the certainty of knowledge represents the nature of knowledge, it can be established that student teachers believed in knowledge transmission, made students recipients of information and adopted the lecture method in teaching. Surprisingly, the study revealed insignificant relationships between the source, justification and attainability dimensions against their instructional practical practices. This means that these teachers exhibit more teacher-centred practices in the classroom. The study did not focus on history teachers, so what transpires in the history classrooms at the senior high school levels is not empirically known.

Lastly, considering just a private school is not enough because there is a tendency for a varied perspective to be obtained in public schools.

Added to the above, Stoel, Logtenberg, Wansink, Huigen, Van Boxtel and van Drie (2017) measured epistemological beliefs in history education to explore both naïve and nuanced beliefs of history students in Holland. It was an exploratory study that employed 922 examination students. The study used an online questionnaire to determine the examination students varied epistemological beliefs. The study considered both research questions deduced from epistemological belief scales and research hypotheses to compare these students' naïve and nuanced beliefs. The pupils were in the last year of upper secondary school. They were chosen from 16 schools spread across several Dutch regions. The study discovered that while some students evoked replies that represented naïve, objectivist attitudes about history, others responded more nuancedly reflecting more complex subjectivist beliefs about history instruction. The study concluded that it is challenging to scaffold history teachers' naïve and nuanced beliefs. However, they are both essential for pursuing inquiry activities and developing pedagogies that embrace the nature and sources of historical knowledge.

Lastly, Burakgazi and İclal (2020) undertook a phenomenological investigation to ascertain how the teaching strategies of secondary school teachers correlated with their perceptions of students' learning. Data from 50 secondary school teachers were acquired through semi-structured interviews. These educators were chosen through deliberate sampling. Finally, the teachers were divided into three groups: those exhibiting learner-centred beliefs and practices, and those who taught following their own beliefs about learning. The

second group (n=17) displayed discrepancies between instructional practices and beliefs. It was discovered that five of these teachers had learner-centred practices but teacher-centred views about learning, probably due to curriculum-based expectations.

Additionally, it was discovered that 12 teachers had learner-centred beliefs but utilised teacher-centred teaching methods as a result of large class sizes, a lack of teacher motivation, a lack of student interest and motivation, overloaded curricula, a lack of instructional resources, high-stakes exams, and a lack of pedagogical content knowledge. The study established that the rationale behind teachers' teacher-centred practices was a result of, among other factors, the non-availability of instructional materials. Therefore, most teachers taught without instructional materials. This finding is a contrast to Chai's (2010) study. While the above study indicates that teachers employ instructional materials in teaching, it has been admitted in this study that teachers teach in a didactic way without any instructional materials. However, neither study was specific about which instructional practices of teachers they focused on. The most emphasised variable in both studies was teacher's beliefs. The general beliefs of teachers may not be the same as their epistemological beliefs. More so, the study did not focus on history teachers.

Epistemological Beliefs and History Teachers' Assessment Strategies

The epistemological beliefs of history teachers significantly influence the forms of assessment strategies they adopt in the classroom. Several studies have explained how teachers' epistemological beliefs contribute to their assessment decisions during teaching and learning.

First, Tarmo (2016) undertook a study examining prospective science teachers' teaching methods and knowledge beliefs. Six future science teachers participated. An interview schedule was used in the qualitative research approach. To further understand their beliefs, teachers were interrogated. The researcher also watched pre-service instructors to understand how pre-service teachers' ideas translated into their lesson plans. An interview focused on the critical incidents noticed was conducted after the classroom observation. Pre-service science instructors were shown to have dualist perspectives on science. They believed that scientific knowledge was straightforward, inflexible, and derived from established bodies of knowledge passed down by authority like experts and textbooks. Pre-service teachers questioned students about the facts while looking for predetermined textbook-based responses aligned with their ideas. This evidence has only been validated among future scientific instructors.

Second, Stoel et al. (2017) also looked at how a questionnaire measured students' epistemological beliefs in history education. It was a correlational study in which 922 examination students participated. The research instrument was a questionnaire containing items on history students' naïve and nuanced epistemological beliefs. Data were gathered through an online survey measuring students' interest in history. The participants emanated from 16 schools located in distinct areas in the Netherlands. The result indicated that history teachers'

understanding of the nature of historical knowledge and the sources of this knowledge at the secondary school level reflected a more naïve position. The study recommended that history teachers should emphasize assessment practices that reflect inquiry activities and help students apply their reasoning skills. Specifically, the study explained that history teachers should give students opportunities to discuss primary evidence or sources on historical events among themselves as their assessment tasks. Through this, students will appreciate the multifaceted nature of history, apply their interpretative skills and generate their historical knowledge. This evidence contrasts with the above-explained empirical evidence. This may result from differences in methodological approaches, research settings, and the numerical strengths of these studies. Overall, all this evidence has been established in different research contexts creating a gap for further investigation in Ghana.

Mataka, Saderholm & Hodge (2019) also examined the epistemological views of science teachers in the South of the United States and how they affected professional growth. The study used a post-test quasi-experimental research approach. Participants in the study were science teachers who instructed computer science, mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology courses. First of all, all the teachers shared a belief that placed a high value on formative assessments, which include conversations in the classroom, responses to clicker questions, the capacity for students to ask pertinent questions of both the teacher and their peers, as well as participation in guided inquiry-style activities that are process-oriented. The majority of the teachers also made note of summative evaluations, particularly tests and homework assignments. Analyses from the above study showed that instructors valued formative and

summative evaluations. The study also revealed that formative assessment activities dominated the interview replies. When determining the assessment types of teachers based on their epistemological ideas, the results of this study are closely related to the goal of the current study. On the other hand, the study did not pay close attention to how teachers' general teaching practices. Additionally, interviews with a teacher who teaches a science-related course were used to verify the findings of this study. Therefore, empirical research shows that, much is not known about the extent to which history teachers' epistemological convictions are reflected in their assessment methods. The current study's significance is seen in this gap's context.

Despite the above evidence, Adam (2020) conducted a meta-qualitative study into rethinking assessment in the 21st Century Senior High School Social Studies classrooms in Ghana. The interpretivist's research paradigm underpinned the study. The study's research design was qualitative meta-analysis. The researcher did not collect primary data but assembled and synthesised existing from literature on educational assessment. The data was used for analysis following the six stages of qualitative meta-synthesis proposed by Sandelowski, Barroso & Voils (2007). The included: formulating the review questions, conducting a systematic literature search, screening and selecting appropriate research articles, analysing and synthesising findings, maintaining quality control, and presenting findings. Findings were retrieved from forty-four purposively selected works on assessment-related issues in education. It was found that Senior High School Social Studies teachers, even though are aware of accepted assessment practices but remain fidelity to traditional assessment strategies such as multiple-choice test, the open-ended, short-answer, and gap-

filling tests. They consistently fail to relate their assessment strategies to the goals and objectives they ought to achieve in the curriculum. Even though the researcher was not so much concerned with teachers' beliefs, these can be epistemologically described as absolutist teachers. Possibly, it was due to the position of absolutism that informed their choice of such assessment methods. However, since the data used was not a primary data, it is possible that this study's finding is too pre-determined provided such assessment practices dominated the number of works selected for analysis.

Moreover, Letina (2022) started a study on Croatian teachers' epistemological views and propensity towards constructivist or traditional teaching and learning paradigms. The research tools utilised were the epistemological beliefs questionnaire and the teaching and learning concepts questionnaire. The items were arranged on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1-5. It sampled 126 primary school teachers in Croatia to respond to the survey questions developed. The data were analysed through means and standard deviation. From the study, three cardinal factors were pointed out in the discussion and the conclusion to inform teachers' epistemological beliefs. These factors were different educational systems, cultural factors, and the nature of teachers' professional development. The study established that teachers tend to believe that the knowledge acquisition process plays a vital role in learning and depends on the students' efforts in learning. Also, an expert's knowledge should be questioned; comprehension is key to learning. These teachers tend to use more constructive assessment strategies such as making students analyse sources and question evidence in the textbooks. They assess students on tasks that will provoke students to develop projects to solve some problems.

Furthermore, Awuah (2022) examined Junior High School Social Studies teachers' assessment practices in two districts in Ghana namely: Asuogyaman and Krachi East districts in the Eastern Region and Oti Region respectively. A mixed-method research approach was used to conduct the study. The researcher used one hundred Social Studies teachers purposively selected from forty Junior High Schools in the two districts. Fifty-two teachers were selected from Asuogyaman and forty-eight teachers were selected from Krachi. Three research instruments namely: questionnaire, interview guide, and observation guide were used to gather data. The quantitative data was analysed using frequencies and means. Qualitative data was analysed using themes. Results indicated that Social Studies teachers preferred and used traditional assessment methods such as multiple choice, blank filling, short-answer questions, true or false, matching questions, essay questions, and dictation in their teaching activities. The traditional learning paradigm informed their assessment conceptions and practices. The study uncovered the conceptions behind teachers' use of traditional assessment strategies. In epistemology, the traditional learning paradigm is described as dualism. Despite the relevance of the study's findings, it was limited to the basic school. Hence, the present study was an extension to the Senior High School level. Different perspectives might be obtained since the present study focused on a different research setting.

Lastly, Manigbas III and De Luna's (2023) study explored the Senior High School teachers' assessment methods and factors influencing their assessment practices in three selected public secondary schools in Goa District in Philippines. The researchers used the descriptive survey research design. They further used a population of forty-five teachers teaching Senior High

School subjects. A survey questionnaire was administered for data collection. Data was analysed using Frequency count, Percentage, and Ranking order statistical tools. The study's findings revealed that teachers utilised quizzes, practical exams, or performance examinations, oral examinations, checklists, rating scales, and rubrics as their assessment strategies to assess students' performance. It meant that teachers employed diverse assessment strategies to assess and evaluate students' performance.

Also, Senior High School teachers placed premium on source books and curriculum materials as bases for making their assessment tasks. Critically, this study found student-related factors and teacher-related factors that informed their choice of the above assessment strategies. However, it could not capture teachers' beliefs about the subject discipline. The study did not incorporate teachers' epistemological beliefs as a variable. While epistemological beliefs remain one of the important factors that contribute to teachers' assessment decisions, the present study sought to explore them to determine the additional evidence it may offer to existing studies.

The Influence of Epistemological Beliefs on the Selection of Instructional Materials

In a case study by Chai (2010), teachers' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices were explored in Singapore in the context of ICT-assisted reforms. The study adopted a qualitative and comparative method to analyse the data. Seven teachers participated in the study. They were enrolled in an in-service programme geared towards equipping them with the competencies of incorporating ICT tools as basic instructional materials for teaching. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed through themes and

constant comparative methods. The result of the study indicated that the seven teachers exhibited more or less relativistic epistemological beliefs that corroborate the constructive views of teaching. Given the nuanced beliefs of the participants, they adopted ICT tools as materials to support their instructions.

Opoku-Asamoah's (2021) study investigated the effective use of instructional materials in the teaching of history in Senior High Schools of Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis. The researcher adopted a case study design. Three schools were selected through the convenience sampling procedure. Also, six history teachers were selected and three Heads of Department were selected using the purposive sampling procedure. It was revealed that history teachers relied on syllabus, history textbooks, and a map. Even, these instructional materials were inadequately available. It was further indicated that history teachers consider class population, teaching periods, and lesson objectives, in the selection of instructional materials for teaching.

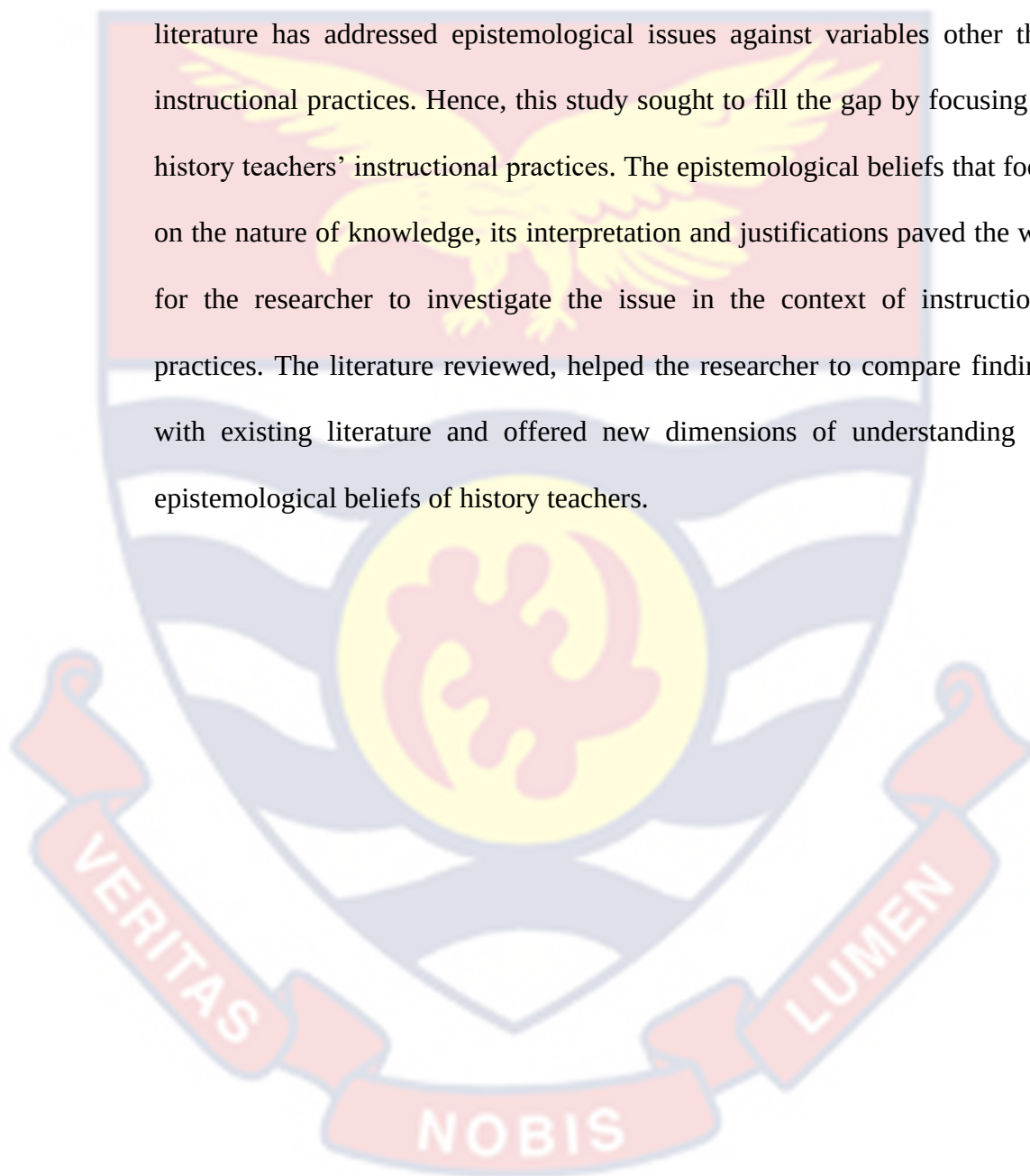
Soleimani (2020) also examined English language teachers' the epistemological views and prevalent teaching methods. Mixed-method research was done to learn more about English language teachers' teaching methods and epistemological ideas in Iran. The quantitative component of the study included a sample of 2000 English language teachers who responded to the teaching style inventory and the epistemological belief scale. Twenty people agreed to take part in the semi-structured interview conversation. Both data-gathering methods revealed that the facilitative teaching technique is the most desired and that students shouldn't look to teachers as the ultimate source of knowledge while trying to learn a language, instead turning to a variety of resources. It was further proven by regression analysis and interview data that their epistemological ideas

influenced English language teachers' choice of a certain teaching method. According to the study's findings, teachers started reevaluating the idea of teaching and took the first steps towards switching from didactic methods to teaching through constructive concepts. Due to this, the professors placed a strong emphasis on their pupils' capacity for critical thought, debate, interactive real-world communication, and reasoning. It follows that these educators provide instruction consideration beyond resources like textbooks, instruction manuals, and teachers' guides. Interactive resources, primary sources, and a variety of papers are just a few of the essential teaching materials that educators who believe in the learner-centred approach to knowledge transfer view as essential. The empirical research on teachers' epistemological beliefs is often extremely varied. Researchers have made efforts to investigate epistemology against several variables but it appears that studies on teachers' instructional practices are minimal. Literature on teachers' epistemological beliefs and instructional practices in Ghana is minimal. This gap affirms the worth of the present study. History teachers' epistemological beliefs are central to instructional practices because they affect teachers' behaviours, instructional decisions, and classroom choices.

Summary of Chapter Two

This chapter discussed existing literature related to this study. It focused on the theoretical review. Theories explained were behaviourism, cognitivism and constructivism. These theories are typically learning theories. However, the researcher made efforts to reconcile these theories with the models of epistemological beliefs by explaining them in the context of what knowledge history teachers possess and possibly teach.

The researcher also explained epistemological beliefs in tandem with instructional practices (instructional strategies, assessment strategies and instructional materials). Also, a conceptual framework illustrating interconnections between the study's variables was constructed. The existing literature has addressed epistemological issues against variables other than instructional practices. Hence, this study sought to fill the gap by focusing on history teachers' instructional practices. The epistemological beliefs that focus on the nature of knowledge, its interpretation and justifications paved the way for the researcher to investigate the issue in the context of instructional practices. The literature reviewed, helped the researcher to compare findings with existing literature and offered new dimensions of understanding the epistemological beliefs of history teachers.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

This chapter described the methods used for this study. The chapter focused on the research paradigm and approach, research design, profile of the study area, study population, sample and sampling procedure, data collection, processing and analysis, ethical consideration and limitations of the study.

Research Paradigm

The researcher aligns himself with the interpretivism research paradigm. Interpretivism is a scientific method of inquiry with the assumption that reality exists in people's minds (Leavy, 2017). This paradigm aims to understand the subjective world of human experience and emphasise the phenomena being studied (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). Furthermore, interpretivism assumes that getting inside your subjects to understand from within, is how truth can be ascertained (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). Also, according to the interpretivists, humans and knowledge are inseparable (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Hence, the truth cannot be ascertained without close contact with subjects out there. The researcher understands that this method of inquiry into the problem paved the way for data to be obtained through established contacts or sustained interactions with participants in the field (Leavy, 2017). The relevance of this research paradigm to the study is it offered the researcher opportunity to obtain participants' varied perspectives and experiences on the problem. Interpretivism was preferred because it aimed to obtain independent insights into a problem from individual participants rather

than using definite and universal laws to generalise perspectives (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

History teachers' diverse epistemological beliefs are phenomena that can be adequately understood through one-on-one interactions with the involved subjects. Also, issues relating to classroom practices can be best sought when the researcher encounters participants on the field. This is consistent with Kinvunja and Kuyini's (2017) assertion on the interpretive research paradigm, that reality exists in the minds of individuals and knowledge is obtained through sustained interactions and contacts with research participants. Nevertheless, interpretivism is criticized for rejecting knowledge obtained through generalised principles. This paradigm is also critiqued for its subjective assumptions, which can differ from distinct individuals (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). This paradigm also prevents researchers from generalizing their interpretations since the data obtained were based on a particular context, viewpoints and values.

Research Approach

Following the research paradigm, the study adopted the qualitative approach. The interpretive paradigm embraces a qualitative methodological approach (Kinvunja et al., 2017). The qualitative approach assumes that knowledge is subjective and can be properly acquired through experiences. History teachers' epistemological beliefs and teaching practices can be dealt with when the data is obtained through subjective descriptions. The researcher understood the problem of the study when he engaged the participants in close interactions to appreciate the problem better.

Research Design

The researcher adopted the phenomenological research design (Leavy, 2017). This research design helped the researcher to gain adequate knowledge about teachers' epistemological beliefs and teaching practices (Creswell, 2014). Leavy (2017) explained that this research design allows researchers to gain insight into individual's perceptions, perspectives, and understanding on a particular phenomenon. This enabled the researcher to draw interpretations, and appreciate the reasoning of the research participants about their epistemological beliefs and instructional practices (Creswell, 2014). In particular, it helped the researcher to properly understand the problem's nature from the participant's point of view (Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2018). Teaching is a daily experience or engagement by the history teacher. Therefore, conducting a study on such experiences and practices requires gathering qualitative data to enable the researcher to capture participants' context and lived reality.

Nevertheless, this research design has its limitations. This approach limits researcher's ability to generalise findings to the entire population. There is also the tendency for the data obtained to be biased or massaged by the researcher (Groenewald, 2004). The issue of bracketing one's preconceived notions about the phenomenon under study is quite tedious. Data becomes very superficial when participants offer clear-cut responses (Leavy, 2017). To resolve the problem of biases, pre-established themes were not used as bases for data analyses. The researcher detached himself from the data to avoid the tendency for some of the findings to be manipulated. Given this, themes were drawn from a carefully scrutinized data. When participants offered straightforward responses, I probed further to seek more explanations where

necessary. To shelve my preconceived notions, I finally ensured that the data guided me during analyses and interpretation. Hence, every interpretation was drafted from the data and compared to existing evidence in the literature.

Study Area

The researcher chose the Mfantseman Municipality, located within the central region of Ghana, as the study area for this study. The area shares boundaries with the Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese District to the west, Ekumfi to the east, and the Gulf of Guinea to the south. Mfantseman has many schools ranging from basic to Senior High Schools. At the Senior High School level, the area contains five public senior high schools and two private senior high schools. The major economic activity within the area is trade. The area is cosmopolitan. This is because different people have made their settlements there and were mainly attracted to the place due to the dominant market conditions. Culturally, the majority of the people are Fante-speaking people and are known for their popular annual festivities. The area was selected for the study because of previous researchers' resurging reports about the inappropriate teaching strategies used by history instructors in teaching the subject within the Mfantseman Municipality (Boadu, 2014; Mupa, & Chinooneka, 2015; Baafi, 2020). Also, considering the dearth of studies into the epistemological beliefs of history teachers, the researcher develops a keen interest in delving into such studies.

Population

At the time of the data collection exercise, the researcher had access to seven history teachers in all five public Senior High Schools in the Mfantseman Municipality. These schools are Mankessim Senior High and Technical School, Mfantseman Girls Senior High School, Methodist High School, Aboadze State College and Kwekyir Aggrey Senior High School. There are three history teachers at the Mfantseman Girls', one history teacher at Mankessim Senior High and Technical School, one at Methodist High School, one at Aboadze State College, and one at Kwekyir Aggrey Senior High School. All seven history teachers were included due to their small number through a census. History teachers were the best participants to furnish the researcher with the required information since they had taught the subject for several years and had accumulated a series of experiences in the subject area. In qualitative studies, a minimum number of five to ten respondents offers the researcher well-saturated data, adequately covering the repeated views of participants in a given study (Subedi, 2021). Subedi (2021) further posited that considering the processes involved in collecting data through the phenomenological lens, a small number of participants offers adequate data for further analysis.

Research Instrument

The research instrument used in gathering the data was a semi-structured interview guide. The researcher designed a semi-structured interview guide following the purpose of the study. The interview guide was structured into sections covering all four research questions. The researcher systematically drafted interview questions based on the concepts, themes, and ideas underlying the study. The first section (Section A) dealt with seven questions on the

epistemological beliefs of history teachers. The second section (Section B) had eight questions on how teachers' epistemological beliefs inform their instructional strategies in history. The third section (Section C) also had eight questions that found out how the epistemological beliefs of history teachers inform the assessment strategies they adopt in teaching. The fourth section (Section D) had eight questions about how history teachers' epistemological beliefs inform their selection of instructional materials in teaching history.

This research instrument paved the way for the researcher to probe, where and when necessary, in the interview discourse with the participants. The researcher also chose this instrument because it allowed for sustained interactions and in-depth discussions with participants on the subject under study. It is one of the most appropriate instruments for gathering data using the qualitative research approach. However, the use of an interview guide in collecting data is very time-consuming. The repeated processes that the researcher takes participants through sometimes cause them to be reluctant to provide certain information. Participants' responses during the interview sometimes digressed from the subject matter. To avoid such digression, the researcher ensured participants understood the study's purpose and avoided ambiguous statements that confused participants.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

To ensure data validity, the semi-structured interview guide designed by the researcher was submitted to my supervisors and other research experts for a thorough review. Their clarifications, comments, and directions were followed, and necessary corrections were made. The instrument was reviewed for credibility, transferability, dependability, and objectivity. This helped the items

stated in the interview guide reflect the study's purpose and collect the required information. The following are how the strategies indicated above were achieved in the study.

Credibility

Credibility connotes the study's finding's true value, correctness and accuracy. It also entails the coherence between the perspectives shared by participants and the actual representations in the study (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). To ensure this, the researcher continually involved the participants in deeply understanding the problem. Also, the researcher supported the participants by clarifying unclear concepts during the interview discourse. When the participants found it difficult to comprehend some of the questions, the researcher focused more on those questions for proper clarification.

Audit Trails

This is a situation whereby the biases of respondents and researchers are separated from the actual data represented in the study. To achieve this, the researcher kept records of the participants' ideas, responses and subjective views throughout the study. The same thing was done on the researcher's part to separate the researcher's biases from the data obtained. The records helped the researcher to audit the data for a reliable and reflexive interpretation.

Peer Debriefing

The interview guide designed by the researcher was submitted first to my supervisor and other colleagues for review. First and foremost, the researcher was instructed to delete the items supervisors and colleagues thought were not directly in line with the study's purpose. Also, my supervisors helped

modify some of the items in the interview guide to avoid ambiguities, unnecessary repetitions and omissions. The items were systematically arranged to ensure that data retrieved from participants matched the study's purpose. Lastly, items that colleagues perceived were relevant but were not captured in the interview guide were added. The researcher's peers' comments, feedback and support were central to gathering the most dependable and transferable data after the analysis.

Member Checking

The researcher returned interview transcripts to each of the participants. Participants were asked to read the transcribed data to see if the researcher captured all their responses. Where necessary, the researcher was asked to make the required corrections to the data. This helped the researcher to document data that resonated with the experiences of the participants involved.

Researcher's Positionality

The researcher was also a history educator and hold the conception that history as a subject should be taught in the most constructive way. His position on classroom instruction is one that transcends textbooks, facts memorization, note taking and recalling of dates. Despite this position, the researcher was very tactful in ensuring that these biases were not superimposed on the data gathered. This was why the researcher adopted the inductive analytical procedure where participants' perspectives were solely prioritised for analyses. No room was created by the researcher to fill any gap in the data with his subjective experiences. From the emic standpoint, he allowed the data to speak for itself and even deduced themes from the data gathered instead of using pre-established themes. These strategies helped the researcher in overcoming biases

and personal position on what teachers perceive historical knowledge and instruction to be.

Data Collection Procedure

Upon approval from the Institutional Review Board (UCCIRB/CES/2023/174), the researcher spent one month on the data collection exercise. First, the researcher visited the teachers from 25th October, 2023 to 31st October, 2023 and pre-informed them about the interview discourse with all ethical protocols assured (Letter of introduction from the Department of Arts Education, UCC, Letter of Application for Ethical Clearance, Request for ethical clearance letter, Ethical clearance form from IRB, and participants' informed consent letters). To ensure quality data gathering, the researcher booked appropriate appointments with each of the seven participants before they were consulted for the interview process. The researcher also explained the study's purpose in detail to them. All seven participants established a good rapport and interactions were very easy.

A maximum of 50 minutes was spent with each participant on the field. Participants were assured that the recorded interviews would be used mainly for transcription, analysis, and interpretation. The participants were informed that the study was voluntary hence they were at liberty to exit at any preferred time. The researcher gathered data from seven history teachers and recorded interview data. The interviewer and the interviewees used the I.C.T Laboratory and the schools' Assembly Halls to curb distractions. This eased recording processes. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms were used in place of each participant. After ten days, the data collection exercise was completed.

Data Processing and Analysis

The researcher recorded the interview using an audio-recording device after which they were transcribed verbatim into written text. After reading the interview transcripts on countless occasions, repeated comments and needless statements were carefully removed without eliminating salient data. The relevant points and ideas shared by the participants were documented. After that, the researcher carefully read the transcripts for each research objective to determine codes. Similar comments were assembled under their corresponding research objective. Also, I deduced sub-themes from the codes which guided my analysis and interpretation. The data were analysed through the inductive thematic analysis approach. The researcher used the inductive analysis style because pre-determined themes were not used instead the themes were drawn from the data obtained from the field. The thematic analytical and the thick description approach were used. These strategies were helpful in this study because they were believed to be the most appropriate analytical strategy for phenomena studied within a naturally occurring setting (Kothari, 2004; Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2018). These analytical strategies also helped the researcher classify the data, trace patterns, deduce codes, compare perspectives and ensure systematic data analysis. Wellington's (2015) seven-stage model of analysing qualitative data was employed. They are the researcher's immersion in the data, data reflection and generating codes, developing and analysing themes, synthesising and 'recombining' data, comparing data to other works, reflecting, and presenting and sharing the findings (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

The researcher adhered to all ethical issues underpinning the study's data collection processes. The researcher sought permission from the University of Cape Coast Institutional Review Board after the first three chapters of the study were approved. The researcher clearly defined the purpose of the study and assured participants' confidentiality and anonymity. The researcher informed the participants that pseudonyms were used instead of their names. Hence, there was no way their names were captured in the analysis and interpretation of the data. Participants one, two, three, four, five, six and seven were identified with pseudonyms. The pseudonyms included Desmond, Elliot, Michael, George, Ellis, Susana and Sylvanus respectively. The voluntariness of participation was considered to give participants the free will to exit should they become disinterested along the line. Lastly, the researcher issued the participants an informed consent letter before initiating the data collection process.

Summary of Chapter Three

This chapter focused on the research methodology and methods the researcher used for the study. The research paradigm chosen was interpretivism and the research approach was qualitative. The study was conducted in the Mfantseman Municipality and the participants were seven history teachers. The researcher adopted the purposive sampling procedure when selecting participants for interviews. The data were recorded and interpreted thematically. The researcher met all ethical issues and followed the protocols needed to gather the data.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter presents the results and analyses of the data collected. The study aimed to investigate history teachers' epistemological beliefs and how such beliefs inform their instructional practices. Also, the researcher employed the phenomenological research design which falls under the ambits of the qualitative approach to research. The researcher gathered data through face-to-face interviews with seven participants using a semi-structured interview guide. The research aimed to provide answers to the various research questions through the viewpoints of the participants. Participants' responses were manually transcribed, coded, categorised and discussed. The results and analyses were presented according to the research questions. This chapter has been divided into four (4) thematic sections based on the variables (research questions) and the resultant data to ensure clear presentation of the results and analyses. Each thematic section contains the research objectives' results and the corresponding discussions. Consequently, each theme has been divided into sub-themes.

The Epistemological Beliefs of Senior High School History Teachers in the Mfantsiman Municipality

The first research question was: "What epistemological beliefs do senior high school history teachers hold in the Mfantsiman Municipality?" It sought to explore the epistemological beliefs senior high school history teachers possessed. The participants provided varied beliefs about the nature of knowledge in history. The majority shared homogenous views, while other participants shared dissented views, which offered extended insights into

teachers' epistemological beliefs in history. The themes obtained from the results for the first research question included: the changing nature of knowledge in history, knowledge from distinct historical sources, connected crafts, experiential and contextual knowledge.

Changing Nature of knowledge in history

This theme sought to determine history teachers' perspectives on the nature of the past. It is generally understood in the literature that knowledge, on the one hand, is considered to be fixed. On the other hand, others perceive knowledge to be flexible. Given this, the theme shed light on participants' views on the nature of knowledge of the past. According to them, knowledge obtained from the past was revealed to be flexible. All participants noted that historical knowledge is not static; rather they continue to change. The responses of four out of the seven participants were emphatic. They emphasised the fluidity of knowledge in history. For instance, Desmond stated:

I think history, just like any other subject, grows. History is not static, even though it deals with facts. However, the facts require interpretation. Like the case of the 1948 riots, what has been taught generally for a very long time was that the petitioners were delivering a petition when the riot broke out. However, later information has proven that the petitioners had already submitted their petition to the governor. While they were returning, they took an unauthorised route and this triggered a gunshot from one of the governor's soldiers. This led to the riots. This new evidence shows that we need to adjust accordingly. So, I think it is not static and it should change as and when new evidence emerges.

Elliot also indicated:

So, I believe that knowledge of history keeps changing. Eyewitnesses narrate the past in more detail than someone who might have heard it somewhere, been told by someone else, or read it. So, I believe history or information in history do change. It is not constant.

Additionally, Michael also responded:

Yes, society is dynamic as we always say. Day in, day out, information keeps changing so historical knowledge is not static. One has to use

new situations to explain known facts or evidence. They keep changing and the information will vary to suit modern times.

The above perspectives indicate that knowledge of the past changes in light of new evidence. It further meant that past facts are pertinent but they do not constitute knowledge. Instead, knowledge of the past is obtained from interpreted evidence. Also, evidence continues to change with time. This finding resonates the conclusion established by Hanson (2019) that the past becomes meaningless in a static world; history teachers should not act as the Rembrandts, Shakespeares and Bethovens in the classroom since knowledge of the past is constantly being revised, modified, and even updated.

Additionally, Elliot's perception of knowledge as flexible stems from how past information has been imparted through constant moderations to students in our current dispensation. Elliot's line of argument is also premised on the principle of proximity. Thus, those who are close to events of the past may produce a different version of the past from those who are at a distance. Elliot's perspective further gives rise to subjectivity as explained by VanSledright & Maggioni (2016), which states that knowledge of the past is subjective, owing to the observer's narrative construction. However, for Michael, knowledge of the past is deduced from one fact, but it must be explained by considering the dispensations students find themselves. The views shared by the participants continue to suggest that, knowledge in history is not a piece of fixed information. Instead, knowledge is flexible, contextual and responsive to prevailing situations. Thus, knowledge of the past is not detached from present developments. It also suggests that participants recognise tentative knowledge in history. Sylvanus underscores this: "I think it can change because truth is what it is now. Truth is tentative and it is subject to change." Participants'

justifications for changing knowledge are premised on three cardinal factors: varied evidence, moderation in narrations and contextual examples a teacher uses to explain events.

Moreover, participants believe that knowledge of the past is not rigid, untouchable and a dead piece of information. They perceive knowledge to be flexible and continuous. Similarly, Stoel et al. (2017) indicated that the tentativeness of information offers students new perspectives associated with historical knowledge but does not render previous evidence insignificant. The findings established under this theme also aligned with the findings of Chai, Khine and Teo (2006) who found that Singapore pre-service teachers believe that knowledge is uncertain or tentative though they recognise experts' knowledge. This finding also corresponds with the assumptions of the constructivists' theory, Yilmaz (2011) and Fosnot (2013) espoused that the knowledge structure is tentative and flexible. The findings also re-echo Collingwood's assertion that knowledge of the past does not emanate from the "scissors and paste" approach to re-constructing the past (Hanson, 2019).

The findings further underscore history teachers' belief that knowledge in history is not an established truth. Knowledge is not what is known to exist; it is obtained through various opinions, truths, and perspectives we investigate to explain past happenings. The results further demonstrate that teachers' view of the past is that historical facts do not speak for themselves. Opinions, perspectives and distinct truths must be systematically pieced together to obtain knowledge of the past. Lee et al. (2013) similarly established that knowledge created based on opinions is what is accepted as truth. Koutsianou and Emvalotis (2021) also espoused that knowledge must be procedural, evaluative, and

individually formed. It is worthy to note that historical facts remain immutable with or without the advent of new evidence. However, it is the opinions and the subjective explanations of the history teacher that will give meanings to the facts of the past.

Knowledge from Distinct Historical Sources

This theme explained the multiple nature of historical knowledge. Thus, there are multiple avenues through which knowledge of the past can be reconstructed. Under this theme, participants explained that historical knowledge can be obtained from different historical sources. Consequently, they do not believe in information from one historical source as historical knowledge. However, they considered factors such as the subject content, source suitability, and source corroboration in reconstructing the past. Emphasising the need to pay attention to the aspects of the past that need to be taught, Desmond responded: “First of all, we need to understand a particular aspect of the past that we want to teach and that will show us which source to use. There are newspapers, manifestoes, and written journals from which we can tap information.”

Complementing Desmond’s position was Susana, who expressed as follows:

The most effective way to gather evidence from historical sources involves a thorough and critical approach. This includes cross-referencing multiple sources, assessing the credibility and bias of each, considering the context of events, consulting experts, and combining both primary and secondary materials.

Sylvanus also indicated: “I don’t believe in depending on a single primary source. You should cross-check the information with other sources.” The above views reveal that teachers are supposed to be critical about how they construct knowledge of the past. Teachers must recognise the principle of source suitability in their quest to make meaning of past happenings. It also suggests that, it is inappropriate for history teachers to rely on a single historical source.

They need to interrogate multiple evidence to understand and explain historical happenings. Also, while history teachers interrogate multiple sources, they must be cautious of authors' biases.

The participants also indicated that comparing different sources helps history teachers to obtain the most reliable knowledge of the past. According to Ellis:

I think you will need a lot of primary sources in general. Whether it is archival or interviews, you will need more. You try to compare them and align them with what already exists in literature before you use them. So, it is just like assessing what you have from the primary source using secondary sources.

This relates to the collaborative or complementary purposes of using distinct historical sources (Lamassaari et al., 2021). The findings also cohere with the multiplists' position that different sources are central to obtaining the most reliable and authentic historical knowledge (Stoel et al., 2017). These responses, among other things, show that history teachers believe that knowledge in history is obtained through careful scrutinisation of different sources. The participants' emphasis on using written materials and other primary sources indicates their perceived quest to explore varied materials to obtain knowledge from the past. Also, if they are given the needed training, history teachers will be equipped with the skills of evaluating multiple historical materials. This suggests that a single source provides single evidence of the past which cannot be accepted as knowledge completely. Thus, knowledge of the past is obtained through diverse sources verified to be true. This position of the participants appears to emanate from their initial belief that knowledge in history keeps changing. This finding resonates with Buehl and Fives' (2009) finding, which established that teachers believe in varied sources of obtaining knowledge while authoritative knowledge cannot be considered entirely as final evidence in teaching. The findings also

correspond with Soleimani's (2020) finding which emphasised the need for students not to recognise history teachers as repositories of historical knowledge but to try different avenues to obtain knowledge of the past.

Connected Crafts: Relating the Past and Present

Another theme from the results was "connected crafts: relating the past and present." This theme explains that knowledge of the past relates to present developments. The past is not an isolated phenomenon with no bearing on the present. It should be interpreted through present situations or developments. Given that, participants intimated that knowledge in history is created through connected means. Historical knowledge has direct relationship with present happenings. Hence, history teachers should use their craft skills to establish such connections. According to Desmond:

I think facts cannot speak for themselves, but what constitutes history is the historian's interpretation of facts. Facts need to be interpreted to make meaning. Thus, the historian must piece together, past fragments, to create a sound and logical product. So, interpretation, I will say, is the craftsmanship of history.

Desmond's response means historical knowledge is the historian's reconstruction of the past. Thus, knowledge of the past is not a static and objective product. The respondent also highlights the role of the historian in shaping one's understanding of the past. He further emphasised the skill required of historians to assess and piece together past evidence critically. The respondent metaphorically indicated, "It is the craftsmanship of history", implying that just as the craftsman puts raw materials together to create a finished product, historians should use their expertise to piece together historical facts to re-interpret the past. Hanson (2019) indicated that the historian must prioritise narration and interpretation. Hanson further indicated that narration and

interpretations are considered the “why” and “how” of history respectively. Consequently, interpretation is regarded as the “lifeblood” or the “breath” of history. Given this, if a history teacher fails to interpret knowledge of the past, he becomes a chronicler and not a historian (Hanson, 2019). Similar to Desmond’s position, George stated:

Yes, you want to interpret history, you need to relate it to prevailing situations. For example, when teaching civilisation, you will explain a feature like ‘Social organisation’ where we treat the three social classes in all the civilisations. When teaching those issues, you can link them to what exists in our society today and it will be easy for students to understand.

In the context of George’s submission, knowledge of the past manifests itself in present happenings. Hence, the past must be taught within the context of present experiences or happenings so that the students can deduce meanings from it. Also, knowledge of the past should be interpreted in line with prevailing issues to ensure effective interpretation. Further, Ellis submitted:

Basically, it is about how the researcher or the historian writes and presents the facts gathered. The gathered facts are many, so sometimes, they do not represent a unit. It is about how you can add your voice to what you have gathered. That is how I see interpretation to be. So, the meaning you give to the data you have obtained from the various primary sources becomes the interpretation.

It is explicit from these submissions that knowledge of the past is a personal construct. It is also the historian’s voice; hence, historical knowledge may not remain the same. It further proves that knowledge of the past is obtained from the historiographic skills of the writer. It also reveals the subjectivity of knowledge, but the participant’s view shows that subjective knowledge should be situated in evidence, reasonable arguments and logical coherence. Additionally, it means that knowledge of the past does not reside in documents and potsherds; it lives in the imaginations of the one who re-constructs the past. This may also mean that in as much as history teachers consider and use

curricula materials, they incorporate their imaginations and opinions when explaining the past. This finding contrasts the assumptions postulated by the behaviourists (Alahmad, 2020; Ibrahimu, 2022), who suggested that knowledge in history contains a single interpretation.

While the above findings were relevant, the participants also established that knowledge of the past should be created through the efforts of teachers. Consequently, participants echoed the belief that knowledge is not inherently obtained but requires conscious efforts of history teachers. According to Desmond: “The teaching of history, like many other disciplines, requires formal training before someone can qualify to teach the subject. This is because there can be abuse or distortion of facts. This always happens when history teachers do not receive formal training.” So, Desmond’s opinion aligns with the effort processes postulated in the multidimensional model (Letina, 2022). Elliot shared a similar thought:

I believe history is not an inherent activity. It is not anyone who can teach history. As a history teacher, you need to research and get your facts together before you go and stand in front of your students to teach. I believe history is not just any inherent activity or subject that one is born with. You need to go the extra mile, conduct research, and read before you start to teach.

In the thoughts of Elliot, he believes that knowledge in history can be obtained through constant investigation since new evidence emerges each day. Hence, the teaching of history is not about offering manipulative and exaggerated knowledge. It also suggests that the history teachers’ constant efforts, his constant search for new evidence of the past and the requisite grooming he has received are very crucial. Ellis also shared a perspective that:

I think you will even need information from various sources and try to analyse them. You don’t attend class unprepared, assuming you have something in mind. You need to gather a lot of information, analyse it,

and come up with your own “truth” to present it. Teaching history demands a lot of effort.

The excerpts above show that, teachers believe in effort-driven processes of creating historical knowledge. History teachers affirming such knowledge brings to the fore that constructive knowledge is core to teaching history. This finding is in line with the finding of Lee, Zhang, Song and Huang (2013) who also found that Chinese in-service teachers hold learning effort or process as the preferred epistemological belief. The finding also brings to the fore, the role of the history teacher in finding an appropriate body of knowledge about past events. This form of participants’ thinking also frowns on teachers who have relied solely on rigid evidence in explaining situations to their students over the years. Lee et al. (2013) further indicated that individuals with sophisticated epistemic beliefs consider knowledge that is evolving continuously, self-constructed, and that authority can be criticised while knowledge acquisition is a process that requires adequate effort.

Experiential and Contextual knowledge

Findings under this sub-theme showed that history teachers further believe that combining experience and contextual information constitutes historical knowledge. Thus, the lived experiences of individuals could have a meaningful bearing on the past. All participants shared similar perspectives in terms of linking personal experiences to past facts. For instance, Desmond stated:

Sometimes, an experience we have encountered gives us knowledge. The past cannot be observed today so it really helps when you connect it to present experiences. This allows students to realise that the things they are studying are not so distant from the present. So, personal experience will help students to understand a past situation through a contemporary situation.

Desmond's recognition of daily experiences as an important principle underpinning historical knowledge indicates that the past is not dead as perceived by some, but is brought to life through its connection with the present. Thus, the meaning of the past can be properly revealed through the present. George also supported the belief that history is connected knowledge.

According to him:

Even before you go to class, you need to plan. At times, you need to find recent situations to explain the historical events you will teach. When you treat historical events that occurred in antiquity in isolation, students will not get the connection and when they are unable to link the issues, they lose interest. So, while you are preparing, you look for certain areas you can easily link to so that they will be able to develop a better understanding.

Further, Ellis emphasised the issue of context. For him, knowledge of the past is the one that is situated into context to ensure a proper understanding of the events. Ellis's response is as follows: "So, sometimes, you need to situate or relate what you are teaching to the daily experiences which are quite tangible to students and I think with that, understanding becomes clear"

From the foregoing, three principal elements define knowledge in history. These are context, experience and relatable issues of the present. These are the mainstay of the assumptions of the constructivists' theory. The constructivist theorists (Fosnot, 2013; Bada & Olusegun, 2015) describe knowledge not as absolute but constructed based on experience. This theory also rejects the notion that knowledge is only the set of information from the teacher as an authority. This finding corresponds with the finding of Miguel-Revilla et al. (2022) that secondary school teachers rejected the copier and borrower orientations about historical knowledge but accepted the 'criterialist' perspective of explaining the past. Also, participants' concern for seeking issues that can be linked to their teaching meant that they emphasised the relevance of

pre-lesson planning. They propose that one should have a plan before going to the classroom. Thus, finding connections between topics or issues that will be covered in class is important. The establishment of connections seems to maintain the interests of students during instruction. The participants suggested that without these connections or linkages, learners may struggle to understand and recognise the significance of what they are being taught. Hence, the preparations must involve finding current situations to which knowledge can be linked.

Lastly, participants strongly emphasise the role of experience in constructing knowledge in history. Participants imply that history teachers can make inferences from their experiences to illustrate how historical events have shaped contemporary situations. This personal touch aids learners in making sense of the relevant past to their lives and society. Essentially, the participants recommend a form of historical knowledge that closes the gap between the past and present through personal experience. Also, the phrase “situate or relate what you are teaching to daily experiences” means that historical knowledge should emanate from one’s ability to contextualise the content within the confines of learners’ lived experiences. This helps to make historical knowledge more meaningful to students. Also, students can make perfect connections between the learnable bits and their own lives.

Influence of History Teachers’ Epistemological Beliefs on their Selection of Instructional Strategies

The second research question was: “How do senior high school history teachers’ epistemological beliefs influence their choice of instructional strategies within the Mfantseman Municipality?” It sought to explore how the

epistemological beliefs of senior high school history teachers influence their choice of instructional strategies. The participants shared varied views on how their beliefs about knowledge in history inform their decisions about selecting of instructional strategies. The researcher generated two subthemes from the opinions shared by participants on their epistemological beliefs in history. They include; Gaining insights through multiple approaches, and engaging the narrative through dynamic pedagogy.

Gaining Insights through Multiple Approaches

The first theme generated by the researcher was “gaining insights through multiple approaches.” This theme emphasises history teachers’ need to use different instructional strategies in teaching history. The views of three out of the seven participants show that knowledge of the past is deeply hidden in various historical sources. Consequently, it is only through different instructional approaches that different perspectives on the past can be ascertained. The view of Elliot was very informative:

I believe that one of the right ways we can gather information to teach is through printed materials and the audiovisual. We can, therefore, gather information through these media by reading, watching videos and embarking on field trips. For instance, when teaching the topic ‘Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade’, the history teacher can send his students to either Cape Coast Castle or Elmina Castle. This will enable them to gather information about the topic based on what they see and hear at such historical sights.

Similarly, according to Michael: “Yes, using the print media, using the audio-visuals, embarking on field trips, dramatising, visiting historical sites and then using journals will be appropriate. In recent times, the Kwame Nkrumah Museum was renovated. So, when you visit there, it gives you real information about Nkrumah’s personality.” Additionally, George said: “Yes, I think for the

sources, we can get most of the information from historical sites and journals. I will also go for articles written by historians and others.”

The above views indicate that participants preferred instructional strategies that provoke students’ thinking, encourage classroom participation and assist students to personalise instruction. Also, the participants indicated that the use of multiple approaches helps shape learners’ minds to comprehend the facts, embrace the different opinions of students for proper interaction, and address classroom diversities. Consequently, Desmond asserted: “The past, as one lecturer of mine always says, we are students of history, and we are not to pass judgment on the past. Thus, we don’t condemn the things we teach to the students. Rather, we help them to get their opinions about the past.” Further, Sylvanus also established: “I see myself as a facilitator and not a repository of all knowledge of the past. Given this, I would want my students to go out there, find the information, and analyse them through critical thinking. My role is only to guide them to assemble their different opinions.”

The above responses further suggest that participants advocate instructional strategies that encourage in-depth understanding and proper connection to the issue under discussion. Participants’ emphasis on field trips also elicited their preference for a practical approach to experiential teaching and learning where students have access to historical sites and resources that are relevant to the topic. Voet and De Wever (2016) describe field trips as instructional avenues through which interactive teaching in history is ensured. Lammassaari et al. (2021) suggest that the above strategies promote interactions and ensure active learning. Also, teachers’ belief in students’ varied opinions suggests that history teachers create opportunities for students to participate in

discussions. This finding aligns with the finding of Yilmaz and Sahin (2011) that pre-service teachers preferred activity-based teaching strategies at the expense of the transmissive approaches. However, it contrasts with the work of Manu et al. (2015) whose findings revealed that teachers believe in “Certain or fixed” knowledge compel them to employ lecture methods in teaching.

The analyses above indicate that history teachers recognised the need to employ instructional strategies to provoke students’ analytic and critical thinking abilities. They also believe in the knowledge of the past that is devoid of judgements. Besides, the view of one participant (Sylvanus) emphasised democratic instruction, where they build knowledge with students on a consensus basis. In detail, Elliot indicated: “I will say, normally, you first allow students to bring on board whatever they know about whatever topic you want to teach them. Once you let them bring on board whatever they have, you also correct them accordingly.” Michael also said: “Yes, you give them more opportunities to participate and ask them more questions so that they will also show what part they took in the work.”

The above results indicate the participants’ preference for non-judgmental knowledge, facilitative knowledge and knowledge built through individuals’ collective opinions. These thus inform their selection of instructional strategies such as presentations, research activities and analysis. The results further show participants’ belief in student-centred approaches to teaching history. This influence teachers’ preference for instructional strategies that encourage thorough participation. Pedagogically, the participants emphasise instructional methods such as personalised, collective and problem-

based learning. These are the instructional strategies that engage the thinking abilities of learners.

Engaging the Narrative through Dynamic Pedagogy and Students' Immersion

The next theme from the results focused on history teachers' most emphasised instructional strategies. It was found that the varied views of the participants revolved around common instructional choices. Their views lend credence to the evidence that they do not concentrate on a single instructional strategy or approach in teaching history. The participants also stressed their consideration of factors like the level of students and their depth of knowledge of a particular topic before adopting an instructional strategy in teaching history.

Desmond, for instance, said:

So, I often use group presentations, individual presentation, role play and lecture method. I consider the latter because there are some historical facts that students cannot put together, so you have to lecture them for a few minutes before engaging them. However, I mostly use small group discussion, think-pair-share, among others.

Also, Ellis expressed:

My favourite has always been discussion. With discussion, I mostly want it to come out from the topic I am teaching. I mostly want to show a picture or a video of whatever I want to teach my students. They look at it and then come out with their ideas. So, the discussion method has always been my favourite. I think role-play is also good. In fact, any learner-centred strategy, I love them.

Additionally, Sylvanus stated:

I will go for presentations, debates, research, problem-solving, and analysis. Yes, because I feel that the abstract nature of history makes it difficult for students to grasp the concepts if I am to go to class and give them facts of the past. The second reason is that there are multiple perspectives of history, so I consider that.

Moreover, Elliot submitted:

Every topic will bring to mind the kind of instructional strategy that you will employ. It is based on the kind of lesson objective the teacher wants to achieve that will determine the skills he has to teach his students. So,

strategies like debate can help students to become vocal. Hence, I think the topic and the relevant skills are the core considerations. Further, Elliot also posited:

As a history teacher, I don't usually begin my lessons with the lecture method because I want my students to go and find out information themselves. There may even be perspectives on some particular topic that I may not know. So, allowing them to go and look for different perspectives becomes very helpful.

Desmond does not consider any instructional strategy irrelevant but he uses them purposefully. For instance, he indicated that though the lecture method is not the most prioritised, he prefers it in situations where students have little to no knowledge about events he teaches in the classroom. Also, the participant preferred a strategy that allows students to work in a team, immerse them deep into the lesson, and come up with their personally gathered information about a topic under discussion. They also hinted at instructional strategies that will make instruction fresh and experiential. Additionally, Ellis believes that only through discussions can students' thinking patterns be engaged. Given this, discussing the events through watching videos is very germane. Also, using learner-centred strategies allow the students to solve problems, make sense of facts and update existing information of the past. The evidence from Ellis' view aligns with Boehle's (2020) finding that teachers exhibited the 'Criterialist' aspect of teaching history where authentic sources are used, and students are hooked on historical reasoning skills through small group discussions.

Linked to the above, the participants' views indicate that history teachers' instructional strategies revolve mainly around presentations, role-play, lecture methods, documentaries, debates, research, problem-solving and analysis. These strategies remain under the auspices of the student-based instructional index except for the lecture methods. However, they use lectures

to introduce students to new concepts while they use the presentations and the others for discussions. Their reasonings also confirmed an instruction that gives an audience to students' contributions. Tarmo's (2016) findings oppose the new findings gathered in this study. Tarmo found that pre-service science teachers regarded knowledge as simple, rigid and derivative, which informed their adoption of transmissive strategies to propagate textbook-based scientific knowledge.

Further, participants paid attention to the needs they wanted to address, the objectives to attain, and the skills students must attain. Participants also paid much attention to developing critical thinking skills. Their instructions are premised on helping students develop skills such as communication, adapting knowledge in history to solve everyday problems, and assembling diverse perspectives in solving historical problems. They also believe in students' debate and personal research as instructional acts that promote critical thinking, classroom engagement and active learning. This suggests that students' varied needs are deeply situated in teachers' ability to sense them in the classroom and align them with the required instructional strategies. This finding echoes the previous finding of Hyytinen, Holma, Toom, Shavelson and Lindblom-Ylänne (2014) that teachers' epistemological beliefs prompted students' utilisation of the skill of critical thinking as a tool for enhancing understanding and determining truth or falsehood in history.

Moreover, participants admitted that they did not select all the student-centred instructional strategies indicated above due to some realities beyond their reach. For example, there are difficulties in meeting all the standards in the curriculum and exhausting all the topics ahead of time. Given that, they are

moved to revisiting narrations to teach the past. For instance, Desmond asserted: “In the curriculum, there is what we call project work. I don’t often use them because in the school, we don’t have the luxury of time to visit libraries or internet cafes to get some information. However, I blend all other instructional strategies to help students to bring out their information.” Similarly, Elliot said:

I think, it is supposed to be a blend of the ways of imparting historical knowledge. Normally, the lecture method makes teaching boring because the teacher always passes on past information to pupils who do not know anything about it. And so, you would have to blend by introducing the modern-day instructional strategy.

Additionally, Ellis indicated:

Ideally, I think the student-centred approach should have been the most preferred but due to the results-oriented nature of the school system, you need to compromise as a teacher. Sometimes, you would want to look at the ideas of every student. However, you will not be able to cover a lot. So, I think blending it with the traditional lecture method, I think is acceptable.

The findings above indicate that history teachers emphasise interactive strategies such as discussion, debates, group presentations, report writing, and experiential teaching. They incorporate these strategies to develop students’ analytic, critical thinking and problem-solving abilities or skills in history. However, teachers highlighted that they prefer blending the student-participation and teacher-centred strategies owing to internal issues such as the luxury of time, fixed curriculum demands and a load of tasks that may not allow them to remain persistent in selecting inquiry-based approaches. Also, they give room for the lecture-based approach only when the classroom environment does not support student-based approaches. This implies that history teachers adapt to classroom situations. It also means that participants do not see history instruction to be the strict acquisition of deposited facts but as a process that will provoke the students’ thinking and always gather fresh information to explain the past. The finding is also in tandem with the work of Yilmaz and Sahin (2011)

who similarly found that pre-service teachers opted for activity-based or student-centred instructional strategies. Namamba and Rao (2016) similarly found that teachers' beliefs about history were mainly interpretational and student-centred instructional approaches were highly prioritised over teacher-centred ones.

Nevertheless, the participants shared factors such as time, curriculum demands, workload among others which hinder history teachers' appropriate instructional preferences. Below are some of the findings shared. First, Elliot said:

The first problem is an electricity problem. Another one is the time factor. Here, we have only four periods in a week. Only two periods have been put together. The remaining two periods are separate. So, I can use only the combined two hours to show the students a video or a documentary. The third issue is planning the timetable. Lastly, the curriculum is a bit loaded. So, it is a whole lot.

Second, Desmond indicated:

Yes, the first one is time constraints. Time is a factor because of the overcrowded nature of our syllabus. So, you have a lot of topics to teach. Another problem is the lack of financial support. Here, I always want to print pictures and use a projector. Also, I may need a laptop to show the video for proper discussion. Mostly, we find it very difficult to get these things.

It shows that history teachers' preference for the narrative methods of delivering historical knowledge is not deliberate but they are adjustments they have to do due to the factors mentioned above. The researcher operationalises these as the paradox against history teachers' beliefs about historical knowledge and their preference for instructional strategies such as research, project works, discussions, presentations, watching documentaries and visiting different authoritative materials. However, the participants indicated their conscious efforts to make their instructions interactive, engaging and tolerating the views or discoveries of students. With such preferences, it can be established that participants' epistemological beliefs align with their instructional strategies. The

challenges highlighted by the participants give the impression that their choice of instructional strategies is an ideal preference, but the reality sometimes contrasts. In this sense, that Manu (2014) similarly found that preservice teachers' epistemological beliefs did not reflect in their instructional choices due to challenges such as workload, mandated testing and Common Core Standards set out for teachers to achieve. These challenges push the teachers to opt for traditional approaches.

Influence of History Teachers' Epistemological Beliefs on their Selection of Assessment Strategies

The third research question was "How do senior high school history teachers' epistemological beliefs inform their classroom assessment strategies in the Mfantseman Municipality?" This research question sought to explore how senior high school history teachers' beliefs about the nature of historical knowledge translate into how they assess their students. Wilke et al. (2022) espoused that teachers' epistemological beliefs inform every aspect of their instructional practices. Wansink, et al. (2017) also indicated that teachers' assessment decisions largely depend on their epistemological beliefs about history and their perceptions of the subject's objectives. Thus, assessment constitutes an important component of instructional practices, and requires research attention. The researcher found out the participants' views on assessment strategies they employ in the classroom. Three themes were generated from the results: Preferred assessment strategies, selecting suitable assessment strategies, and limitations to teachers' assessment strategies.

Preferred Assessment Strategies

This theme emerged from participants' responses regarding the assessment strategies they prefer. The majority of the participants placed a premium on written forms of assessment as tools to ensure students' demonstration of in-depth understanding of the past rather than mere memorisation and reproduction of facts. First, four of the seven participants shared congruent views on their assessment choices in history. Most importantly, Desmond indicated:

So, history is not an accumulation of facts; it is also training the mind to think. We cannot rule out written forms of assessment like examination, test and exercises, but then, the problem comes down to framing the questions. The questions should be framed in a way that push students to demonstrate an understanding of the things they have read.

Similarly, Elliot said: "I believe assessment is essentially meant to know if students are following or understand whatever knowledge you are imparting. So, I mostly prefer essays, and assignments." Michael also said: "Yes, different assessment forms give us information about how to go about teaching and evaluate the strategies one can use to improve students' grades. The exercises we give to the students also offer us information on their understanding." Sylvanus further added:

I feel that assessment strategies should not necessarily be used to test historical events' content, dates or characters. But how can the knowledge about the whole historical situation be applied or used to better our lives as Ghanaians or people in the present day.

The views of all seven participants showed that they consider certain conditions before selecting assessment strategies. These factors include the objectives stipulated in the history syllabus, the class size and the skills teachers want students to acquire. First, Desmond said: "Okay, so I think the questions you use in assessment must be tailored to the objectives. It must also be derived from the content of what you have taught."

Second, Ellis highlighted:

You need to consider the large class size and the students' nature. These will inform you of the type of assessment you have to choose. It can be a multiple choice, short-answer test or essay type. As a history teacher, you may want to learn about the student's writing ability. But looking at the number, you may not give them such essay-type questions, you may go in for multiple choice questions. You may prefer "fill in", meaning they cannot copy themselves because they need to write a statement or a word.

Third, Elliot explained:

Yes, the aim should not be to accumulate facts. For example, just narrating the account of Mansa Musa's journey to Mecca is not enough. This is just fact, but I think the essence of history is to train the mind to think. So, I think you should set questions that are not straightforward but should bring out the thinking capacity of the students.

Fourth, Sylvanus indicated: "If the topic has diverse perspectives, I will employ debate or argument but if it is more of facts, I will do the normal lecturing. If it is problem-solving, then I would come up with a case study requiring that a student applies knowledge of the historical event." Moreover, Sylvanus added:

I feel that my assessment strategies should be focused on problem-solving and critical-thinking tendencies. So, with that, I would instead set questions to test the problem-solving skills of my learners and not necessarily an account of what happened. So, with knowledge of say, the coup d'état during Rawlings' era, how do students of history right now perceive it? What is their perception of how such things have affected us now? This will enable us to learn from such incidents to reshape our society.

According to Ellis:

I feel history should ginger the critical thinking and analytical abilities of students. Hence, I assess through presentations, and sometimes, I also assess through debates. The points they raise will also inform the kind of marks I assign to them and, sometimes, the normal assessment, pen and paper test.

Finally, Michael also re-iterated:

So, an assessment strategy is effective if it gets directly to the student's understanding level. Using assignments won't give you that outcome because assignments are mostly unreliable. For assessment strategies, I use the ones that are not mostly influenced by odds such as copying. That is to me.

Desmond's assertion indicates that, assessment strategies ordinarily, cannot be said to be fact-based or constructive, but they depend on how teachers

frame their questions. Hence, his view depicts that questions constructed to assess history students should be designed to compel students to exhibit an in-depth understanding of problems discussed in class. Desmond's view further suggests that teachers have to be strategic before assessing their students. By strategic, he meant teachers should be faithful to the stipulated objectives in the syllabus before assessing their students. Demonstrating fidelity to the general objectives in the school curriculum or syllabus means that assessment should focus on only areas covered by history teachers. Elliot prefers that his assessment strategies unveil students' progress and concentration levels. He also emphasised understanding of knowledge in history and not fact accumulation. Also, his assessment strategies engage students in thinking processes. By helping students deduce the significance of past events, they apply their thinking skills to explain historical knowledge further. He, however, admitted that the thinking-based and the application questions normally transcend his students' levels, making him fall on the usual textbook-based questions. Moreover, it was revealed that participants mostly prefer strategies such as fact analysis, research projects, essays, and class discussions. This indicates that history teachers' ways of assessing are diverse.

Moreover, participants emphasising debate as means of assessing students meant that history teachers do not only focus on written and research-based assessment. They also consider oral assessments to monitor the communicative abilities of students. They assess orally because of the ineffective and corrupt nature of assessing students through assignments. To the participants, assignments do not allow history teachers to get the needed impacts after instruction. The additional finding from the participants was that apart

from employing strategies that encourage students to think, they also assess students in ways that allow them to apply conceptual knowledge in solving practical problems. The above views also give the impression that participants consider certain factors or conditions before choosing a particular assessment approach or strategy. Notwithstanding, their assessment choices varied depending on the skills they wanted their students to imbibe. For instance, they employ essays when they are concerned with improving their students' writing skills. It further indicates that participants' assessment strategies and the skills they expect students to acquire are inseparable. Yilmaz's (2006) study similarly found that essays were part of the assessment techniques teachers adopted.

Generally, the above views explain teachers' intent in assessing students. They see assessment beyond facts accumulation and in-depth understanding. Instead, they see assessment as a means through which teachers should reflect on their instructions subsequently, revise their teaching strategies and monitor students' progress. It also can be deduced from the results that history teachers prefer assessment strategies such as written forms and exercises. They use these strategies to monitor students' levels of understanding and not necessarily assimilate facts. Finally, the evidence suggests that assessment strategies that history teachers normally emphasise in the Mfantseman Municipality are being informed by classroom situations. The finding emanating from this study agrees with the finding of Yilmaz (2006) whose study revealed that teachers' epistemological beliefs prompted their use of rich assessment strategies such as informal observations, structured questions, discussions, formal multiple-choice questions, essays, and projects. Yilmaz described these as performance assessment tasks.

Selecting Suitable Assessment Strategies

This sub-theme was also generated from the results in response to Research Question 3. The researcher wanted to understand participants' perspectives on how they select their assessment strategies. Five out of the seven participants explained how they select their assessment strategies. For instance, Michael indicated: "Yes, I need to identify students' abilities before considering the instructional strategy I want to use. For example, when I realise that students are very vocal, I engage those students more in presentations." Similarly, Ellis stated:

Yes, you have to identify the special needs of the students. If it is a situation where they delay when it comes to reading their books, you give them regular fill-ins and many objective tests. That one will force them always to be reading before they come to class. Again, if they struggle to write essays, the focus can also be on writing tasks to improve their writing skills.

Additionally, Elliot addressed: "I think the assessment strategy depends on many factors. One of the factors is the size of the class. We also consider the lesson duration. So, I think normally, the objective test and the short responses, as well as the essay type, are what I prefer." Further, Ellis established:

Objective questions don't help, but depending on the level, I think it will help at the SHS level. The objective will help the students grab the exact narration. So, you have to get the exact story for you to be able to answer the objective questions. However, the project-based and the essay questions help the students blend narration and analysis. So, to me, they all help, but the essay and the project-based help the students research the topic and know more on their own.

Finally, Sylvanus said:

I think that with history, I would prefer the essay and the project-based approach. I prefer that because history deals with interpretation, and you would want to understand how your students interpret it for each topic. Also, I prefer essays to help make my students more proficient in writing and speaking. With the essay, they can express themselves and convince you, the teacher, why they have taken a particular stand.

The views of participants suggest that teachers adopt assessment strategies such as discussion and presentations by reasoning around the needs of

history students. Also, the participants believed that students possess different needs requiring different assessment methods. They vary their assessment strategies just as they vary their instructional approaches. Moreover, considering the limitations of various assessment strategies, they blend them to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of students' progress after instruction. Also, they blend their assessment strategies depending on the kind of skill students have to acquire at the end of instruction. Further, the participants' views indicate that they consider factors such as time and the size of students in class before they settle on either objective tests, fill-in-the-blank items, short responses or essay type questions. However, the participant emphasised the essay-based questions at the expense of the objective test or the multiple-choice questions.

In the case of Susana, she appreciated that each assessment strategy has its limitations, so the history teacher needs to blend them. Similarly, Susana indicated that she prefers strategies such as essay, project work, debates and others, which promote critical thinking, creativity, and in-depth understanding. It also implies that owing to the mediating factors highlighted in the earlier excerpts, participants do not have a specific assessment strategy they usually employ. However, they leverage on the use of objective questions in assessing their students. This finding corresponds with that of Breakstone (2014) that objective test questions make students recall bubbles of past evidence and resort to evidence in reference materials as the only appropriate information for understanding the past. Ellis also appreciated all the assessment strategies but indicated that essay and project-based assessments encourage explorative and self-generated learning in history. Lastly, due to participants' beliefs in interpretative knowledge, they utilise assessment strategies requiring students

to offer interpretations of past events. They continue to avoid using multiple choice assessments, as these are seen as ineffective tools that do not align with the epistemic demands of historical knowledge.

The results show that history teachers consider some prevailing factors within the school environment and the classroom in choosing assessment strategies. However, their assessment choices are essay, fill-in, and project work among others which promote critical thinking, in-depth understanding, problem-solving and creativity among history students. This means that these history teachers believe in student-based assessment strategies rather than strategies that promote recalling of isolated facts in the classroom. Similarly, Fogo (2014) states that through authentic tasks, including creating historical exhibits and presenting reasoned arguments, students demonstrate their understanding. The result also reflects the previous position in the literature that teacher's assessment decisions largely depend on their epistemological beliefs and their perceptions about the objectives underlying the teaching of the subject (Wansink et al., 2017). Lastly, Griffen et al. (2019) stated that assessment strategies such as essay, project work, and debates, reflect disciplinary practices and engage students' thinking.

Limitations to Assessment Strategies Selected

This theme emerged when the researcher elicited factors that inhibit them from implementing their preferred assessment strategies from the participants. All the participants shared similar perspectives. According to them, time, the bulky nature of the syllabus, and class size prevent them from employing their ideal assessment tools. These factors discourage them from undertaking a comprehensive assessment of their students. Elliot's response was

very informative: “In this particular school, assessing students sometimes, becomes difficult because of the class sizes. We are mostly discouraged, especially with the marking involved. However, teachers are doing very well in meeting targets.” Michael also said:

Yes, I have to say the enrollment is a bit challenging, but notwithstanding, we are doing our best. We give them various tasks such as multiple-choice, and project-based tests. Mostly, teachers’ heavy workloads are even a problem. Unfortunately for us, the class size is so huge that if you want to mark a particular class, it will take all your time. You may do some shabby work along the line because you will be tired. Administratively, there are some strategies that the school authorities do not allow us to use due to GES rules.

Similarly, Ellis indicated:

At times, when you want to print your questions to assess students, you visit the administration and there are no papers. This is a serious administrative challenge. Also, it becomes difficult when you want to show a documentary in the classroom because all the sockets have been disconnected.

Additionally, George indicated:

The overcrowded nature of the syllabus makes it challenging to employ presentations or debate as a form of assessment. This is because, I have about 55 students in my class, and if I am to assess them with a presentation method, it becomes almost impossible. Also, I have only an hour. So, I am forced to use the normal paper and pen test. Further, for the essay, it becomes very difficult for me to read everyone’s essay due to limited time.

The findings lend credence to the idea that history teachers are well-informed and know what is expected of them when assessing their students. However, the above limitations hinder history teachers from using their preferred assessment strategies. The evidence from the above excerpts contradicts with the work of Stoel et al. (2017) who indicated that history teachers should emphasise assessment practices that reflect inquiry activities and help students to apply their reasoning skills. Also, the findings do not align with the work of Gestsdottir, van Drie and van Boxtel (2021) that out of eight

participants, two were found to assess their students through project work and source analysis as well as task-based assignments.

Generally, the results show that history teachers are not consistent with the selection of student-centred assessment methods. Also, participants' knowledge of the inquiry-based instructional approaches may mean that they have been exposed to the most appropriate ways students of history should be assessed. However, the reason for the contrast in the respective secondary schools may also transcend the actual reasons shared. Other situations, such as teachers' self-reluctance, the level of students, and the absence of personal motivation to employ such ideal assessment strategies may contribute to the contrary practices occurring in senior high schools.

Influence of History Teachers' Epistemological Beliefs on their Selection of Instructional Materials

The fourth research question was "How do senior high school history teachers' epistemological beliefs influence their choice of instructional materials within the Mfantseman Municipality?" This research question sought to find out how teachers' epistemological beliefs manifest in their choice of instructional materials. This has been conceptualised in the researcher's analytical framework, revealing knowledge-based beliefs' influence on history teachers' instructional activities. Three themes emerged from the responses. These are selecting strategic instructional materials, the rationale for selecting historical instructional materials and the dual role of historical instructional materials. Each theme has been analysed based on the common views shared by the participants.

Selecting Instructional Materials Strategically

The first theme generated was incorporating materials that will match their selected strategies in history. This theme uncovers participants' views on how they choose strategic instructional materials by having their instructional strategies and classroom situations in mind. The majority of the participants shared similar views on this theme, but four of the seven participants' views were highly informative. First, Ellis established:

Okay. I think it has informed me because in teaching, if I only want to go by the discussion, which is my favourite, I always try to get teaching and learning materials such as pictures, maps or videos. This is because my discussions may depend on them. Based on my instructional strategy, I incorporate its corresponding instructional material. And I think that is the right thing to do.

Another participant indicated that using multimedia presentations, primary documents, and visual materials promotes discussions, deep thinking, interaction, creativity, analysis, and catering for diversity. This was found in the response of Susana:

I prefer interactive discussions to foster student engagement and reasoning. I also select the media to provide a visual and auditory understanding of historical narratives. I also prefer primary source analysis to encourage students to interact with historical documents directly.

Additionally, Elliot said:

Okay, so, to me, the ideal instructional material should be the audio-visual type where normally, students are being made to watch videos and pictures. It helps them to live within the event. Almost every historical topic has corresponding audio or visual material that will help students understand properly.

Michael also established:

Yes, I have been teaching civilisations of Africa, and what I prefer most, is maps. If I want to talk about North Africa, I show them a map of North Africa. The map helps them to capture the geographical locations of the events. We may not be able to have audio-visuals or get the projector, but at least, for the maps, we have the Map of Africa, and the Map of Ghana.

First, Ellis' perspective implies that, with pictures, maps, and videos, the emphasis is on engaging students in thorough discussions. This means that, the

participant chooses his instructional materials with instructional strategies. The findings also reveal how history teachers strategically choose instructional materials. This was evident in Ellis and Susana's responses that they chose instructional materials not just to deliver a sequence of historical accounts to students. They would rather ensure coherence between the instructional materials they select and the instructional strategies they will implement. Also, participants understand the distinct role of each of the instructional materials. They also select materials that will necessitate discussion and satisfy the overall learning needs of students. This was evident in Michael and Susana's response.

In addition, the participants indicated that they prefer instructional materials such as audio-visuals, audio, maps and pictures. These are the materials that participants shared to be the most appropriate instructional materials in delivering historical knowledge. The participants' choice of the above instructional materials is based on the reason that they are readily available. Also, the participants explained the essence of the instructional materials they preferred. Pedagogically, they prioritise these instructional materials to create historical scenes for the students, and create a familiarity between students and historical events. The statement "It helps them to live within the event" as captured in Elliot's response, shows that the participants use visuals and audio materials since they want students to have a feel or get in touch with the historical events they discuss in class. In the case of Michael, he admitted that the sole instructional material available for use is the map. Even though maps help students locate historical settings, using maps solely will not allow the history teacher to effectively discuss issues with the students.

Overall, it is evident that history teachers preferably use audio, audio-visual materials, maps and pictures to promote students' understanding of the past. Stoel et al. (2017) classify instructional materials such as pictures as the ones used by teachers with naïve beliefs about teaching while maps and audio-visual materials are the ones that enhance students' engagement and interaction. History teachers make these instructional choices probably due to their ease of accessibility and use. It can also be deduced that participants' preference for audio-visuals and audio materials for teaching history can be considered ideal. This means it is not always the case that they select their desired instructional materials for teaching history. However, the reality is that they rely largely on pictures, maps, and videos to help students understand historical settings, make sense of the past and make the concepts concrete to students. Also, only Ellis' response revealed that he contextually selects her instructional materials. He considers his instructional strategies by context first before deciding which instructional material is appropriate. The other participants were silent on the purpose of choosing a certain instructional material. The silence of the other participants when choosing instructional materials based on instructional strategies may confirm that they do not necessarily consider the role or purpose of each instructional material. This is because making students understand the historical locations and positions of countries and continents is not a thorough inquiry act.

Rationale for Selecting Historical Instructional Materials

After discussing the ideal instructional materials history teachers utilise in their instructions, they further shared their views on why they preferred these materials and how they use them to bring the past to the level of their students' understanding. Their justification was based on their beliefs about historical knowledge as tangible, flexible and interpretive. First, Elliot said that:

Instructional materials are an essential part of history because history is very abstract, and to enable our students to relate to the past, you need to employ such materials to draw them closer to the past. For instance, when talking about Nkrumah, J.B Danquah, and others, it would be prudent to provide instructional materials for them to visualize the situation.

Second, was Susana's view:

I believe instructional materials play a fundamental role in teaching history. They are vital tools to enrich the learning experience and provide diverse perspectives. For instance, textbooks, primary sources, documentaries, and online resources provide context and cater for different learning styles, fostering a more engaging and comprehensive learning environment.

Third, is the perspective of Elliot:

I believe that they complement each other. So, if you want the students to understand whatever topic that you want to teach, you should blend all of them. Thus, they wouldn't get written evidence to cross-reference if they watched alone. So, the textbook will be there for them to read. Sometimes, you also need someone to speak to the events students watch to promote deeper understanding.

Fourth, is the response of Ellis:

I feel that people who write textbooks also talk from their perspectives. Given this, I wouldn't recommend textbooks as sole instructional materials for my students. I would prefer them to have access to different types of newspapers and other sources to gain multiple views about the past. So, I would encourage them to read more newspapers and magazines to obtain different perspectives.

Additionally, four participants stated that multifaceted factors mostly informed them before using audio, audio-visuals, maps, and other instructional materials. These factors include current affairs or issues, instructional

techniques, topic, timeframe of historical events, lesson objectives, specific classroom climate and the calibre of students. Specifically, Desmond said:

So, we know that history develops a person mentally and if the person is developed, it affects society. And for that to happen, we must always ensure we are bridging it with contemporary issues. So, before preparing for a class, I go through the topic I will be dealing with and choose the suitable instructional materials to help with the delivery. Then, I will think about ways the teaching and learning techniques will be very useful in the classroom.

Sylvanus also indicated:

I consider how long that historical event had taken and its setting. For instance, if we are teaching about the pygmies of Congo, my students have never been to Congo, and the closest thing they will have to do is watch a video or a picture. So, I would prefer electronic media and if it happened in Ghana, say, an election, then I would prefer that they read newspapers, magazines, etc.

The participants added that they also considered the lesson objectives and the classroom climate. This evidence was specifically advanced by Elliot:

I think we consider a lot of factors. At times, the topic you are going to teach can inform you as to the kind of instructional material you are supposed to use and the objective you also seek to achieve. Certain objectives will require certain instructional material to help you achieve them properly. Then, at times, you have to consider the time of the day.

Similarly, Ellis established: "One thing you should look at is the calibre of students that we have."

From the above views, it can be pointed out that due to the distant or inaccessible past, the participants use audio and audio-visual materials to situate concepts and ideas into the actual historical setting and bring the content live to students. Also, using these instructional materials helps students to relate to events and historical figures from the past. By mentioning historical actors like Nkrumah and J.B Danquah, it suggests that using audio and audio-visuals pave the way for students to visualise situations of the past and events surrounding historical figures. Also, it allows teachers to provide their students with tangible references that make historical narratives more meaningful, accessible and

engaging. Participants' views further suggest that each instructional material serves a unique purpose. Hence, using various instructional materials helps teachers cover their students' diverse needs or preferences. Diverse instructional materials also pave the way for teachers to take students through different learning modalities. Elliot, for instance, suggests that relying solely on one type of instructional material may not provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the past. For example, the participant mentions that if students only watch videos, they might miss out on certain details that are well explained in written form. Conversely, simply reading from a textbook may not provide the same level of engagement that the use of video will offer. In such cases, when teachers blend the two, they can create contexts for their students. Through that, teachers also clarify complex concepts for students. This requires the need for history teachers to create a synergy between various instructional materials.

Consequently, participants projected instructional materials such as resource persons, documentaries, virtual tours, interactive presentations, newspapers and magazines as supplementary materials that provide extended information to students. In this response, the participants were skeptical about relying solely on textbooks for historical understanding. This is because textbooks may not encompass the full range of viewpoints on historical events. The participants prefer exposing students to diverse perspectives so that they understand historical topics from different viewpoints. The participants also advocate that students read other newspapers and magazines to build their reasoning abilities, and supplement evidence found in textbooks.

Additionally, Desmond's excerpt, notes that historical knowledge is directly connected to contemporary issues in our society hence the need for history teachers to pay attention to contemporary happenings. Desmond further considers the nature of the topic before selecting his instructional materials. Similarly, Sylvanus believes in the accessibility of the historical setting for their students and tailors their instructional materials accordingly. For instance, he highlighted teaching about the pygmies of Congo.

Recognising that his students may not have direct experience with Congo, the participant prefers using electronic media such as videos or pictures, to provide visual representations of the setting and context. The respondent's choice of electronic media for historical events suggests a desire to offer immersive experiences that help students connect with the subject matter despite their physical distance from the setting. On the other hand, when teaching about events closer to the students' context, the respondent prefers using print media like newspapers and magazines. This choice possibly stems from the assumption that students may have more direct access to information and perspectives about events happening in their country, making print media a suitable and relevant resource.

Moreover, it can be established from the views of participants that instructional materials are not connected to a certain instructional enactment by default, but it is through the history teachers' intervention and innovations that effective historical instruction can be ensured. Hence, they use audio, visuals, and audio-visuals to promote accessible history instruction, experiential engagement, practical delivery of content and concretising knowledge of the past. For instance, Okonkwo, Ibiam, Akpojotor, Ugwu, Ifelunni & Okoh (2022)

established in their study that audio-visual documentary arouses students' interest in social studies instruction. They are also wary of the limitations of each instructional material so they do not restrict themselves to only one material. The participants talking about blending instructional materials is also evidence that they know the purpose and use of each of them. The views further reveal that the classroom climate at some point in time can inform history teachers about what instructional material vis-à-vis technique to employ in delivering instruction in history.

On top of the highlighted factors, it was revealed that instructional materials should match the distinct abilities or calibre of the students they handle in the classroom. Some students could be auditory learners, others visual learners, and others kinesthetic learners. The distinct calibre of students in the class informs the selection of instructional materials. The findings above align with what Giangreco and Cravedo (2007) outlined as factors teachers must consider before choosing instructional materials. They included the suitability of the method to the learner, the topic to be treated, the interest of students, teachers' mastery or ability to apply the method properly, the maturity level of the learner and the heterogeneous nature of the classroom environment. These factors are pivotal to the selection of instructional strategies and their associated materials.

Furthermore, five participants also indicated another important factor they consider before selecting instructional materials. Sylvanus, Ellis, Elliot, Susana, and Desmond similarly emphasised that students' backgrounds and cultural considerations are factors they consider before selecting instructional

materials. However, Sylvanus, Ellis and Elliot's responses were more informative. Sylvanus indicated:

I consider students' religious beliefs and their tribes. So, I am cautious of my instructional materials due to tribal reasons. I even want to vary the voices behind the videos I show to my students. So, it shouldn't just be an Akan narrative all the time. I will vary them, considering the distinct ethnic backgrounds I have in my classroom.

Ellis also explained:

Sometimes, you have to consider the background and the society in which the school is situated. Choosing resources from those places is quite important because those are things that students see every day and are very much familiar with. Also, considering students' backgrounds will help you avoid offending any student in your choice of resources.

Additionally, Elliot also admitted:

At times, the school environment informs us. In this particular school, the environment doesn't permit using certain instructional materials. For example, if you go to class, and you want to show a particular video, it will not be possible. Even on a laptop, how many students can focus on that screen at the same time? Are you going to pass it around? So, we are always being made to improvise.

The responses above lend credence to the evidence that the participants consider the diversity of their students' backgrounds before choosing any instructional material, especially when it is a video. This shows that the participants are conscious of cultural diversity and ensures that the instructional materials they select are inclusive and respectful of students' identities. The responses also indicate a desire to offer broader perspectives and representation of different ethnic groups within the classroom.

Ellis' view suggests an awareness of the influence that students' personal experiences and the community's cultural environment can have on their learning. It also emphasises the essence of selecting instructional materials relevant to the local context. This makes instruction more meaningful, real and relatable to students, as these resources reflect aspects of their everyday lives. The use of local instructional materials may also resonate more deeply with the

students. This approach enhances students' engagement and fosters a deeper connection between the subject matter and their own identities. Pedagogically, it means that the participants are proactive in using adaptive approaches in teaching. Manu et al. (2015) similarly indicated that cultural beliefs are central to the student-teacher's instructional reasonings. Manu et al. (2015) further made a similar inference in their study that teachers' cultural beliefs could affect their thinking as they advance through college.

Dual Role of Instructional Materials

This was the last theme generated to further explain history teachers' choice of instructional materials. It was revealed that some instructional materials supported inquiry activities while others did not. It was also revealed from participants' views that how the instructional material is being prepared determines its role or function in instruction. The dynamics were expressed in the opinions of majority of the participants. For instance, Ellis advanced:

Sometimes, I think how instructional materials are being prepared determine their functions. Sometimes, the instructional materials give you just some traces of the past. It will then require the history teacher's creativity to help students understand what is being taught. So, whether narration or not, it depends on how they are being used to facilitate the lesson.

Additionally, Susana indicated:

I perceive instructional materials as relevant tools that can be aligned with both traditional and constructive approaches to teaching history. While some materials, like textbooks, may traditionally provide foundational information, others, such as primary sources, simulations, and interactive multimedia, strongly promote constructive learning. The history teacher must create a balanced instructional approach that caters for both traditional and constructive learning styles.

Sylvanus also stated:

I think most instructional materials such as pictures, videos and audio, promote the narrative way of teaching history. I think videos on history are just someone narrating what he thought happened, and that person has sat down to compile them. But then, if you can get a footage of when

Nkrumah was declaring Ghana's independence, that one is more constructive because that is very original. The students will be able to analyse it and develop their opinions.

Ellis's view connotes that instructional materials in history can be used to unveil historical narratives before the teacher can subsequently bring up the interpretation through student engagement. For Ellis, narration is pivotal to teaching history with or without instructional materials. This may be because through narrations, teachers can generate foundational knowledge from the past. This was why Ellis succinctly averred: "To me, you can't take away narration from history, it is very important." Ellis's view further suggests that the availability of instructional materials does not solve all the instructional problems of the history teacher. Whether it is a discussion, narration, or any other inquiry activity, it depends on the history teacher's ability and implementation skills. Moreover, it was revealed that some of the instructional materials furnishes only the conceptual or foundational knowledge but the constructive aspect of historical instruction can be necessitated when the history teacher looks beyond the textbooks.

Sylvanus' view emphasises the relevance of using original primary sources. Primary sources enable history teachers to overcome the fabrications associated with second-hand narratives. For this participant, he feels secondary authors and illustrators create most audio and videos on historical events. Hence, they are biased narratives of various historians. Consequently, it will not be enough for history teachers to use audio and videos to teach history solely.

Conversely, the participant prioritises original historical footage as the most appropriate. This may mean that, for such instructional sources, students are left to watch and present their imaginations on what they see and hear. And that will be where students will apply reason or think thoroughly to create their

knowledge of the past. The finding agrees with the work of Yadav and Koehler (2007) that pre-service teachers select video cases consistent with their prior epistemological beliefs and their descriptions of what they find salient about cases. The findings further align with the work of Soleimani (2020), who revealed that English Language teachers possess learner-centred beliefs in teaching, hence they consider knowledge beyond textbooks and manuals. They emphasise interactive materials, primary sources, multiple documents, etc.

Revisiting the Conceptual Framework

The study's results were meaningful to the researcher's conceptual framework. From the results, it was first established that history teachers hold the epistemological belief that historical knowledge changes in light of new evidence, changing situations, and the dynamic nature of our society. They also hold the belief that historical knowledge is interpretational, a blend of tentative truths and opinions. In connection with the study's conceptual framework, these epistemological beliefs reflected that of constructivist teachers who similarly hold relativistic beliefs. Thus, teachers with relativistic beliefs endorse knowledge reconstruction, knowledge interpretation, and experienced and facilitative instruction. As illustrated in the framework, it can be established that, teachers' epistemological beliefs are in sync with the postulations of the constructivist history teachers.

Also, history teachers' choice of instructional strategies indicates that history teachers combine lectures, narrations, and constructive strategies for teaching. These suggest that history teachers' choice of instructional strategies is mediated between behaviourist teachers' and constructivist teachers' instructional assumptions. Additionally, history teachers' preferred assessment

strategies resonated with the constructivist teachers' assessment assumptions like assessing based on project-based tasks, debates, and primary source examination. Lastly, history teachers preferred instructional materials corroborated with the instructional materials constructivist teachers prefer.

Thus, videos, maps, pictures, and audio-visual materials.

Summary of Chapter Four

The chapter has established that history teachers believe in knowledge that is flexible, contextual, explained in light of present evidence and current situations and subject to personal opinions and interpretations. The chapter also shows that history teachers mostly emphasise instructional strategies including discussion, and presentations, and less emphasis is placed on lecture methods. Further, the chapter highlighted key assessment strategies such as oral questions, essays, debates, etc. Finally, the findings indicated that in light of history teachers' constructive beliefs, they employ instructional strategies that stimulate students' thinking, participation and analysis.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the summary of the research process, the key findings, the conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

Summary of the Research Process

The study aimed to investigate history teachers' epistemological beliefs and their perceived instructional practices in Senior High Schools within the Mfantseman Municipality. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What epistemological beliefs do Senior High School history teachers hold in the Mfantseman Municipality?
2. How do Senior High School history teachers' epistemological beliefs influence their perceived choice of instructional strategies within the Mfantseman Municipality?
3. How do Senior High School history teachers' epistemological beliefs inform their perceived classroom assessment strategies within the Mfantseman Municipality?
4. How do Senior High School history teachers' epistemological beliefs influence their perceived choice of instructional materials within the Mfantseman Municipality?

The researcher adopted the phenomenological research design using a qualitative approach to gather data. A census approach was used to include all seven history teachers in the Municipality as the population of the study. Data were collected through the use of a semi-structured interview guide, and face-to-face interviews were conducted. The validity and reliability of the instrument were ensured through consistent field engagement, member checks, and peer

debriefing. Finally, the data gathered through interviews were manually transcribed, organised into themes, analysed and interpreted.

Key Findings

The first research question sought to find out the epistemological beliefs that history teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality hold. Below are the findings.

1. First, it was revealed that history teachers hold the epistemological belief that historical knowledge changes in the light of new evidence, changing circumstances and the dynamic nature of society. Second, the history teachers believe in the blend of tentative truth and opinions obtained from sources such as written documents, primary, and secondary sources. Third, the history teachers believe that knowledge in history is interpretational and dependent on an individual's craftsmanship. Fourth, they believe historical knowledge can be reconstructed when the history teacher efficiently prepares before his lessons. Finally, history teachers believe in experiential and contextual knowledge of the past, which can be obtained by analysing facts from historical narratives.
2. The second research question also sought to find out how history teachers' epistemological beliefs influence their perceived choice of instructional strategies within the Mfantseman Municipality. The key findings were: The history teachers believe in encouraging their students to read and discuss different materials, watch videos, and visit historical sites to augment the knowledge acquired in class. Also, it has been established that history teachers guide students to offer their

interpretations about the past, analyse them and present their perspectives. Lastly, they believe in using strategies such as presentations, group discussions, debates, problem-based strategies and analytic discussions. Notwithstanding these findings, it was revealed that factors such as time, overcrowded syllabus, the absence of teacher motivation, and financial constraints compel history teachers to sometimes lay emphasis on lectures and narrations when teaching.

3. The third research question sought to explore how senior high school history teachers' beliefs about the nature of knowledge translate into how they perceptibly assess their students after classroom instruction. The key findings were: It was first established that history teachers adopt assessment strategies such as oral tests, debatable tasks, presentations, problem-based questions, analysis and critical thinking assessment tasks. They used these assessment strategies to train the minds of their students to demonstrate a deep understanding of historical knowledge. Also, history teachers use essay questions and fill-ins to monitor students' writing and spelling abilities. Further, it was revealed that they align their questions with their lesson objectives, consider class size and students' levels before choosing their assessment strategies. Furthermore, they use debates to assess students' understanding of historical happenings they watch. However, history teachers prefer oral tests to obtain instant student feedback while multiple-choice questions were preferred to assess foundational historical knowledge. Moreover, they preferred project questions to enhance students' exploratory and analytical skills as well as creativity. Finally, while they select these

assessment techniques, they are aware of limiting factors such as students' enrolment and the overcrowded nature of the history syllabus.

4. The last research question sought to find out how the epistemological beliefs perceptibly manifest in history teachers' decisions on instructional material they use in teaching. Consequently, it was first established that history teachers prefer instructional materials such as videos, maps, pictures, audio-visual materials, and audio. It was also found that history teachers consider curriculum and classroom-related factors before they select their instructional materials. These factors include students' cultural and religious backgrounds, instructional techniques, nature of historical topics, students' abilities, and classroom environment.

Conclusions

From the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. History teachers in the Mfantisman Municipality's epistemological beliefs were more nuanced or advanced. Thus, history teachers possess relativistic and multiplistic beliefs about historical knowledge, espoused in the progressive or unidimensional model. Also, it can be concluded that history teachers' epistemological beliefs transcend the threshold of knowledge being fixed, produced by an omniscient authority, stable, and inherent. These imply that history teachers will engage students in instruction and challenge students' reasoning abilities in the classroom. It will also make history students, personal investigators of historical knowledge and challenge textbook information with new evidence. Finally, history teachers' epistemological beliefs will help reform

students' conceptions of history as being the repetition and narration of the past.

2. Teachers' epistemological beliefs are reflected in their perceived choice of instructional strategies. This is because teachers perceived instructional strategies that were transactional and engaging. Also, they perceive instructional preferences that promote collaboration, investigation, and exploratory teaching and learning, where students are recognised as the centre of instruction. The instructional choices obtained from the findings will promote interactive history instruction and engage students' experiences, and opinions.
3. Teachers' epistemological beliefs reflected in their perceived choice of assessment strategies. It can be concluded that history teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality choose a combination of fact-based and activity-based assessment strategies. History teachers' assessment strategies could compel students to reason, analyse and investigate knowledge of the past. Also, due to participants' belief in constructive knowledge, their assessment strategies could pave the way for students to lead investigations and problem-solving activities. It can also be concluded that history teachers' assessment strategies could equip students with analysis, thinking, writing and communication skills.
4. Teachers' epistemological beliefs implicitly informed the perceived instructional materials they select. Their concern for factors such as the level of students, and lesson objectives, only give the impression of how they align their instructional materials with their instructional strategies to achieve an all-engaging and purposeful instruction. Finally, it can be

concluded that history teachers' choice of instructional materials could make students creative in deducing historical knowledge from what they experience, watch and listen to.

Recommendations

Based on the findings outlined, the following recommendations are made for policy and practice.

1. History educators and planners of the history curriculum should prioritise the epistemological dimensions of historical inquiry. This can be ensured by developing classroom pedagogies that touch on teachers' reflections on the nature and source of historical knowledge. This will expose history teachers to the diverse dimensions of historical knowledge. History teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality should continue emphasising knowledge that can be ascertained and taught beyond textbook knowledge. History teachers must arm themselves with research, explore, and sift evidence from distinct sources apart from their curriculum materials. This would be the means through which the teaching of flexible and constructive knowledge can be ensured. They should also recognise students' perspectives in building historical knowledge so that students will have eyes for knowledge deduced from perspectives, and opinions.
2. History teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality should be innovative in selecting instructional strategies as new situations inform history teaching. They can be innovative when they research new ways of teaching history, diversifying their instructional approaches and creating synergy among different instructional strategies to teach history.

Professional seminars or in-service training on creative pedagogies revolving around history teachers' epistemological reasonings in classroom instructions can be organised. This will enable history teachers not to remain handicapped by prevailing factors that restrict their instructional preferences.

3. To ensure instructional practices that promote students' involvement in history lessons, curriculum designers should emphasise assessment strategies that align with Senior High School History teachers' beliefs about the nature and source of historical knowledge in the Mfantseman Municipality. Effective supervision must ensure history teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality implement assessment techniques that promote thinking, analysis, investigation and problem-solving activities since they perceive constructive assessment strategies.
 4. There should be professional development opportunities for Senior High School history teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality to keep refining their beliefs about knowledge in history, and explore diverse perspectives on historical knowledge. Through professional development, history teachers would be capable of integrating instructional materials that promote the teaching and learning of history.
- Lastly, since history teachers' epistemic beliefs are geared towards teaching practical historical knowledge, it will be expedient that the Ghana Education Service consider providing well stocked history resource centres in schools where History teachers and learners are accessible to, so that they can verify and cross-check information.

Areas for Further Research

The following areas were suggested for further research.

1. Firstly, the researcher restricted himself to the frameworks of William Perry and Marlene Schommer. Other Epistemological frameworks such as Baxter Magolda's Epistemological Reflection Framework, King and Kitchener's framework among others, are available that future researchers can use as their analytic basis to investigate teachers' epistemological beliefs.
2. Also, a mixed-method approach can be used to similarly investigate teachers' epistemological beliefs. Epistemological constructs such as the Epistemological Beliefs Questionnaire, and Epistemological Beliefs Inventory, can be adapted by future researchers to investigate epistemological issues in teaching history.
3. Future researchers can extend the study to incorporate teachers in the Central Region so that further insights will be ascertained on teachers' epistemological beliefs in the context of their instructional practices.
4. Finally, the variable epistemological beliefs can be used to investigate other instructional practices of history teachers such as their lesson planning, resource usage, and integration of technology.

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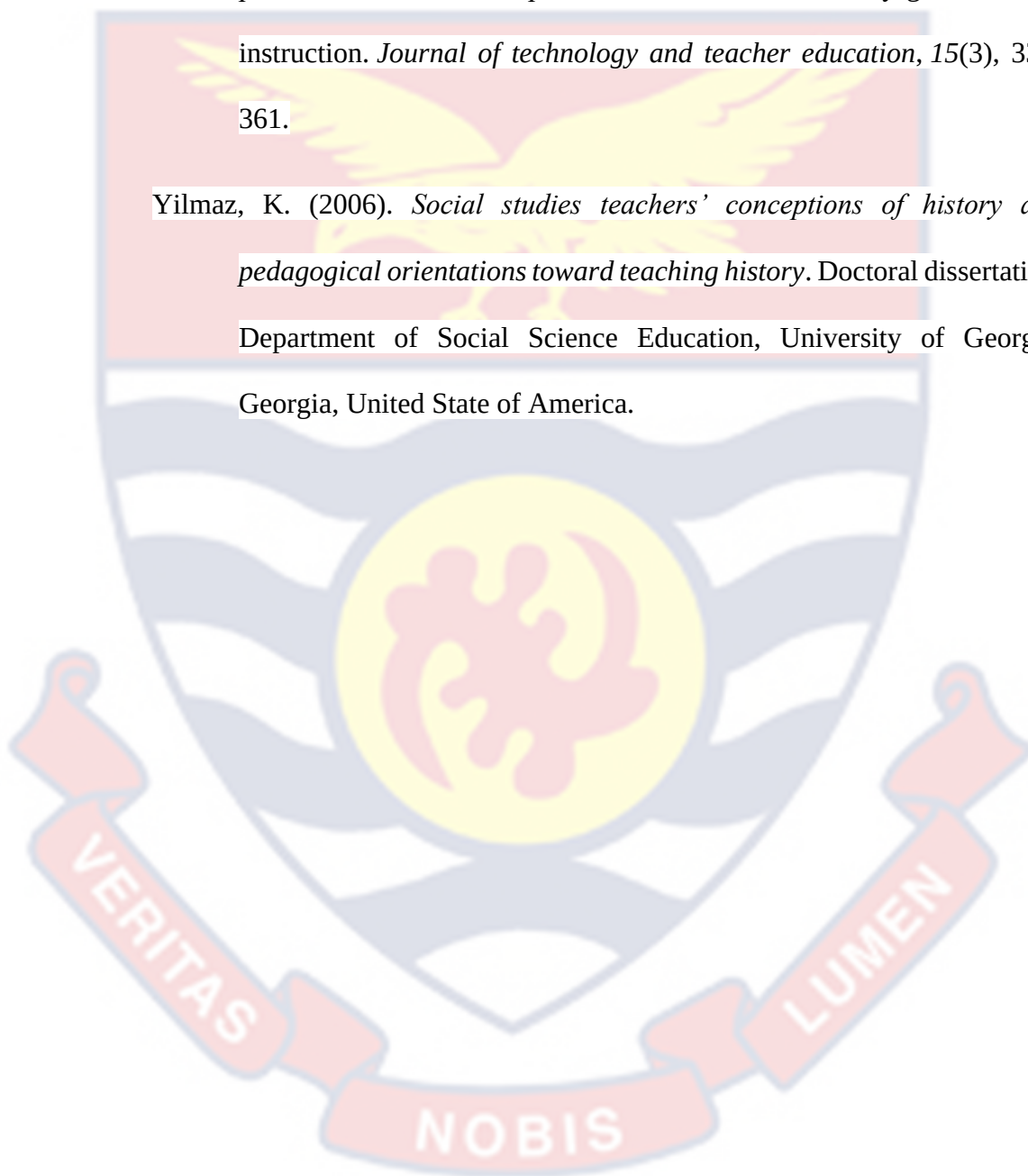
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ARTS EDUCATION

**CONSENT FOR HISTORY TEACHERS' PARTICIPATION IN
INTERVIEW FOR RESEARCH**

**Title: Senior High School History Teachers' Epistemological Beliefs and
Their Instructional Practices in the Mfantseman Municipality**

Principal Investigator: Gabriel Donkoh

Address: University of Cape Coast

General Information about Research

I am Gabriel Donkoh, a Master's candidate at the University of Cape Coast. I am undertaking a study that seeks to explore history teachers' epistemological beliefs and how they reflect in their instructional practices. I humbly seek your consent to engage you in a 40-50 minutes interview with me.

Procedures

To find answers to the questions in the semi-structured interview guide, we invite you to take part in this research project. If you accept, you will be required to:

- participate in an interview with myself.

You are being invited to take part in this interview discourse because I feel that your experience as a social worker can contribute much to these interactions.

During this interview engagement, however, I do not wish you to tell me your personal experiences but give me your opinion on the questions that I will pose to you based on your personal experiences and your experience within your community. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions, you may say so and keep quiet. The interview will take place in a confined place like the classroom or a quiet office, and no one else but you, the participant, and myself will be present during the interaction. The entire discourse will be tape-recorded, but no one will be identified by name on the tape. Additionally, the tape will be kept on google drive. The information recorded is considered confidential, and no one else except myself and my supervisors (Prof. Charles Kwaku Adabo Oppong and Dr. Isaac Atta Kwenin) will have access to the information documented during your interview.

The expected duration of the interview is about 40-50 minutes.

Possible Risks and Discomforts

This research can affect you in the following ways:

- i. You may have to sacrifice part of your class hours for the engagement.
- ii. There is also a possibility that you may get tired in the engagement process.

Possible Benefits

This study will alert or inform history teachers on how their beliefs about knowledge in history go a long way to inform their instructional practices.

Moreover, the findings of the study may provide evidence to any potential challenges inhibiting history teachers from teaching history to reflect their epistemological beliefs.

Confidentiality

You are assured that the information you provide will be confidential and will be used solely for academic purposes. We will protect information about you to the best of our ability. You will not be named in any reports. Some staff of Ministry of education, Ghana Education Service, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, students, and teachers may access the research.

Voluntary Participation and Right to Leave the Research

You are assured that participation in this study is voluntary. You, therefore, have the liberty to opt-out at any point in the data collection process

Contacts for Additional Information

Any information regarding the research can be channelled through the following persons:

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[isaac.kwenin @ucc.edu.gh](mailto:isaac.kwenin@ucc.edu.gh)

Contact of Ethical Review Board

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Cape Coast (UCCIRB). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant you can contact the Administrator at the IRB Office between the hours of 8:00 am and 4:30 p.m. through the phone lines 0558093143/0508878309 or email address: irb@ucc.edu.gh.



APPENDIX B**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST****COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES****FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION****DEPARTMENT OF ARTS EDUCATION****INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR HISTORY TEACHERS**

You have been selected to participate in this study to provide information on the epistemological beliefs of senior high school history teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality. Please answer the questions candidly. Whatever you say will be treated as confidential. Your name will not be associated with the responses you will offer. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Section A**Epistemological Beliefs of History Teachers**

1. How do you perceive knowledge in history or historical knowledge?
2. What do you think is the best way of getting evidence from this truth or sources that we have in history?
3. In your view too, what does interpretation in history represent?
4. What is your belief about history teaching being considered an inherent activity not requiring any formal preparation or an effort-driven endeavour or activity?
5. In terms of the teaching of knowledge in history or the delivery of knowledge in history, what do you believe is the appropriate way of

incorporating daily experiences in explaining some of the concept and ideas.

6. So, in your perspective or in your view, how will you prefer history students to acquire or obtain knowledge in history?
7. Do you believe that your belief about how the subject should be taught, with time, do you believe it can undergo some changes? How?

Section B

History Teachers' Selection of Instructional Strategies based on Epistemological Beliefs

1. What are your personal beliefs about history as a subject and how do you perceive the role of a history teacher in shaping the understanding of your students about the past?
2. Generally, describe the types of instructional strategies you use in teaching history and why you make use of those strategies?
3. How do these instructional strategies align with the best way history educators are saying you should handle the subject or you believe, in as much as you have highlighted these ones, there is the need for other strategies to be recommended?
4. What do you believe are the essential goals and objectives of teaching history at the senior high school level?
5. How does your choice of instructional strategies, as a history teacher, inform your lesson planning and classroom activities?

6. What are your beliefs about the place of research, as a history teacher, what are your beliefs about research in going about your instructional strategies?
7. What specific challenges or opportunities could affect the history teachers' approach to teaching history?
8. What are your beliefs about the benefits and probably the potential drawbacks of adopting different instructional strategies in teaching the subject?

Section C

History Teachers' Assessment Strategies based on Epistemological Beliefs

1. Generally, what are your personal beliefs about assessing the knowledge and skills in history teaching?
2. What are the types of assessment methods that can be commonly used in history classes?
3. What makes an assessment strategy effective in evaluating students' grasp or assimilation of historical knowledge?
4. How do you decide on the specific assessment strategy to use and do you think that your beliefs about knowledge in history play critical role in taking decisions on assessment strategies you would want to use as a history teacher? How do you decide that?
5. What are your beliefs about essay questions, multiple choice tests, project-based assessments, these things, what are your beliefs about them in terms of history teaching?
6. How do you cater for the different learning styles of your students in history teaching? How do you cater for that, in terms of assessment?

7. Have you encountered any challenge or what are the opportunities available to you in implementing your assessment strategies in teaching history?
8. In your view, do you think that the way history students are being assessed really align with the constructive way of learning history or they align with the rote-memorisation way of learning history? Explain.

Section D

History Teachers' choice of Instructional Materials based on Epistemological Beliefs

1. How do you perceive the place of instructional materials in teaching history?
2. What do you believe are the important components of instructional materials in history? What are the aspects of instructional materials in history?
3. How do you decide on your choice of these ones you have mentioned? How do you take decision on that?
4. What instructional materials promote constructive way of teaching history? How do you ensure that?
5. What are your beliefs about the selection of textbooks, calling in resource persons, selecting primary sources and the multimedia, as materials for teaching history? What are your beliefs about them?
6. what are your beliefs about considering the distinct learning abilities of the students?

7. How do students' background and even where you are teaching as a history teacher/ that setting, the terrain, how do you consider these conditions in choosing your instructional material to teach history?
8. As a history teacher, linking or connecting your beliefs about knowledge in history in selecting instructional materials, have you encounter any challenge? What are those challenges?



APPENDIX C

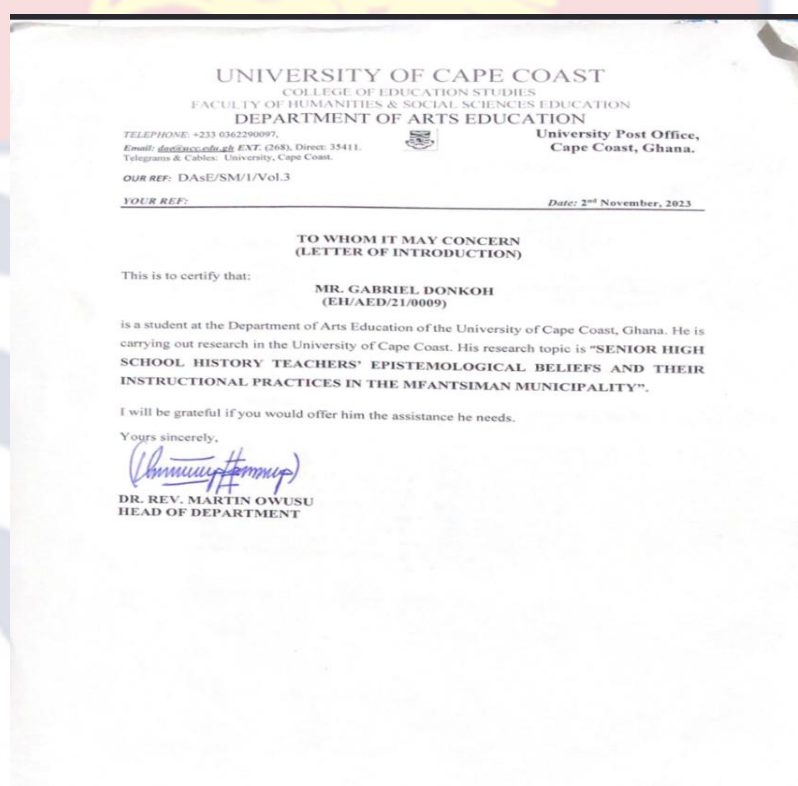
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ARTS EDUCATION

INTRODUCTORY LETTER



APPENDIX D

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ARTS EDUCATION

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF ARTS EDUCATION

TELEPHONE: +233 (0)321 354111 - +233 (0)321 324805
Email: dean@ucc.edu.gh EXT. (248), (249), (25411)
Telegrams & Cable: University-Cape Coast.

University Post Office,
Cape Coast, Ghana.

OUR REF: DA/ESM/1/V/3

YOUR REF: _____ Date: 21st August, 2023

The Chairman
Institutional Review Board
University of Cape Coast
Cape Coast

Dear Sir,

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE

The bearer of this letter Mr. Gabriel Dankoh is an Mphil student in the above-mentioned Department. He is conducting research on the topic "EPISTEMOLOGICAL BELIEFS OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL HISTORY TEACHERS AND THEIR INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES" as part of the requirement for obtaining a Master of Philosophy Degree in Arts Education at the University of Cape Coast.

I am the principal supervisor and he has satisfied the conditions for data collection. I support his application for ethical clearance and would be grateful if he is given the necessary assistance to enable him to commence the data collection.

Counting on your maximum cooperation.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

PROF. CHARLES ADABO OPPONG
PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR

APPENDIX E

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ARTS EDUCATION

REQUEST FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF ARTS EDUCATION

TELEPHONE: +233 03321 35411; +233 03321 35885,
Email: donko@ucc.edu.gh EXT. (284), (285), (281),
Telegrams & Cable: University, Cape Coast.

University Post Office,
Cape Coast, Ghana.

OUR REF: DAS/SM/IV.3

YOUR REF: _____ Date: 21st August, 2013

The Chairman
Institutional Review Board
University of Cape Coast
Cape Coast

Dear Sir,

REQUEST FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE – GABRIEL DONKOH

We forward herewith an application for ethical clearance from Mr. Gabriel Donkoh an MPhil student at the Department of Arts Education who is conducting research on the topic "EPISTEMOLOGICAL BELIEFS OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL HISTORY TEACHERS AND THEIR INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES".

He will therefore need ethical clearance to enable him carry out the research successfully.

Counting on your maximum co-operation.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,


PROF. CHARLES ADABO OPPONG
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX F

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ARTS EDUCATION

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD SECRETARIAT

TEL: 0302001143 / 0302001144
E-MAIL: irb@ucc.edu.gh
OUR REF: IRB/C3/ValD0614
YOUR REF:
OMB NO: 0990-0279
IORG #: IORG0011497

14TH FEBRUARY 2024

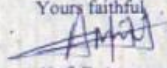
Mr Gabriel Donkoh
Department of Arts Education
University of Cape Coast

Mr Donkoh
ETHICAL CLEARANCE – ID (UCCIRB/CES/2023/174)
The University of Cape Coast Institutional Review Board (UCCIRB) has granted Provisional Approval for the implementation of your research **Senior High School History Teachers' Epistemological Beliefs and their Instructional Practices in the Mfantseman Municipality**. This approval is valid from 14th February 2024 to 13th February 2025. You may apply for an extension of ethical approval if the study lasts for more than 12 months.

Please note that any modification to the project must first receive renewal clearance from the UCCIRB before its implementation. You are required to submit a periodic review of the protocol to the Board and a final full review to the UCCIRB on completion of the research. The UCCIRB may observe or cause to be observed procedures and records of the research during and after implementation.

You are also required to report all serious adverse events related to this study to the UCCIRB within seven days verbally and fourteen days in writing.

Always quote the protocol identification number in all future correspondence with us about this protocol.

Yours faithful

Kofi F. Arnuquandoh
Ag. Administrator