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### Research Article

## 21st Century Teachers and Pupils' Perception on the Use of Tests as a Form of Assessment in Senior High Schools in Ghana

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### About Article

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores the perceptions of 21st-century teachers and pupils on the use of tests as a form of assessment in senior high schools in Ghana. Grounded in the Constructivist Learning Theory, which emphasizes active knowledge construction and diverse assessment methods, the study examines whether tests adequately capture critical 21st-century skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity. The research objectives focus on evaluating differences in perceptions regarding the effectiveness, fairness, and relevance of tests. Employing a descriptive survey design with a quantitative approach, the study sampled 300 respondents, including 100 teachers and 200 pupils, across five senior high schools in Ghana's Northern Region. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data, which was analyzed using descriptive statistics, and independent samples t-tests, in SPSS. The study assessed three hypotheses, testing for significant differences between teachers' and pupils' perceptions of tests in assessing student learning. The findings indicate no statistically significant differences in perceptions between teachers and pupils regarding the effectiveness ( $t = -0.771$ ,  $p = 0.441$ ), fairness ( $t = -1.076$ ,  $p = 0.283$ ), and relevance ( $t = -1.057$ ,  $p = 0.291$ ) of tests. This suggests that both groups share similar views on traditional assessments, recognizing their utility while acknowledging potential limitations. These results underscore the need for a balanced approach to assessment, integrating alternative methods such as projects and performance-based tasks alongside traditional testing. The study highlights the importance of re-evaluating assessment strategies in senior high schools to align with modern educational goals. It recommends greater stakeholder engagement in assessment policy formulation and the incorporation of diverse assessment methods to enhance student learning outcomes. Future research should explore contextual factors influencing assessment perceptions and investigate the impact of alternative assessment techniques on academic performance.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Technological developments, changes in pedagogical strategies, and changing expectations for pupils and teachers are driving fast changes in education in the 21st century. Still, in the language of education, assessment is a fundamental part of education and a means of gauging pupil progress, the success of instructional strategies, and the general calibre of education (Asare, 2020). In senior high schools, exams have always been the more often utilized kind of evaluation (Asare, 2020). Pupils' cognitive skills, knowledge of the subject matter, and preparation for prospective academic or professional endeavours are evaluated via tests ranging from quizzes to examinations to standardized assessments. Often justified through its dependability and ability to standardise assessments across different learning settings is testing as an element of assessment (Arhin, 2015). Traditionally, tests are seen as objective assessments with a methodical approach to gauge pupils' knowledge and memory of the subject matter (Songnalle, 2019). But with the fast changes in education throughout the world including the increasing focus on critical thinking, teamwork, and problem-solving questions about the suitability and efficacy of exams as the main instrument for evaluating these sophisticated abilities have surfaced.

Senior high school education is essential in Ghana in terms of getting pupils ready for the job and higher education. Therefore, the assessment tactics used in this phase have broad consequences for the future possibilities of the pupils. As pointed out by Alimatu *et al.* (2021), standardized examinations are sometimes used to evaluate pupils' preparedness for improvement and ascertain their suitability for further education, therefore serving both as an instrument of assessment and an instrument of academic progression in the Ghanaian schooling scene. Still up for contention, though, is whether conventional testing approaches fairly gauge the skills needed for success in the twenty-first century. Directly affected by these tests, teachers and pupils have an important understanding of their usefulness, fairness, and effectiveness in equipping pupils for contemporary issues.

This study seeks to find out the perception of 21st century teachers and pupils on the use of tests as a form of assessment in senior high schools in Ghana. This study is to give insights that can direct legislative bodies and teachers in reevaluating assessment processes to guarantee they match the present educational demands by looking at their opinions on the efficacy, equity, and value of examinations.

### 1.1. Objectives of the study

The main objectives of the study are to;

- i. evaluate whether there is a significant difference between teachers' and pupils' perceptions of the effectiveness of tests as a form of assessment in senior high schools.
- ii. examine whether there is a significant difference between teachers' and pupils' perceptions concerning the fairness of tests as a method of evaluating student performance.
- iii. discover whether there is a significant difference between teachers' and pupils' views on the relevance of tests in preparing pupils for future academic and professional challenges.

## 1.2. Hypotheses

**H1:** There is no significant difference between teachers' and pupils' perceptions of the effectiveness of tests in assessing student learning.

**H2:** There is no significant difference between teachers' and pupils' perceptions of the fairness of tests.

**H3:** There is no significant difference between teachers' and pupils' perceptions of the relevance of tests in assessing student learning.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review and theoretical framework underscore the need for a balanced approach to assessment that aligns with 21st-century educational goals. This study builds on existing literature by specifically exploring the perceptions of teachers and pupils in senior high schools in Ghana, focusing on their views on the effectiveness, fairness, and relevance of tests as a form of assessment.

### 2.1. The role of assessment in education

Songnalle (2019) underlined that by offering a methodical strategy to measure student learning, assessment is very important in determining the results of education. The study underlined that because of their dependability, impartiality, and simplicity of comparison across various student groups, conventional examinations especially standardized ones are extensively employed. Songnalle (2019) also noted, however, that these tests restrict their ability to promote critical thinking and creativity as they sometimes stress rote memorisation instead of deeper learning. This study is especially pertinent in Ghana, where the evaluation system is dominated by standardized tests, therefore impacting curricular priorities and instructional approaches.

Bariham (2022) further criticised the conventional testing system, contending that a one-size-fits-all approach to evaluation cannot meet the many types of learning and demands of pupils. His research looked at formative assessment techniques that include project-based assessments, peer reviews, and self-assessment tools. By means of constant feedback, Bariham (2022) discovered that these strategies improve student participation and deeper learning. Although exams are crucial for gauging academic performance, the study shows that a mixed strategy including formative assessments is more helpful in preparing children for skills of the twenty-first century.

Amoako (2019), investigated in the Ghanaian educational scene the effects of high-stakes tests on instruction and learning. According to his research, teachers frequently sacrifice whole learning opportunities in order to match national exam criteria. According to the study, this "teaching to the test" phenomena limits the curriculum and hinders originality in both instruction and learning. To guarantee a more complete assessment of student skills, Nyaaba and Zhai (2023), advised a move towards varied assessment models that combine ongoing evaluation with standardized testing.

### 2.2. 21st century skills and assessment

In the 21st century, the educational discourse has shifted



towards fostering skills that prepare pupils for a rapidly evolving, technology-driven world. Essential talents for modern pupils, according to the 2015 Partnership for 21st Century Learning, are critical thinking, communication, teamwork, and creativity. Designed to measure information retention, traditional examinations are progressively considered as unable to evaluate these sophisticated abilities. Rather, more all-encompassing ways to measure pupils' competency have become popular include project-based learning, portfolios, and peer assessments (Bernhardt, 2015).

Trilling and Fadel (2009) underlined the need of contemporary evaluation methods matching the needs of the twenty-first century, in which digital literacy, critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork are indispensable. According to their research, as they mostly concentrate on subject knowledge rather than application, conventional examinations in particular may fail to reflect these sophisticated abilities. To more effectively evaluate pupils' preparedness for upcoming professional and academic problems, the study recommended including performance-based evaluations, such as project-oriented instruction and contemporary problem-solving exercises.

Chehayl (2010) carried out a thorough analysis of how different educational systems evaluate 21st-century abilities. According to their results, many nations fail to create suitable evaluation frameworks while acknowledging the value of abilities like creativity, communication, and technical literacy. According to the report, standardized testing is still the most common approach, frequently ignoring the development of more comprehensive skills, even if formal assessments and reflective tools might capture these competences. To provide a more complete picture of pupils' learning, the authors suggested a hybrid assessment strategy that blends conventional exams with cutting-edge evaluation techniques.

Oduro (2003), investigated how Ghana's educational system satisfies the requirements of 21st-century learning in the African environment, as did Massey (2023). According to their research, despite efforts to integrate problem-solving and critical thinking into the curriculum, evaluation procedures are still primarily focused on exams. Teachers said that a lack of standardized instruments and training made it difficult to evaluate soft skills. To guarantee that pupils have the skills required for the modern workforce, the study suggested a gradual transition towards competency-based assessments with a stronger focus on in a classroom assessments, digital assessments, and group projects.

### 2.3. Teachers perspectives on testing

Teachers play a vital role in designing and administering assessments. Studies show that exams' practicality and capacity to produce quantifiable results appeal to educators most of the time (Akyina & Oduro-Okyireh, 2019).

Arrasyid (2021) explored teachers' opinions on the adoption of tests as a form of assessments and noticed that although many of them acknowledge the use of standardized tests in evaluating how pupils learn, they also show worries about its limits. According to their research, high-stakes testing frequently makes teachers feel limited and drives them to subject pupils to the exam instead of promoting a better knowledge. Although

some teachers believe that standardized examinations are a fair and objective means of evaluating student achievement, the study also revealed that they neglect to measure problem-solving and critical-thinking skills.

Not so long, Acar-Erdol and Yildizli (2018) investigated teachers' attitudes toward assessment practices in secondary schools and found that while teachers generally support the use of tests, their perspectives vary based on experience and subject area. The study revealed that mathematics and science teachers tend to favor standardized assessments due to their structured nature, whereas humanities teachers prefer alternative assessments such as essays and portfolios. McMillan also found that teachers who had undergone professional development in assessment literacy were more likely to integrate a mix of formative and summative assessments, balancing traditional testing with more student-centered evaluation methods.

Amoako (2019), looked into teachers' opinions on the testing culture in Ghanaian senior high schools and discovered that many of them felt under pressure from the focus on standardized tests. Their studies revealed that classroom education is much influenced by national tests, which can cause an emphasis on memorising instead of analytical ability. The study also showed that although educators recognise the need of tests in guaranteeing responsibility and preserving academic standards, they feel that an even more varied assessment strategy including ongoing assessment and project-based assessment would offer a more whole picture of student learning. Osei-Owusu (2022) also discovered that many educators feel annoyed with the narrow range of conventional assessments, which often do not match their larger educational objectives. Some teachers so support including alternate assessment strategies that reflect a greater spectrum of student competency.

### 2.4. Pupils' perspectives on testing

Pupils' experiences, academic success, and the cultural setting in which tests take place all help to define how they see testing. Paris (2000) discovered that the severe consequences of examinations cause great tension and anxiety even if some pupils view them as a reasonable gauge of their academic performance. According to their research, pupils who perform very well on tests typically see them favourably; those who struggle generally believe that examinations unjustly evaluate their knowledge and ability. Moreover, the survey underlined that pupils would rather show their knowledge in several ways such as projects and presentations than be judged just based on written tests.

The impact of testing anxiety on pupils performance has been widely studied. Stowell and Baumert, (2009) discovered that high-stakes assessments provide a tense learning environment that can compromise pupils' capacity for focus and performance to their maximum capabilities. According to their studies, children prefer formative assessments such as tests and ongoing assessments because they give chances for development free from the extreme pressure connected with the last tests. They thus advised teachers to use a range of evaluation techniques in order to reduce student anxiety while also preserving academic integrity. These results complement more general debates on how evaluation methods can encourage learning instead of



acting as a cause of great anxiety (Darling-Hammond, 1991). A distinct viewpoint on pupils' attitudes towards testing is provided by the Ghanaian educational environment. Titty (2015), explored the opinions of Ghanaian senior high school pupils and discovered that although they accept the need of exams for both academic advancement and university entrance, they frequently complain about the system for being unduly test-driven. According to their research, a lot of pupils believe that standardized assessments promote rote memorisation over in-depth learning. Pupils also voiced worries about the anxiety of high-stakes exams, which frequently leads to a limited concentration on test-taking techniques rather than conceptual knowledge. To offer a more impartial means of evaluating pupils, the authors suggested using other forms of assessment, such as coursework, group projects, and seminars. Studies conducted worldwide have revealed issues with exam fairness and relevancy outside of Ghana. Boadu (2016) observed that children who perform well in practical or non-traditional activities are disadvantaged by standard assessments' frequent inability to account for different learning styles. Similarly, study by Nandzo (2021) raised issues with test question clarity and the possibility that socioeconomic and cultural biases might affect exam results in Ghana. In a culture where social mobility and intellectual achievement are strongly correlated (Oppong, 2009), Test-driven learning strategies may make pupils feel pressured to follow them even if they don't fit with their chosen learning preferences. The results of this study reveal that an increased inclusive and student-centered strategy for assessment may improve learning in general and lessen test-taking anxiety.

## 2.5. Balancing traditional and alternative assessments

One of the main topics of discussion in educational research has been how to balance traditional and alternative assessments. Nasab (2015), underlined the need of applying formative assessment techniques in addition to conventional summative assessments to raise the performance of student learning. Their studies show that while standardized tests and assessments provide reliable measures of pupils' ability, they often fail to spot more advanced understanding and critical thinking skills. The writers contended that including different kinds of tests such as portfolios, peer reviews, and self-evaluations will result in more complete assessments of pupils' competency. Furthermore, they said that by letting pupils show their knowledge in several ways, a balanced approach can help to increase student involvement and motivation. Shrestha and Roffey (2018), conducted more recent studies comparing the efficacy of authentic assessment techniques to traditional testing. According to their research, alternative tests including real-world problem-solving assignments and project-based learning enable pupils acquire transferable abilities required for the workforce of the twenty-first century. They also recognised, nevertheless, that standardising evaluation procedures, guaranteeing fairness, and preserving academic responsibility depend critically on conventional evaluations. The study came to the conclusion that although addressing issues with validity and dependability, a hybrid strategy

combining conventional examinations with different kinds of tests might offer a more complete measure of student learning. Examining the use of substitute assessments in secondary school and their effects on student performance, Hargreaves *et al.* (2002) studied Ghanaian settings. Although teachers understand the advantages of including coursework, lectures, and group projects, structural issues including big class numbers, restricted funds, and teacher workload prevent the broad acceptance of these approaches according to their study. The study also showed that since alternative tests include chances for innovation and practical application of information, pupils usually prefer them. Some instructors, meanwhile, voiced worries about the subjectivity of grades and the more time needed for assessment design and review. The writers advised Ghanaian legislators to create policies combining both assessment strategies so that pupils get a fair, thorough, and skills-based measurement.

## 2.6. Theoretical framework

Constructivist Learning Theory is the foundation of this study as it holds that pupils actively create knowledge by means of experiences rather than merely absorbable knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). While effective for gauging information recall and standardized performance, traditional examinations typically fall short in capturing more fundamental cognitive processes including problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity skills needed in the twenty-first century (Trotman, 2016). From a constructivist standpoint, evaluation should incorporate other forms such as projects, portfolios, and performance-based assignments that let pupils apply knowledge in practical settings rather than depending just on examinations.

Moreover, constructivist thinkers contend that learning is a social process whereby pupils gain from group projects and communication (Vygotsky, 1978). Examining instructors' and pupils' impressions of examinations in Ghanaian senior high schools calls especially for this viewpoint. Assessment procedures are greatly shaped by teachers, so their eagerness to include several evaluation techniques might affect the interaction of pupils with their education. Research findings indicate that pupils are more likely to be motivated and take responsibility for their learning when they believe tests to be fair and reliable (Wright, 2015). The present research adds to the continuing conversation on striking a balance between conventional and alternative assessments to produce more student-centered and relevant learning opportunities by looking at how instructors and pupils view test use.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This section delineates the research design, demographics, sample strategy, tools, and data collection techniques, along with data analysis methods utilized in the study regarding the perceptions of tests as an assessment form among 21st-century teachers and pupils in Ghanaian senior high schools.

### 3.1. Research design

The research study probes teachers' and pupils' opinions about





testing as an evaluation tool using a descriptive survey format with a quantitative methodology. In educational research, the descriptive survey approach is generally acknowledged for effectively collecting the opinions, ideas, and behaviours of the participants (Creswell, 2012; Treagust & Won, 2023). This method offers a methodical strategy to gather and examine opinions from a big sample, therefore fitting for examining patterns and themes without intervening with many factors (Cresswell, 2013).

### 3.2. Population

The population for this research comprises teachers and pupils from government senior high schools in the northern region of Ghana. This covers pupils from several grades who have undergone various kinds of testing as well as teachers who grade tests. By concentrating on this group, the research tackles viewpoints from both sides of the procedure of assessment, therefore offering a whole picture that increases the usefulness of the study (Carracedo *et al.*, 2010).

### 3.3. Sample and sampling procedure

This study drew a sample of 300 responders, including 100 teachers and 200 pupils from five Northern Region senior high schools. The process of sampling involved the following steps:

i. *School Selection:* Five senior high schools were purposefully selected to ensure representation of both urban and rural settings. The Northern Region of Ghana is characterized by a mix of urbanized centers and rural communities with distinct educational challenges and opportunities. Including schools from both contexts was critical to capture diverse perspectives on testing as an assessment method. Urban schools were selected to reflect the experiences of pupils and teachers in resource-rich environments, while rural schools provided insights into assessment practices in areas with limited resources. This balanced approach ensures that the findings are applicable across different educational settings.

ii. *Teacher and Student Selection:* From each selected school, 20 teachers were randomly chosen, totaling 100 teachers, and 40 pupils were selected, resulting in a total of 200 pupils. This stratified sampling technique ensured adequate representation of key subgroups within the population, allowing for comparisons across demographic factors such as gender, teaching experience, and academic level. Stratified sampling also minimized selection bias and enhanced the reliability of the study findings. Stratified sampling also minimized selection bias and enhanced the reliability of the study findings (Minakuchi *et al.*, 2018).

iii. This sampling technique's justification is its capacity to ensure the sample size is reasonable for data collection and analysis while nevertheless capturing the variation of the research population.

### 3.4. Instrumentation

A structured questionnaire created depending on the goals of the research and literature review was the main tool utilised for data collection. Because they guarantee consistency in

replies by gathering data on views in a standardized manner, structured questionnaires are extensively used in academic studies (Collins, 2017).

The questionnaire was split into two sections:

**Section A:** This part gathered demographic data like gender, age, academic level (for pupils), and teaching experience (for teachers), therefore influencing opinions of evaluation (Ngulube, 2022).

**Section B:** 20 Likert-scale questions covering topics including efficacy, fairness, and relevance of examinations in an educational setting aimed at capturing opinions. Commonly employed in perception studies for its capacity to quantify degrees of agreement across many items, the Likert scale has responses ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" (Anyan, 2018).

### 3.5. Questionnaire validation and development

The questionnaire items were reviewed by experts in educational assessment for content and face validity. They provided feedback on the clarity, appropriateness, and relevance of the items to the study objectives (Tsegaye, 2013). Based on their recommendations, necessary adjustments were made to enhance the instrument's alignment with the research goals. Expert review is an essential step in instrument validation, ensuring alignment with study objectives and improving comprehensibility (Collins, 2017).

Additionally, the instrument was piloted with 30 participants from a school not included in the main sample to assess reliability. Reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85, indicating high internal consistency, which is considered reliable for educational research (Scott, 2019).

### 3.6. Data analysis

Using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), a program applied in educational research for handling and evaluating quantitative data, the gathered data were coded and examined. The data was compiled using descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages, therefore providing a general picture of the demographic traits of the participants and their perception of testing as an evaluation tool (Arshad, 2021).

Inferential statistical techniques were applied to handle the test hypotheses and objectives of the study

*Independent sample T-test sample:* This test was conducted to determine any significant differences between teachers' and pupils' perceptions, which is common in comparative studies of attitudes (Arshad, 2021).

### 3.8. Ethical consideration

In keeping with research ethics standards, this research followed rules of ethics to safeguard participants' rights and confidence (Gajjar, 2013). After informed permission was gained, respondents were advised of the voluntary character of participation and guaranteed anonymity, hence strengthening the ethical rigour and legitimacy of the study (Cacciattolo, 2015).



#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1.** Demographic data of respondents

Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	127	42.3	42.3
Female	173	57.7	100.0
<b>Role</b>			
Teacher	100	33.3	33.3
Student	200	66.7	100.0
<b>Years of Experience (Teachers Only)</b>			
1-5 years	38	12.7	38.0
6-10 years	42	14.0	80.0
Over 10 years	20	6.7	100.0
Missing (Pupils, No Teaching Experience)	200	66.7	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>-</b>

The demographic details of the study participants reveal that out of the 300 participants, 42.3% were male ( $n = 127$ ) and 57.7% were female ( $n = 173$ ) displaying a somewhat greater female representation. Regarding roles, teachers made up 33.3% ( $n = 100$ ) of the sample, whereas pupils constitute the majority at 66.7% ( $n = 200$ ). With regard to the teachers, 38% had between 1-5 years of teaching experience, 42% had 6-10 years, and 20% had more than 10 years of experience, highlighting a varied range of teaching terms. The 66.7% missing data for years of experience relates to pupils without a teaching background. All things considered, the sample shows a fair mix of genders

and a varied spectrum of educational responsibilities, thereby offering a complete basis for examining opinions of evaluation.

##### 4.1. Teachers' and pupils' perceptions of test effectiveness

**H1: There is no a significant difference between teachers' and pupils' perceptions of the effectiveness of tests in assessing student learning:** An independent samples t-test was carried out. The test associated the mean scores of teachers and pupils on their perceived effectiveness of tests. The table below displays the outcomes.

Table 2 displays an independent samples t-test used to

**Table 2.** Teachers' and pupils' perceptions of test effectiveness

<b>Independent Samples Test</b>										
		<b>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</b>		<b>t-test for Equality of Means</b>						
		<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	<b>Mean Difference</b>	<b>Std. Error Difference</b>	<b>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</b>	
									<b>Lower</b>	<b>Upper</b>
Effectiveness	Equal variances assumed	.445	.505	-.771	298	.441	-.140	.182	-.497	.217
	Equal variances not assumed			-.779	203.427	.437	-.140	.180	-.494	.214

investigate whether or not pupils' and teachers opinions of the efficacy of tests as a type of assessment differ significantly. Levene's Test for Equality of Variances generated an F-value of 0.445 with a p-value (Sig.) of 0.505, representing that the supposition of equal variances is not violated ( $p > 0.05$ ). Thus, we interpret the t-test results under "Equal variances assumed." The t-value is -0.771 with 298 degrees of freedom (df) and a

p-value of 0.441 ( $p > 0.05$ ). Given that the significance level exceeds 0.05, we do not reject the null hypothesis. The data suggests there exists no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of teachers and pupils concerning the effectiveness of tests as an assessment method.

##### 4.2. Teachers' and Pupils' Perceptions of Test Fairness



**H2: There is no significant difference between teachers' and pupils' perceptions of the fairness of tests:** An independent samples t-test was carried out. The test matched

the mean scores of teachers and pupils concerning their perception of how fair tests are in assessing student learning. Table 3 above provides the results of an independent samples

**Table 3.** Teachers' and Pupils' Perceptions of Test Fairness

Independent Samples Test		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Effectiveness	Equal variances assumed	.203	.652	-1.076	298	.283	-.185	.172	-.523	.153
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.087	203.629	.278	-.185	.170	-.521	.151

t-test, which was carried out to assess the significance of the difference between teachers' and pupils' perceptions of the fairness of tests as a form of assessment. Levene's Test for Equality of Variances generated an F-value of 0.203 with a p-value (Sig.) of 0.652, demonstrating that the assumption of equal variances is not violated ( $p > 0.05$ ). Therefore, we interpret the t-test results under "Equal variances assumed." The t-value is -1.076 with 298 degrees of freedom (df) and a p-value of 0.283 ( $p > 0.05$ ). Since the significance level is more than 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. Teachers' and pupils' opinions on

the fairness of exams for assessing student achievement show no statistically significant variation.

#### 4.3. Teachers' and Pupils' Perceptions of Test Relevance

**H3: There is no significant relationship between pupils' perceptions of the relevance of tests and their academic performance:** Teachers' and pupils' opinions on the usefulness of exams for assessing student learning were compared using an independent samples t-test.

Table 4 shows an independent samples t-test to evaluate

**Table 4.** Teachers' and Pupils' Perceptions of Test Relevance

Independent Samples Test		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Effectiveness	Equal variances assumed	.000	.984	-1.057	298	.291	-.185	.175	-.529	.159
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.057	198.083	.292	-.185	.175	-.530	.160

whether teachers and pupils' opinions on the usefulness of tests as a form of assessments in preparing them for potential academic and professional difficulties differ significantly. Levene's Test for Equality of Variances yielded an F-value of 0.000 with a p-value (Sig.) of 0.984, signifying that the notion of equal variances is met ( $p > 0.05$ ). Thus, we interpret the t-test results under "Equal variances assumed." The t-value is -1.057, with 298 degrees of freedom (df) and a p-value of 0.291 ( $p > 0.05$ ). Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, we fail to reject the null

hypothesis. Teachers' and pupils' opinions on the significance of exams for assessing student learning and readiness for the future thus show no statistically significant difference.

#### 4.4. Discussion

The present study assessed views of teachers and pupils about the relevance, fairness, and efficacy of exams as a kind of assessment. The results show that these two groups see success, fairness, and value in no statistically significant different ways.



#### 4.4.1. Perceptions of Effectiveness, Fairness, and Relevance

The results of the independent samples t-tests indicated that teachers and pupils hold similar opinions on the effectiveness of tests as an assessment tool. The t-test for effectiveness produced a t-value of -0.771, with a p-value of 0.441 ( $p > 0.05$ ), signifying no statistically significant difference in how the two groups perceive test effectiveness. This result support with previous studies showing that both educators and learners recognize tests as a structured mechanism for evaluating learning outcomes (Bariham *et al.*, 2022).

Likewise, opinions of fairness did not differ greatly among the groups. ( $t = -1.076$ ,  $p = 0.283$ ), demonstrating that both teachers and pupils basically agree on how fairly tests assess student performance. Fairness in assessment has been usually deliberated, with studies such as those by Tierney (2022) and Herman and Cook, (2019), stressing the part played by clear assessment criteria and unbiased administration. The non-significant outcome implies that test fairness could not be a main factor separating teachers from pupils.

Concerning significance, no statistically significant difference was found ( $t = -1.057$ ,  $p = 0.291$ ). This implies that both groups see the degree to which tests equip pupils for upcoming academic and career problems from the same angle. Earlier study has underlined concerns that traditional testing may not continuously support with real-world applications (Atjonen, 2014). The present results, however, imply that tests have some degree of importance acknowledged by teachers and pupils.

#### 4.4.2. Implications

The findings of this study have important implications for assessment practices in senior high schools. The lack of statistically significant differences between teachers and pupils regarding effectiveness, fairness, and relevance suggests a shared understanding of the role of tests in evaluating student learning. This indicates that both groups recognize tests as an essential part of the assessment system, reinforcing their continued use in educational settings. However, given ongoing debates about whether tests truly capture pupils' competencies beyond rote memorization (Atjonen, 2014), educators must ensure that test designs align with broader learning objectives, including critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Moreover, while tests remain a widely accepted tool for assessment, concerns about their fairness and relevance persist. The findings suggest that although teachers and pupils acknowledge the structured nature of testing, there is still a need to explore more holistic assessment approaches. Many educational scholars argue that assessments should go beyond standardized tests and incorporate more authentic measures that reflect pupils' diverse abilities (Hopfenbeck *et al.*, 2013). Schools and policymakers must therefore consider ways to balance traditional assessments with alternative evaluation methods to provide a more comprehensive picture of student learning.

Another key implication is the need to re-evaluate how tests are designed and administered to maximize their benefits (Herman, 1992). Since both teachers and pupils perceive tests as effective assessment tools, improving their quality, fairness, and real-

world relevance can help sustain their credibility (Wright, 2015). Clear grading rubrics, diverse question formats, and the inclusion of application-based scenarios in test questions can help bridge the gap between test performance and actual skill development.

Finally, this study reinforces the importance of ongoing assessment reform efforts in Ghanaian senior high schools. While standardized testing is deeply embedded in the educational system, policymakers should consider ways to enhance the effectiveness and fairness of assessments to align with 21st-century learning goals. Ensuring that tests serve as learning tools rather than merely evaluative measures can help improve student engagement and academic achievement (Oppong, 2009).

### 5. CONCLUSIONS

This study provides a comprehensive examination of teachers' and pupils' perceptions of tests as a form of assessment in senior high schools in Ghana. The results indicate that both groups share similar views on the effectiveness, fairness, and relevance of tests, acknowledging their strengths while recognizing their limitations. Traditional tests remain a core assessment tool, but they may not fully capture essential 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving.

Given these findings, there is a pressing need for a more diversified approach to student assessment. Incorporating alternative methods, such as project-based assessments, portfolios, and performance-based tasks, could enhance the comprehensiveness of evaluation systems. A more balanced assessment framework would not only ensure a fairer measurement of student capabilities but also better prepare pupils for the complexities of the modern world.

Policymakers, educators, and stakeholders must collaborate to reform assessment practices, ensuring that they align with contemporary educational demands. Future research should explore how different contextual factors, including school resources and teacher training, influence assessment effectiveness. Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into the long-term impact of alternative assessment methods on student performance and educational outcomes. By embracing a more holistic and inclusive assessment approach, Ghana's senior high schools can enhance learning experiences and foster the development of well-rounded graduates equipped for future challenges.

### RECOMMENDATION

Based on study findings, the following suggestions were produced:

1. Test forms should be changed by educators to include analytical thinking, practical applications, and resolving issues problems. This helps to guarantee that examinations evaluate not just memorisation but also higher-order cognitive ability.
2. Learning through projects, portfolios, presentations, and ongoing evaluations should all help schools vary their assessment tools. These strategies give pupils other methods to show their knowledge and abilities and help them to supplement conventional assessments.
3. Assessment literacy should be the main emphasis of





professional development initiatives as it guarantees that instructors have the tools to create fair, accurate, and significant assessments transcending conventional examinations.

4. Formative assessments tests, peer reviews, self-evaluations should be given top priority in schools so that they may give pupils continuous feedback. This method creates a growth-oriented learning atmosphere instead of one motivated just by high-stakes tests.

5. Policymakers in education should always assess how relevant and successful assessment strategies are in top-notch high schools. Including teachers and pupils in these conversations will help to produce more sensible and significant changes in assessments.

Following these suggestions will help governments and educational institutions improve the fairness, efficacy, and relevance of tests so that they support significant learning and improved results of learning.

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