Relevance of assessment course: a follow-up study of graduate teachers in Ghana

ABSTRACT

The study was a follow-up on graduate teachers of the University of Cape Coast and the University of Education, Winneba, who received training in an assessment course during regular degree programme. It also determined the relevance of the course to the practicing teachers. Descriptive survey design was used for the study. The target population for the study was all core subject teachers in the six public Senior High Schools in the Agona West and East Municipalities in the Central Region of Ghana. The purposive sampling procedure was used to select 204 core subject teachers in six Senior High Schools for the study. A self-designed questionnaire was used for data collection. The reliability index for the questionnaire was 0.76. Means, standard deviations and content analysis were used to analyse the data. The results showed that, teachers indicated the content areas of the course as relevant. Teachers reported instructional learning objectives and their role in assessment of students and the cognitive domain with special reference to Bloom’s taxonomy as relevant. It was found that the course content is difficult to understand. It is recommended that the course content should be maintained since it is relevant. Furthermore, lecturers/instructors who teach the course should be patient with students during instructional period. This would help students to get the central idea of whatever instructors or lecturers present in the class.

Key words: Assessment, graduate, reliability, instructional, lecturers, senior high school.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning process is enhanced through assessment. Airasian (2005) noted assessment as the process of collecting, interpreting and synthesising information to aid in decision making. Assessment, in general, involves gathering and processing data both quantitatively and qualitatively for the purpose of maintaining and improving standards in the society. To ensure standardisation with regard to how teachers in Ghanaian Senior High schools construct test items, there is the need to look at the content of the assessment course.

People usually conceive assessment as only paper and pencil test. Nevertheless, assessment means more than using formal paper-and-pencil tests to gather information or to grade pupils. According to Etsey (2012), assessment has to do with the process of obtaining information about students, curricula and programmes and educational policy. Etsey added that assessment includes the full range of procedures used to gain information about student learning. These procedures may be formal (paper and pencil tests) or informal (observations).

Assessment began over two decades ago (Martell and Calderon, 2005). But two decades hardly take us back to the origins of educational assessment in the United States. According to Pearson et al. (2001), assessment of student learning has been gaining and losing popularity for well over 150 years. DuBois (as cited in Allen and Yen, 1979) noted that Civil Service Testing began in China about 3000 years ago, when an emperor decided to assess the competency of his officials.

Assessment emerged in America in the 1840’s, when an
early pioneer of assessment, Horace Mann, used standardized written examinations to measure learning in Massachusetts (Pearson et al., 2001). After losing momentum, the scientific movement of the 1920's propelled the use of large-scale testing as a means of assessing learning (Audette, 2005). In the United Kingdom, examinations have their origin with the emergence of competitive entry to the civil service and the universities. Mental testing started with attempt to identify more precisely those children requiring special education provision, and it was developed in the context of “clever plus” selection for grammar school (Akplu, 1989). Tyler (1986) also stated that the major concern of educational measurement in the first half of the twentieth century was the need to devise fair ways of discriminating between individuals when distributing access to the scarce and unchanging economic good of education. Furthermore, students in European schools were given oral exams until well after the 12 century, when paper began to replace parchment and papyrus. During the 16th century, the Jesuits started using tests for the evaluation and placement of their students.

Assessment plays many essential roles in education and a single assessment can serve numerous, but quite distinctive, roles. Remediation role happens when sometimes the instruction the teacher arranges for the student in schools is not effective, therefore students may need special instruction, hence, relying on alternative methods or materials. Diagnostic assessment or decisions revolve around questions, such as what learning activities should I use to best adapt to the individual student requirements and thereby maximizing the opportunities to attain the chosen targets? Hence, when the content of the assessment course is not relevant, assessors would find it difficult selecting the right method or content for the diagnosis of such an individual.

Significantly, selection decisions are also dear to the heart of assessment officers. This is due to the fact that an organization decides that some persons are acceptable while others are not (Nitko, 2001). Those not accepted are rejected and no longer the concern of the institution or organization. This feature, that is rejection and the elimination of those rejected from immediate institutional concern is central to a selection decision. It is further, imperative for any institution who uses assessment procedure for selection to show that the candidate’s results on these assessments bear a relationship to success in the programme or job for which the institution is selecting persons. The inability for the institution to distinguish effectively and efficiently between those candidates likely to succeed and those unlikely to succeed through their assessment calls for improvement in the assessment procedures. Specifically, this may apply to the content of the assessment course offered by the University of Cape Coast and the University of Education, Winneba.

Graduate teachers need to know and also to understand the role of assessment in education. The content of the assessment course covers the role of assessment. This provides teacher trainees with the requisite knowledge and skills to diagnose, select, promote and place students based on their abilities at the appropriate classes or institutions. But, the question is, are practicing teachers from the two universities who took the course able to use their knowledge and skills gained from the course to assess their students?

Scriven (1994) identified two types of assessment methods that must be used to achieve desired goals. They are formative and summative assessment. Etsey (1992) and Ogguniyi (1990) saw formative assessment as a systematic procedure for collecting information on students about teaching and learning in the school environment. In close, summative assessment is described as a tool used after instruction to measure student achievement which provides evidence of student competence or programme effectiveness (Teach, 2010). The course structure from the two universities is such that it adequately covers the different types of assessment. This enabled the graduates to acquire the knowledge and skills to practice assessment of their students effectively. But are practicing graduate teachers able to assess their students effectively with knowledge acquired from the assessment course? This is what the study sought to investigate.

Statement of the problem

McMillan (2001) studied the actual classroom assessment and grading practices of secondary school teachers in relation to a specific class and determined whether meaningful relationships existed between teacher’s assessment practices, grade level, subject matter, and ability levels of students. McMillan, in his study, asserted that there was no meaningful relationship between teacher’s assessment practices, grade level, subject matter and ability level. Therefore, Fennell et al. (1992) suggested that specific training is necessary for graduates to learn to assess students’ thinking by analysing how they comport themselves. Dean (1999) contended that most teacher education programmes skim over classroom assessment, leaving teachers to assess in the way they were assessed when they were in school.

Campbell and Evans (2000) evaluated pre-service teachers who had completed coursework in educational measurement and found that student teachers did not follow many assessment practices recommended during their coursework. This phenomenon, has made graduate teachers very narrow minded in terms of methods or techniques of assessing students.

An assessment instrument must be such that the result is reliable and valid. To achieve valid and reliable results, assessment instruments should be selected or constructed appropriately. In Ghana, standardised tests are not
available for use by classroom teachers, therefore classroom teachers depend on their little knowledge in constructing test items. The results of these assessment instruments may tend to have low reliability and validity as well. Therefore, such assessment results cannot be used for making sound decisions. A study of secondary schools by Amedahe (1989) found that teachers do not apply any statistical item analysis to their test items to ensure the quality before administering them. The study further established that test specification tables are not taken into consideration by the secondary teachers when constructing test items thereby rendering the validity of the test items rather low or unknown. It is, therefore, necessary to do a follow up on graduates who received training in assessment course from the University of Cape Coast and University of Education, Winneba, on the relevance of the course.

**Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to determine the relevance of the assessment course content from the perspective of practicing graduate teachers who received training in the assessment course from the University of Cape Coast and University of Education, Winneba in the Agona West and East Municipalities of Ghana.

**Specific purposes**

1. To determine the perception of graduates of University of Cape Coast and University of Education, Winneba on the relevance of the assessment course content in teaching and assessing their students.
2. To find out from graduates who received training in assessment course from the two universities (UCC and UEW) what they perceive to be the weakness of the assessment course.

**Research questions**

1. What is the perception of graduates of University of Cape Coast and University of Education, Winneba on the relevance of the assessment course content in teaching and assessing their students?
2. What do graduates who received training in assessment course from the two universities (UCC and UEW) perceive to be the weakness of the course?

**Significance of the study**

The findings of the study would be beneficial to the University of Cape Coast and University of Education, Winneba. Stakeholders in education, students and the communities in the country at large would also benefit from the findings of the study. The prime aim of every academic institution is to mount a programme or course which contributes to both economic and social developments of the nation or country. Therefore, the findings of the study would aid the two universities to know whether the objectives for which the course was mounted are being achieved or not.

**Concept of assessment**

Harlen (2006) explained that assessment is an integral piece to assuring that an educational institution achieves its learning goals, as well as a crucial means of providing the essential evidence necessary for seeking and maintaining accreditation. “Assessment in education is conducted to gain an understanding of an individual's strengths and weaknesses in order to make appropriate education decisions” (Salvia and Ysseldyke, n.d, p.26). Decisions about students include managing classroom instruction, placing students into different types of educational programmes, assigning them to appropriate categories, guiding and counselling them, selecting them for educational opportunities, and credentialing and certifying their competence (Nitko, 2001). The course outline of the assessment course from the two universities demands that teacher trainees acquire knowledge regarding principle of assessment. This would serve as a guide to teacher trainees when planning about instruction in terms of selecting the appropriate objectives and the appropriate teaching methods.

**Concept of follow-up Study**

Follow-up study is considered critical to effective implementation of professional development in the classroom. Yogev (as cited in Margo and Sullivan, 2006) noted in an extensive review of the professional development literature that the limited implementation of training in classrooms in industrialised countries could be attributed to lack of follow-up support. Evidence is slowly accumulating which indicates a similar problem in developing countries (Lamb, 1995). Beeby (as cited in Margo and Sullivan, 2006) indicated the rationale for follow-up as without continuing encouragement and support (upon completion of workshops and courses), the average teacher has a remarkable capacity for returning back to old practices under a new name.

A study by Joyce and Showers (2000) used the term ‘transfer’ to explain the rationale for follow-up. Joyce and Showers suggested the use of coaching (intense lesson observation and feedback) to follow-up training and support teachers’ efforts to ‘transfer’ training to the classroom. Fullan’s (1991) phenomenology of change forms an underlying theoretical review for follow-up. It was found that neglect of the phenomenology of change affect how people actually experience change. The process of implementing change is a complex, difficult and often painful process. The findings of the study suggest that
Relevance of assessment course

Educational course content is said to be relevant when the content covers assessment goals. The assessment course structure in the two universities was designed such that teacher trainees are provided with knowledge about goals and objectives of instruction. Goals help teacher trainees to know whether the objectives of their instruction have been accomplished or not. Educational goals and objectives are widely used and required for the development of continuing professional education activities that award continuing education credit (Race et al., 2005). The relevance of assessment courses content demands that the content includes the domain of learning. Knowledge which is the simplest taxonomy focuses on individual's ability to remember previously learned material. Comprehension is the ability to understand the meaning of material. Application is the ability to use learned material in new situations. Analysis refers to the ability to put parts together to form a whole, and evaluation which is deemed as the most complex taxonomy is the ability to judge the worth of material for a given purpose. This domain with its levels is still useful today in developing critical thinking skills in students. The course outline of the assessment course from the two universities in Ghana considers the three categories of domain especially, the cognitive domain. The course teaches practicing graduate teachers on how to assess students under all the levels of the cognitive domain. But the question is, are the practicing graduate teachers able to assess students under all the levels of the cognitive domain?

There are two main forms of teacher or classroom-made tests; formal and informal tests. Teachers may pose questions, observe activities, and evaluate students’ work in a planned and systematic or ad hoc way (Gipps et al., 1995). Classroom tests are basically teacher-made tests.

Teachers have the responsibility to provide their students with the best instruction possible. This implies that they must have some relevant content procedures or method whereby they can reliably and validly evaluate how effectively their students have learnt what they have been taught (Mehrens and Lehmann, 1991). The pencil and paper or teacher-made test is one of such tool. Moreover, they are more likely to reflect today’s curriculum. This mostly prevails in subject-matter assessment such as science and social studies.

According to Nitko (2001), assessment content is relevant when teacher-made or classroom test comprises choice formats (such as multiple choice, true or false, matching exercise and other formats like greater – less same items), short answers and completion format and essay format (restricted responses and extended responses), respectively. Some educators argue that essay tests are more susceptible to inconsistent scoring than the objective tests (Nitko, 2001). However, classroom teachers tend to use both objective and essay tests because one cannot be used exclusively to measure all learning outcomes.

To ensure that the content of assessment course is relevant, the course structure must cover objective-type tests. The course content from the two universities under consideration provides trainee teachers with knowledge about the objective-type items. The objective-type item was developed in response to the criticism levelled against the essay question (Nitko, 2004). Objective-type item formats are put into two groups; the supply type and the selection type. The supply type format consists of completion type, fill-in-the blanks and short answer. The selection type consists of true-false, matching, and multiple-choice item type. According to Amedahe and Etssey (2003), objective type test items are most useful when class sizes are very large and when there is limited time to submit the results of the test. Essay test items, on the other hand, provide the respondent with the freedom to organize his own ideas and respond with restricted or unrestricted limits. Here respondents are asked to speak to a particular issue and for that reason they could not just write a single word as an answer but express themselves in terms of what they know about the task. The ability for the respondent to express his/herself clearly and fluently tells the instructor that the student has actually mastered the content of the subject. According to Amedahe and Etssey (2003), an essay item is a test that gives freedom to respondents to compose their own response using their own words. Essay test items consist of relatively few items, but each require an extended response.

Test plays a cardinal role in the assessment process in educational settings. Good and quality test items are not just constructed by test constructors or experts, they require adequate and extensive planning so that the instructional objectives, the teaching strategy to be employed, the textural material, and the evaluative procedures are all related (Nitko, 2004). Student teachers during their training acquire knowledge regarding construction of test items. As a result, it is believed that practicing graduate teachers would be able to construct good test items and also review them in order to assess their students effectively.

Ideally, every test should be reviewed critically by other teachers to minimize the deficiencies that may be overlooked by the developer. Without adequate and careful planning, one can be fairly certain that one’s test will not be very good. According to Tinkelman (2002: 46) “at the very
least, inattention to planning can lead to waste and delay due to failure to coordinate properly the various phrases of test construction.” Hence, Mehrens and Lehmann (1991) outlined the following stages and steps as being important in the construction of the classroom or teacher-made tests: specify the course or unit content, list the major course or unit objectives, define each objective in terms of student’s behaviour, discard unrealistic objectives, prepare a table of specifications, decide on the type of item format to be used, prepare test items that match the instructional objectives, evaluate the degree to which the students have learned the objectives and revise the objectives and/or teaching material and/or test on the basis of the result.

Factors influencing validity and reliability of test items

Validity and reliability of test items are affected by several factors. Length or number of items is a crucial factor of test reliability. Carefully written tests with an adequate number of items usually produce high reliability. Long tests perform three functions to help maintain validity. Firstly, they increase the amount of content that the student must address, ensuring a more accurate picture of student knowledge. Secondly, long tests counteract the effects of faulty items by providing a greater number of better items. Thirdly, long tests reduce the impact of student guessing (Griswold, 1990).

In addition to the length of the test, trainee teachers are taught several things to ensure that the content of a course is valid and reliable. First, test items cannot be ambiguous. Poorly written test items will prompt students to guess, thus diminishing the reliability of the test. Second, test items need to be at a reasonable difficulty level (Griswold, 1990). Newell (2002) asserts that teacher-made tests usually measure only a limited part of a subject area. He further indicated that they do not cover a broad range of abilities and they rely too heavily on memorized facts and procedures. To guard any unintended imbalances and disproportionate item distribution, test item constructors draw up a table of specifications of the target cognitive objectives as per Bloom’s taxonomy before any items are prepared. Such specifications as spelt out in Bloom (1956) should begin with an outline of both the instructional objectives of the course, the subject matter to be covered, and the cognitive skills measured (Miller et al., 2009). The time and effort expended to develop a table of specification can ensure that the test is valid and reliable (Notar et al., 2004).

METHODS

Research design

The quantitative descriptive survey design was used for the study. Descriptive survey design seeks to explore and describe events as they are. The researchers wanted to know from graduates who received training in the assessment course from University of Cape Coast and University of Education, Winneba, respectively about the content adequacy to the practice of assessment in the schools.

Participants

The target population was the set of teachers in all the public senior high schools in the Agona East and West Municipalities of Ghana who have taken a course in assessment at UCC and UEW. The accessible population consisted of teachers of Core Mathematics, English Language, Social Studies and Integrated Science in the six public senior high schools in the Agona East and West Municipalities. The census sampling procedure was used to select all the six-government assisted senior high schools in the Agona East and West Municipalities of Ghana. Also, the purposive sampling procedure was used to select 204 core subject teachers for the study. Core subject teachers were selected for the study because core subjects were common in the all schools that participated in the study.

Instruments

Questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire comprised both close and open-ended items. Items on research question one was closed ended, while that of research question two was open-ended. There are twenty-three (23) items on research question one. Items on research question one was multiple-scored on a four-point Likert type scale as 1- not very relevant, 2- not relevant, 3- relevant and 4- very relevant. The Cronbach's co-efficient alpha for the items on research question one (23 items) was = 0.76. Respondents were also made to write by responding to research question two.

Data collection procedures

Ethical clearance was received from Institutional Review Board in the University of Cape Coast. The purpose of the study, the need for individual participation, anonymity and also confidentiality of respondents’ responses were spelt out. Informed consent was sought from participants by explaining the purpose of the study to them. Anonymity of respondents was highly considered in the study. This gave the participants the opportunity to have their identity concealed. Neither names nor any identifiable information from respondents were taken. On the issue of confidentiality, effort was made to maintain confidentiality of the responses of the participants. Participants were told
that their responses would be kept confidential and that no one known to them would have access to the information provided. The questionnaire was administered personally by the researcher to all the 234 teachers involved in the study in the six selected senior high schools in the Agona West and East Municipalities. A period of one month was used to travel to all the sampled schools to administer the questionnaire. Out of the 234 questionnaires administered, 204 representing 87.17% were retrieved.

**Data analysis**

Data were analysed using means and standard deviations to answer research question one while data on research question two were analysed using content analysis. The criterion in Table 1 was calculated by dividing the range (3) by the number of categories (4), giving 0.75. Then the criteria are 1.00-1.74: Not Very Relevant; 1.75-2.49: Not Relevant, 2.50 -3.24 = Relevant, and 3.25-4.00 = Very Relevant.

**RESULTS**

**Research question one**

What is the perception of graduates of University of Cape Coast and University of Education, Winneba on the relevance of the assessment course content in teaching and assessing their students?

Table 1 shows that the respondents perceived content knowledge gained from the course as very relevant. This is because the mean of means for the content relevance of the course was 3.25 and standard deviation was 0.64. This (M = 3.25) means that the teachers perceive the overall content very relevant to their practice as teachers. The results of content relevance are summarised into two categories as (a) relevant and (b) very relevant respectively.

Out of the 23 content areas listed, it was found that

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content areas</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Concepts and principles of assessment.</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>Very Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Instructional learning objectives and their relevance in assessment of students.</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>Very Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Construction of objective test items (multiple-choice, True/False, completion/supply, matching).</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>Very Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Planning of objective test items (multiple-choice, True/False, completion/supply type, matching).</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>Very Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The concept of validity in assessment.</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>Very Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The various forms of test item formats that teachers can use to assess their students such as objective formats, essay formats etc.</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>Very Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Construction of essay test items.</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>Very Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Planning of essay test items.</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>Very Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Effective administration of classroom tests.</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>Very Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. How to score essay tests to ensure consistency of the scores.</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>Very Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. How to use the various forms of classroom tests for assigning grades, diagnosis, remedial teaching, certification etc.</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>Very Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Discussion of some deficiencies in the teacher-made test such as ambiguous questions, excessive wording, lack of inappropriate emphasis.</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>Very Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The cognitive domain with special reference to Bloom’s taxonomy.</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>Very Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. How to interpret test scores and make inferences from the scores.</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. The concept of reliability in assessment.</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. How to construct test items on the various learning outcomes with special reference to Bloom’s taxonomy.</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. How to appraise classroom tests items of different formats.</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Methods of estimating reliability in assessment.</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. How to assemble tests of different item formats.</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Categories of validity evidence in assessment.</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Factors that affect validity of assessment results.</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Test item analysis procedures and their relevance to quality of test items.</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Factors that affect reliability and relevance in assessment.</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean of means</strong></td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
thirteen (13) of them were very relevant. The items are as follows:

2. Instructional learning objectives and their relevance in assessment of students.
3. Construction of objective test items (multiple-choice, True/False, completion/supply, matching).
4. Planning of objective test items (multiple-choice, True/False, completion/supply type, matching).
5. The concept of validity in assessment.
6. The various forms of test item formats that teachers can use to assess their students such as objective formats, essay formats etc.
7. Construction of essay test items.
8. Planning of essay test items.
9. Effective administration of classroom tests.
10. How to score essay tests to ensure consistency of the scores.
11. How to use the various forms of classroom tests for assigning grades, diagnosis, remedial teaching, certification etc.
12. Discussion of some deficiencies in the teacher-made test such as ambiguous questions, excessive wording, lack of inappropriate emphasis.
13. The cognitive domain with special reference to Bloom’s taxonomy.

Also, the results of the study showed that fourteen (14) of the content areas were relevant. Some of these items are:

1. How to interpret test scores and make inferences from the scores.
2. The concept of reliability in assessment.
3. How to construct test items on the various learning outcomes with special reference to Bloom's taxonomy.
4. How to appraise classroom tests items of different formats.

**Research question two**

What do graduates who received training in assessment course from the two universities (UCC and UEW) perceive to be the weakness of the course?

Under the perceived weaknesses of the courses, 72 respondents responded to the questionnaire. Majority of the respondents involved in the study indicated that; (a) they did not have any idea about the weaknesses of the courses, (b) did not have time to respond to the item, and (c) others also have no reason for not responding to the questionnaire. The researcher made several efforts by explaining to them the need for their participation but they did not. From Table 2, 9.8% indicated that the assessment course is theoretically oriented but not practical. Followed by 8.3% who opined that it is classroom based, 6.9% indicated that it is too difficult to study, and 4.4% asserted that the content is voluminous. Lastly, 4.0% indicated that the instructional time for the course was inadequate while 2.0% also opined that, the course sometimes favours students in mathematics field of study.

**DISCUSSION**

The findings of content relevance indicated that, in general, teachers in the study perceived the content areas as very relevant. The study found that the course content is relevant since it covers the various forms of test item formats that teachers use to assess their students. The course content includes test item formats such as objective formats and essay formats. Objective formats (multiple choice, true or false, matching exercise, short answers and completion type) help graduate teachers to assess students from wide coverage of the content taught while essay formats (restricted responses and extended responses) also aid graduate teachers to assess students on higher order thinking items. The findings are in line with previous findings of Nitko (2001). In the literature, Nitko indicated that assessment course content area is relevant when it contains various forms of test item formats. He further asserted that the content must include teacher-made or classroom test: objective formats (such as multiple choice, true or false, matching exercise, short answers and completion type), and essay format (restricted responses and extended responses) respectively. This helps teachers to have several assessment formats for assessing students since a single format, sometimes does not portray the true reflection of a particular students. Bartels (2003) added that with regards to the objective type tests, the multiple choice, short-answer/fill-in-the-blanks, matching and true or false types are the most commonly used by teachers in the teacher training colleges in Ghana. The course outline of the assessment courses covers extensively issues regarding assessment formats. By implication, teachers would be able to use the appropriate assessment formats when assessing their students.

The findings related to perceived weaknesses of the course taken by teachers were: inadequate instructional time for the course, the content of the course is voluminous, the course favoured mathematics-oriented students than non-mathematics-oriented students and the course is difficult. The study showed that practicing graduate teachers were of the view that inadequate instructional time makes lecturers not to complete the course outline. This implies that graduate teachers would also not complete the course outline. Teachers would not be able to use areas not taught on the field.

Coupled with the above, the study further showed that the content of the course is voluminous. Practicing graduate teachers indicated that the voluminous nature of the course
alone sometimes discouraged some students to study the course. This does not motivate students to pay keen attention to the content of the course. Again, it was found that the course favoured mathematics-oriented students than non-mathematics oriented-students. The issues of calculations of reliability coefficients, standard error of measurement and others were indicated by teachers as favouring mathematics-oriented students the most. A substantial percentage of teachers disclosed a high gap between knowing and doing as majority indicated that the course content is either not practical or not related to the classroom. 

Mention should also be made of the fact that the study revealed that the course is difficult. An appreciable 6.9% out of 35.4% of the respondents who responded to the weaknesses of the course indicated that, the course is difficult. Teachers indicated that concepts such as reliability, validity and others were difficult to understand. With the percentage given, it is evident that students do not find it easy when reading the course. This can contribute to students not performing well in the course and therefore, not being able to practice assessment well.

Conclusions

On the basis of the results obtained in this study, the following conclusions can be drawn. Teachers involved in study generally reported that the content is relevant. It could, therefore, be concluded that, to a great extent, teachers in the government assisted Senior High Schools in the Agona West and East Municipalities perceived the content knowledge gained from the course as relevant in the sense that the knowledge gained from the course has helped them in their work. However, the course posed some challenges to teacher trainees such as favouring mathematics students. Given this situation, the course should be made attractive to all students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above research findings and the conclusions arrived at, the following recommendations are made. The content of the course should be maintained so as to serve trainee teachers with the knowledge needed for effective teaching and delivery. However, the content of the course was found to be difficult to understand. It is therefore recommended that lecturers/instructors who teach the course should be patient with students and ensure the authenticity of the course when delivering their instructions. This would also help students get the central idea of whatever instructors or lecturers present in the class.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents’ perceived weaknesses of the assessment course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Content is voluminous.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Favours mathematics students most.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Inadequate instructional time for the course.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. It is classroom based.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. It is too difficult.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. It is not practical.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. No response</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>64.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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</table>

REFERENCES


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