

Effective Teaching in History: The Perspectives of History Student-Teachers

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Abstract

The effective teaching of History is a prime area of concern for most History teacher-educators. This is because most History teachers do not adopt appropriate methods in teaching the subject. Owing to this, most students describe History as a boring and dull subject. The study investigated the perspectives of History student-teachers on effective teaching of History. A focus group discussion was held with five final-year prospective History teachers. The findings revealed that at the pre-engagement phase, student-teachers perceived effective teaching as comprising the acquisition of content knowledge, knowledge of learners, adequate planning, and collaboration with other teachers. At the engagement phase, effective History teachers demonstrate mastery over content, show enthusiasm, relate lessons to students' prior knowledge, use multiple instructional methods and resources in conveying content, create a supportive learning environment, and use alternative assessment techniques. Also, at the post-engagement phase, it was found that effective History teachers are open to students' concerns after class, seek feedback from students, and update their knowledge in content and pedagogy. It was thus concluded that History student-teachers possess an appreciable level of understanding of what constitutes effective teaching of History.

Keywords: effective teaching, history, student-teachers.

Introduction

Teachers are crucial elements in education, and effective teaching is the hallmark of every good teacher. Opinions, however, differ on what constitutes effective teaching. As such, there is grave difficulty in giving an apt portrayal of an effective teacher as opinions on who an effective teacher is are many and varied. The difficulty that arises in describing and measuring teacher effectiveness may partly relate to the "multidimensional, highly individualized, and seldomly observed" nature of teaching (Lumpkin & Multon, 2013, p. 288). Lumpkin and Multon (2013) argue there is no universally accepted stand on how effective teaching should be defined and how it should be measured. A possible causative factor for this "difficulty" is that different subjects are organised differently and also have differing approaches as regards inquiry and analysis (National Academy of Sciences, 2000). For example, the approach a History teacher may use to teach the 1948 Riot in Ghana, will certainly differ from how a Mathematics teacher would teach Algebra or how a Science teacher will teach Cell Division. In light of this, Oppong and Quan-Baffour (2014) affirm that History differs from most other disciplines in that its major preoccupation lies with the action of past people, and the significance and effects of those actions: a feature of History which apparently informs History teachers' instructional practices

and decisions in the classroom. Again, different school and/or classroom environment as well as student characteristics can really make “effectiveness” a subjective phenomenon. For instance, a teacher who is said to be effective in one school setting may not attain a similar feat in another school due to situational differences which impact directly on the teacher. This presupposes that effective teaching is not attributable to only innate characteristics and abilities of teachers, but also to a supportive and conducive physical climate. Thus, the notion that subject matter knowledge and knowledge about methods of teaching alone is enough to ensure effective teaching cannot hold. Even though some teachers are naturally inclined to teach a variety of disciplines, their ability to do so goes beyond the possession of a set of general teaching skills (National Academy of Sciences, 2000).

The teaching of History can be a challenging experience due the abstract nature of the subject. The abstractness lies in the fact that events in the past cannot be reproduced and re-examined for authenticity, and motives for which actions were taken are not open to physical examination and scrutiny. As such, Taylor and Young (2003) contend that History is a complex task encompassing the transformation of subject matter into a form that enables learners to gain meaning, while at the same time, retaining the integrity of the subject. It is for this reason Aggarwal (as cited in Ghansah, 2009) notes that the teaching of Social Studies and History for that matter requires more ingenuity from teachers as these subjects demand well prepared conscientious teachers of sound knowledge. Again, teachers of History need to possess a sound professional training in the theory and art of teaching and assessing the learning outcomes of students (Ghansah, 2009) so as to equip students with the “intellectual toolkit that will allow them to make connections with the past and make informed decisions about their lives in the present and in the future” (Taylor & Young, 2003, p. 177). Sadly, most teachers of History do not portray the subject as an exciting and interesting field of learning during lessons periods (National Academy of Sciences, 2000). Studies have shown that most History teachers are tied to using the traditional mode of delivery, with little or no innovation (Adeyinka, 1989, 1990; Oppong, 2009; Boadu et al., 2014). This could possibly be as a result of the fact that most History teachers are not exposed to, or trained on the tenets of handling the subject effectively, or that, teachers lack the commitment towards teaching the subject as it should be taught. Effective teaching of History connotes, among other things, bringing the subject to life and making it appealing to the intellectual and emotional faculties of students. It goes over and beyond oral presentation or narration of events, or the use of lectures, but embraces a complex mix of overarching understanding of content and the art of teaching. This understanding is paramount in creating an environment in which students can gain mastery over historical concepts as well as improve their skill of thinking historically. Thus, the uniqueness of the subject is that which should feed and inform teachers to adopt innovative approaches towards making their teaching effective.

Dimensions of Effective History Teaching

Effective teaching is a much sought-after hallmark in education the world over. The high stakes in education and the unperturbed growth of knowledge presents a much more arduous challenge for teachers of all fields of academic scholarship to rise up to the changing trend by revamping their teaching strategies in order to add innovative and creative dimensions to their mode of delivery. Effective instruction has a bearing on the interest of students and their motivation to learn History, influences students to make critical judgment on Historical issues, and understand current events in the appropriate historical context (Noboa, 2013). This notwithstanding, it can be multifarious, demanding, frustrating and energy-sapping. To quote Grant and Gradwell (2009), effective teaching “...is challenging, nuanced, and highly-contextualized work” (p. 19). Fogo (2014) observes that effective teaching of History is less likely to occur in a traditional History classroom setting “where curriculum covers wide expanses of

time, teachers provide content-heavy lectures, and students take notes and scour textbooks to put facts to memory” (p. 153). It is more than knowing how to teach ‘anything’, but calls on History teachers to be proactive and goal-oriented in the discipline.

This notwithstanding, teachers need not become experts in teaching before they can teach effectively. This is because expertise can sometimes mar teaching as many experts lose sight of what is easy and what is difficult for students (National Academy of Sciences, 2000). Being an expert, thus, does not guarantee effective teaching. World Health Organisation (WHO) (2005) is of the view that effective teaching is acquired through learning but not inherent at birth. Arguably, the basic step towards effective History teaching is knowledge about the concepts underpinning the subject. As Yilmaz (2008) argues, History teachers should possess a firm grasp of the concepts that form the foundation of the History subject. Teachers’ knowledge must cut across the “substantive” and “syntactic” aspects of History, that is, “the structure of the discipline, its different modes of historical explanations, and the historical procedures and skills needed to construct explanations about the past” (p. 41) as well as the “generic and subject-specific pedagogical knowledge that helps the teacher transform the subject matter knowledge into effective learning experiences for students” (Yilmaz, 2008, p. 42). This understanding is necessary as it would make students appreciate the different dimensions of the subject, as well as help them understand the complexities of past human experiences. An effective History teacher, therefore, deeply understands the structure and epistemologies of the discipline, and also knows the activities to adopt to aid students’ understanding of the subject (National Academy of Sciences, 2000). Stated differently, effective History teachers’ knowledge and beliefs about the subject and its structure deeply correlate with their instructional strategies. Rather than a simplistic introduction of a heap of facts to be memorised, such teachers help students to make meaning out of the problem of interpretation and analysis in History in order for students to gain appreciation of the relevance of History in their daily lives (National Academy of Sciences, 2000). Therefore, “teachers need to give students good reasons for learning, help them define what they need to learn, help them organize and make sense of what they should learn, ensure student participation, make the learning environment interesting, give students plenty of opportunities for practice, and let them know how they are progressing” (WHO, 2005, p. 9).

Taylor and Young (2003) underscore three outstanding characteristics of effective History teaching. According to them, effective History teaching encompasses knowing History, doing History, and scaffolding learning. This means that understanding the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the subject, the processes of historical reconstruction, as well as projecting the discipline in a context and manner that facilitate subsequent learning are at the core of historical pedagogy. Again, effective teaching requires that teachers become ambitious. Ambitious teachers, as Grant and Gradwell (2009) observe, have a good depth of understanding regarding their subject matter and consciously seek ways of connecting the subject matter to students’ experiences. They employ “new teaching methods, alternative assessments, and flexible student groupings” (p.7), but these in themselves do not make teaching effective if they are not linked to vigorous learning among students. This view confirms the assertion that teaching is said to have taken place only after learning has occurred. Effective History teaching thus involves teaching in no single pattern, taking no single shape in teaching, and assessing students in no single fashion (Grant & Gradwell, 2009).

Owoyemi and Adesoji (2012) allude to three key characteristics of effective teachers; personal qualities, teaching skills and subject matter mastery. They write;

When personal qualities are emphasized, effective instructors are described as enthusiastic, energetic, approachable, open, imaginative and possessing a high sense of humour. When teaching skills and mastery of

subject matter are emphasized, effective instructors are described as being masters of the subject matter, organized and emphasizing important concepts, able to clarify ideas and point out relationships, able to motivate students, able to pose and elicit useful questions and examples, creative or imaginative, and reasonable and fair (p. 169).

Hoge (1988) observes that sensitive History teachers are abreast with the difficulties that come along with the over-reliance on textbooks. He however contends that even when the textbook dominates instruction, it is still possible for students to relish and appreciate History lessons. According to him, teachers who are successful with this method put in place “steps to accommodate the varied reading abilities of their students; make sure that vocabulary, conceptual, and experiential foundations are laid prior to reading; and vary reading assignments and routines to help break the boredom of needless repetition” (p. 2). Going on, Hoge argues that teaching about the past would be very much enhanced with the careful and meaningful integration of sounds, images of videotapes, films, filmstrips, and trips to historical sites. Noboa (2013) sought from History teachers the methods and approaches that made them effective. Responses indicated, among other variables, that the use of a wide variety of approaches such as group or collaborative work; real-world projects; a variety of visual aids; interactive assignments and technology tools (computers, the internet, and the interactive white board) were effective means of teaching the subject. Other approaches such as straight lecturing, reading, and answering questions from textbooks were regarded as less effective means of teaching the subject. Young and Shaw (1999) studied the profiles of effective college and university teachers and revealed that effective communication, comfortable learning atmosphere, concern for student learning, motivation, course organization and course value were the criteria used to measure teacher effectiveness.

In a summary of an extensive literature review on effective teacher practices, Lumpkin and Multon (2013) described effective teachers as those who “(a) use a variety of instructional approaches, (b) engage in professional endeavors and developmental activities to enhance their teaching, (c) seek feedback from students and made changes in instruction in response to this feedback, and (d) value the interrelationship between teaching and research...” (p. 292; 293). Similarly, Feldman (1976) reviewed literature on college students’ views on superior college teachers and made the following conclusion on the characteristics of superior teachers: (a) ability to stimulate students’ interest, (b) presentation clarity, (c) subject matter knowledge, (d) preparedness, (e) enthusiasm, (f) relationship/interaction with students, and (g) availability. Studying Asian students’ perceptions of a good college or university teacher, Lee et al. (2009) discovered three categories of dimensions that students used to assess a quality teacher. Teachers in the first category showed characteristics such as subject matter knowledge, preparation and organisation of subject content, and fairness towards students. The second category of quality teachers were found to show concern and respect for students, exhibited clarity of presentation, and showed enthusiasm and helpfulness to students. Presenting material in an interesting way; encouragement of independent thought; frequent feedback; clear statement of objectives; friendliness, and approachability were the characteristics of teachers in the third category. Though the study concluded that quality teachers are those whose possess mastery over subject matter, Lee et al (2009) were of the view that knowledge itself does not make one a good teacher but rather, the combination of knowledge of subject matter with other variables such as preparation of teaching material, setting of clear objectives, enthusiasm, and ability to present learning materials clearly, that make an effective teacher. This implies that effective teaching involves a multiplicity of variables, but all these variables rest, and are highly dependent on the depth of the teacher’s knowledge.

In another study by Koutrouba (2012) on the profile of an effective teacher in Greek secondary schools, it was found, among other variables, that effective teaching occurs in classrooms where teachers involve learners in multiple learning procedures; implement effective modes of communication to convey content in an understandable manner; respond to students' needs during instruction; build a rich teacher-student interaction; ensure productive classroom management; and exhibit compassion, concern, helpfulness, and a sense of humour. Again, effective teachers, according to the study, have interest in students' prior knowledge, simplify learning materials to meet students' individual needs, respect diversity, employ democratic procedures, and encourage feedback. Similarly, Lumpkin and Multon (2013) studied faculty perception about effective teaching. They found that building respectful relationships with students; showing enthusiasm; being humorous; being responsive to student's needs; knowing students' names; and being sensitive to time through class organization, are instances of effective teaching practices. Again, responses indicated that teaching fellows emphasized student learning by taking into account the learning styles of students. They achieved this by setting clear expectations and goals; providing timely feedback; using varying approaches for presentations, as well as using a multiplicity of instructional methods. Faculty members amended their instruction based on comments received from students during course evaluations. They also offered encouragement to students regarding assignments and examinations through personal interactions to provide constructive feedback. The study concluded that multiple methods of teaching are effective for teaching, and that, highly effective teachers use different instructional strategies in teaching to boost learning among students.

In a survey on the core practices for teaching History in Delphi, Fogo (2014) found several practices that could enhance effective teaching. These included the selection and adaptation of historical sources; supporting historical writing; supporting historical reading skills; utilising historical questions; assessing students' thinking about History; facilitating discussion; engaging students in historical research; using historical concepts; and making connection to individual cultural experiences. In the face of the rapid growth of knowledge, it is germane that History teachers continuously update their knowledge in both content and pedagogy in order to be at par with the new development (Yilmaz, 2008). Yilmaz (2008) explains that since content and pedagogy constantly change and grow, it is necessary for History teachers to be part of professional organisations, read research papers, and participate in professional gatherings such as workshops and seminars so as to be abreast with the latest developments in theory and research.

The preceding literature gives enough credence to what constitutes effective History teaching. It could be gathered that the core of effective teaching of History is the possession of a firm knowledge base in History and the skill to convey this knowledge in ways that are meaningful to students. Other dimensions include creating an atmosphere to enforce students learning; using a variety of student-centered methods; use of appropriate instructional materials (films, filmstrips, audio-visuals); use of appropriate assessment procedures; use of technology tools; provision of feedback; efficient classroom management; instructional clarity; active engagement of students; catering for students' varying needs; supporting students' progress; building on students' prior knowledge or personal experiences; building a healthy relationship with students; enhancing students' imaginative abilities; having a sense of humour; and being at par with knowledge growth. These dimensions are proved by prior studies as contributing positively to effective teaching.

Research Focus

Knowledge about what constitutes effective History teaching is fundamental to the formation and training of prospective History teachers. This is because their effectiveness on the

field after their training will depend on how they perceive their roles as effective teachers of History. It has been established that different subjects have differing approaches as regards inquiry and analysis. As such, even though the concept of effective teaching may be deemed applicable to most disciplines, different disciplines may require different approaches to teaching. This study holds that the teaching process begins before the classroom encounter and continues even after classroom instruction. As such, the study operates with the implicit rationale that effective teaching is not tied to only the lesson delivery stage, but embraces other teacher activities which take place within and without the classroom and school environment. The study therefore explores History student-teachers views on what effective History teaching entails in three stages of teaching, that is, pre-engagement phase (before class hour), engagement phase (during class hour), and post-engagement phase (after class hour). The findings of the study would inform History teacher-educators on strategies to adopt to restructure and consolidate the training of History student-teachers in such a manner that they would be better placed to teach the subject effectively after their training. By this, there is every possibility that the subject which is becoming increasingly unpopular among Ghanaian students would be resuscitated to take its rightful place in the school curriculum.

The Method

The study adopted an interpretive constructivist approach to investigate History student-teachers' perceptions of effective teaching of History. The intention for adopting this approach was that it helps researchers to discern the views, perceptions, and reactions of participants towards the phenomenon under study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). By this, the researcher was able to understand the meaning of participants' experiences and how they made sense of such experiences (Grbich, 2007). Consequently, the approach helped to "develop a more overtly interpretative analysis", which helped to position "the initial description in relation to a wider social, cultural, and...theoretical context" (Larkin et al., 2006, p. 104). The population for the study comprised all final-year History teacher trainees in the University of Cape Coast. The rationale behind the choice of the final-year students was that they have had adequate exposure to the content, concepts and theories underlying the teaching of History as a subject. Again, they had undergone the field experience in teaching (practicum) and experienced the practicality of teaching the subject. The simple random sampling technique (lottery method) was employed to select five (5) final-year students to serve as the sample size for the study. This was in line with Boyd's (2001) position that participants ranging from 2 to 10 are enough to make a qualitative study saturated.

Since the study was qualitative in nature, data was collected by means of focus-group discussions with the five student-teachers, guided by a semi-structured discussion guide. The instrument was designed by the researcher, based on the key issues emerging from the literature. In all, the discussion guide was made up of three sections, each section addressing one of the key stages of teaching. Also, under each section, major and sub-questions which were mainly open-ended were outlined to address issues which were of specific interest to the study. This helped to keep discussions within the scope of the study. Apart from this, probing questions were employed to further obtain thorough understanding of participants' views and experiences. The discussions were held at the closing stage of the second semester of the 2014/2015 academic year. A convenient time was fixed at which all participants were present to take part in the discussions. All discussions were taped and transcribed into text so that the exact expressions of participants could be preserved. Thematic analysis was then used to present the findings. The findings were backed with inferences drawn from the literature.

Results and Discussion

Effective Teaching Practices at the Pre-engagement Phase

The perspectives of History teacher-trainees on effective teaching practices at the pre-teaching stage were sought. Responses showed that student-teachers perceived the acquisition of subject content knowledge and its philosophical basis, knowledge about students' characteristics, as well as good planning as comprising effective teaching practices before classroom engagement. In relation to content, respondents indicated that for effective teaching of History to take place, teachers must acquire adequate levels of content knowledge before they go to class. A respondent remarked that *"a History teacher has to read thoroughly before going to class so that he or she would be abreast with what he or she is going to teach"*. Another respondent said that *"at the pre-engagement phase, as a History teacher, you have to read a lot about what you are going to teach and gather all the available resources to make the teaching effective"*. These responses suggest that effective teaching of History implies that History teachers should arm themselves with the subject matter even before the class hour. This entails reading far and wide around the subject. With History in particular, History teachers need to read from a variety of sources and accounts in order for them to be well positioned to integrate the different historical accounts to make students gain understanding and appreciation of the past. Beside the subject content, respondents conveyed that there is the need for History teachers to understand the rationale and philosophy of teaching the subject as well as possess knowledge about other disciplines before they go to teach. They intimated that knowledge about the concepts, principles, theories and philosophies governing the subject is crucial for effective teaching to take place. In response, one participant noted; *"The philosophy behind History teaching should come to bear. The teaching of the subject involves some technicalities and so teachers should know the philosophies so that they can really teach well"*. One other respondent said that it is also necessary for History teachers to know their personal philosophies of teaching, and combine them effectively with the content to be taught. In her own words; *"Every History teacher must have his or her philosophy of teaching. Understanding content is important, but understanding content in a way that buttresses their own conception and theorisation of the teaching of History is more important to ensure teacher effectiveness"*. This affirms the position of Yilmaz (2008) who argued that History teachers must possess a firm understanding of the concepts that form the foundation of History, as well as the "generic and subject-specific pedagogical knowledge that helps the teacher transform the subject matter knowledge into effective learning experiences for students" (p. 42). This means that effective History teachers are those who know History, do History, and scaffold learning (Taylor & Young, 2003).

On knowledge about other disciplines, respondents were of the view that since History integrates knowledge from other subject areas, teachers should have knowledge of other disciplines like Geography and Economics in order to be well placed to teach certain topics effectively. This view is buttressed by Oppong and Quan-Baffuor (2014) who put forward that the facts of History are integrated with the facts of other related subjects like Geography, Sociology, Government and Economics in the use of concepts, knowledge, generalisation, theories and skill such that there is no way History can be taught without elements of other subjects. Again, respondents revealed that History teachers must get to know the various methods of teaching, the type of learners, and the context within which learning is to take place. *"The teacher has to know the variety of teaching methods available and which of them is effective in what situation. One also has to know the learners and the society in which the learning is taking place as well as the country's own context. The knowledge of the content, knowledge of learners, and knowledge of methods should all come together to give the teacher a collective understanding of what he is supposed to teach in the classroom"*, a respondent remarked. The forgoing results indicate at the pre-engagement phase, History teachers have to gain a broad view of the subject, "a firm understanding of its concepts, principles, values, theories, generalizations" (Ababio, 2013, p. 42), the various schools of thought on the subject, how the subject is integrated with other disciplines, the methods of teaching, learners and the context in which learning will take place. Effective History teachers, thus, understand the structure of the discipline, and also know the activities to outline to aid students'

understanding of the subject. Their knowledge and beliefs about the subject and its structure match with their instructional strategies (National Academy of Sciences, 2000). This, therefore, means that it is necessary for teachers to read and study far beyond the level required for their lessons (Colin, 1969). This would “give students good reasons for learning, help them define what they need to learn, and help them organize and make sense of what they should learn” (WHO, 2005, p. 9). In relation to planning, respondents were of the view that effective planning during the pre-engagement stage will culminate in effective teaching of History. According to them, planning will bring orderliness in classroom procedures, make lesson presentation systematic, and maximize instructional time. One respondent indicated that *“planning will make the History teacher deliver the content systematically. The History teacher should plan on the specific objectives to be set so that the students would know where they started and where they are going”*. Another respondent remarked; *“planning helps a lot in the teaching process because ...you know the amount of time you spend with each topic and it makes you move on smoothly... such that before you move on to another topic, the students would have grabbed what you are teaching”*. Responses further revealed that as part of planning, teachers should set clear lesson objectives and select appropriate teaching resources to accompany instruction. These objectives should be stated in ways that will help measure the achievement levels of learners at the end of the lesson, and should cover broad areas such as the cognitive and affective domains as well as help improve the writing skill of students. In the words of one respondent; *“Teachers should set clear, measurable and achievable objectives and also give projects that will bring to bear the writing skill of students”*. This means that planning of instruction, in the view of the student-teachers, is crucial to effective teaching of History. The finding, thus, reinforces Friesen’s (2009) assertion that effective teaching is initiated by thoughtfully designing lessons that stimulate students intellectually and academically. On teaching resources, there was a unanimous view that planning on resources will help reduce the abstractness associated with the teaching of History. This means that making decisions on which objectives to set for a lesson is important to effective teaching since objectives serve as the pointers that guide the teaching process. Also teaching resources serve as vehicles by which teachers can effectively convey content knowledge to students. Respondents moreover disclosed that before class hours, it is germane that History teachers consult other teachers on strategies to enhance teaching. This was deemed very important, especially, for new History teachers, because of the multi-dimensional character of History. *“History is the mother of many disciplines and so teachers should tap from the knowledge of other teachers on various topics on which such teachers have expert knowledge”*, a respondent remarked. Doing this will invariably contribute to making History teaching effective. This concurs with Friesen’s (2009) view that teachers must improve their practice in the company of other teachers.

The above discussions reveal that in the view of student-teachers, effective teaching of History begins at the period before classroom engagement. Here, History teachers acquire adequate subject matter knowledge, understand the philosophical and theoretical positions on the subject, understand learner characteristics, plan adequately in terms of lesson objectives, methods of teaching, resources to use, and also consult other teachers on strategies to improve instruction. These, in the perspective of History student-teachers would present the necessary conditions for the effective teaching of History.

Effective Teaching Practices at the Engagement Phase

The views of the respondents indicated that at the engagement phase of teaching, History teachers are supposed to show that they have in-depth understanding of the content they are charged to deliver. It was revealed that having acquired content knowledge at the pre-engagement phase, teachers are to demonstrate that they have mastery over the subject matter by looking at historical events from different viewpoints, and by citing relevant examples to season the points they discuss in class. This was made evident in the words of one respondent; *“During*

the engagement stage, the teacher has to demonstrate that he or she has acquired mastery over the subject matter. He or she should be able to cite relevant examples to buttress his or her points, and apply multiple perspectives in teaching the subject". This suggests that History student-teachers conceived effective teaching of History as involving the application of a multi-perspective approach to view past events. By this, teachers explore the different perspectives historians have about certain historical events in order to enable students appreciate the varieties of interpretations on historical actuality. It was again found that effective teachers demonstrate zeal and enthusiasm in delivering the subject matter to students. A respondent asserted; *"I think the way the way the teacher is happy teaching the subject also contributes to effective teaching. History teachers should be enthusiastic and optimistic in teaching. It should not look like the course has been forced on them to teach"*. Respondents further revealed that for teachers to demonstrate that they have acquired content knowledge, they must be able to respond to students' questions effectively and also redirect questions back at students. The point here is that History teachers must be able to communicate content in ways that facilitate students' understanding. Additionally, the content that is taught in class must be related to students' background knowledge and experiences. One respondent disclosed that *"it may be that students have some knowledge about the lesson. So it is necessary for students' knowledge to be sought when teaching"*. Effective teaching, in this case, implies seeking the prior knowledge of students in order to make the lesson proceed from the known to the unknown. This is in line with Grant and Gradwell's (2009) observation that ambitious teachers have a good depth of understanding regarding the content of the subject and consciously strive to connect the subject matter with students' experiences. It also confirms the findings of Koutrouba (2012) and Fogo (2014) that effective teachers are those who care about students' prior knowledge and connect lessons to students' personal or cultural experiences. Respondents thus perceived that effective History teaching involves integrating students' experiences and tailoring lessons along the things students already know.

Regarding the methods and resources for teaching, respondents were of the view that effective teaching connotes the use of multiple methods and resources to convey content to students. Most of the respondents revealed that during the teaching period, effective teachers use methods that cater for the involvement of students in the classroom interaction. Teacher-centered pedagogies, according to respondents, make students passive in class. As such, if a teacher realizes that one particular methodology is not helping students' assimilation, he or she has to switch over to other methods that will make students participate "fully, actively and consciously in what transpires during the period of teaching" (Boadu et al., 2014, p. 208). A respondent intimated; *"...as a teacher, you should know that your students have diverse ways of learning and different levels of conceptualisation. Sometimes when you use only the lecture method, students find it difficult to understand. So you have to vary your teaching methods, reinforcement strategies, and teaching resources so that it will cater for diversity in the classroom"*. This points to the fact that effective teaching of History involves the use of learner-centered pedagogies to make students identify with past events and motivate them make personal judgments based on evidence. The function of the teacher is to act as a guide to help students to explore and share the past in a manner that appeals to the emotions and intellectual faculties of the learner. The use of multiple methods to enhance History teaching, hence, conforms with the findings of Koutrouba (2012) and Lumpkin and Multon (2013) that multiple methods of teaching are effective for teaching, and that effective teachers use multiple instructional strategies in teaching subject content in order to meet students' individual needs and cater for diversity. It also relates to the view that effective teaching of History is less likely to occur in a traditional History classroom setting where teachers give "...content-heavy lectures, and students take notes and scour textbooks to put facts to memory" (Fogo, 2014, p. 153). On the use of multiple resources, respondents asserted that multiple resources reduce the abstract nature of History. *"They help the students to have a feel of how past incidents actually happened. For instance, taking student to the castle when teaching on the slave trade creates a*

live situation for them. So the varying of resources is important for the effective teaching of History”, a respondent remarked. Hoge (1988) shares a similar view that teaching about the past is enhanced with the careful and meaningful integration of sounds, images, films, and field trips to historical sites. Noboa (2013) also confirms that the use of a wide variety of approaches is indispensable to effective teaching of the subject.

It was again revealed that effective teaching connotes ensuring a conducive, comfortable, and supportive learning environment. This is because effective teaching cannot take place when the class is noisy or when there is a disruptive behaviour of some sort. *“The environment in which the interaction takes place is very necessary so teachers have to make sure that the place is conducive and good enough for students to participate in the lesson”*, a respondent disclosed. This relates directly to classroom management. Respondents pointed out that effective History teachers are democratic in managing their classrooms. Such teachers set rules with students to guide the behaviours of students. Therefore, if History teachers are able to manage the classroom effectively, there will be less disruptive behavior and effective teaching can take place because all attention will be directed toward the teaching and learning process. This falls in line with Young and Shaw’s (1999) position that conducive learning environment and learner enthusiasm are key to measuring teacher effectiveness. Similarly, the result consolidates the finding of Koutrouba (2012) that building a rich teacher-student interaction, and ensuring productive classroom management contributes to effective teaching.

Regarding the forms of assessment in History, student-teachers posited that in order to ensure effective teaching of History, there should be class exercises and assignments at the end of every lesson to inform teachers on whether what they taught has been assimilated or not. Responses showed that to the student-teachers, assessment in History should be based on both multiple choice and essay-type tests. They explained that multiple choice tests will make students read wide in an attempt to score high marks while essay-type tests are necessary to improve the writing skills and communicative skills of students as well as develop students’ critical thinking abilities and imaginative faculties. This is because one of the important dimensions of effective teaching of History is that it must activate the imaginative ability of the student. In the words of one respondent; *“Effective History teachers vary their assessment strategies and procedures. The questions they ask are not always the recall type. They also ask High order questions to make students add their own judgments to what is given them in class”*. This implies that student-teachers perceived that effective History teachers use alternative assessment strategies and combine low and high order questions to create a balance and ensure a holistic development of students. This, in their view, ensures learning on the part of students and thus contributes to effective teaching of History. Hence, Friesen’s (2009) assertion that assessment practices must clearly focus on enhancing students’ progress in learning, is confirmed.

From the foregoing, it is evident that History student-teachers perceived that effective teaching of History at the engagement phase embraces demonstrating mastery over the subject matter, teaching events from multiple viewpoints, demonstrating enthusiasm in content delivery, responding to students’ questions effectively, relating lesson to students’ prior knowledge, and using multiple learner-centered methods and resources in conveying content. Again, student-teachers opined that effective teaching of History involves managing the classroom effectively in order to ensure a conducive and supportive learning environment, as well as varying assessment techniques to cater for all levels of learner abilities in the classroom. The above confirms the view of Lee et al. (2009) that subject knowledge itself does not make one an effective teacher but a combination of knowledge of subject matter with other variables such as preparation of teaching material, setting of clear objectives, enthusiasm, and the ability to present learning materials clearly, that come together to make teaching effective.

Effective Teaching Practices at the Post-engagement Phase

History teachers' work continues even after the classroom interaction has taken place. The effectiveness of the teacher outside the classroom environment can therefore be brought to scrutiny. At the post-engagement phase of teaching, respondents mentioned that teachers should continue to show love and pay attention to students' concerns. They said that where there is a genuine need, History teachers have to attend to those needs since all the needs and concerns of students cannot be met in the classroom. One respondent, for instance, intimated that *"sometimes, the period is not enough to achieve all objectives, so if students come after class, the teacher has to show them care, concern and attention by explaining the lesson more or giving them some task to do"*. This means that effective teachers make time after instructional periods to give extra attention to students who have concerns on the lesson taught or to even discuss non-academic issues. By this, students feel a sense of belongingness and are encouraged to approach the teachers on any problems they might face. This is closely tied to how approachable teachers are. Effective teachers convey a warm and positive outlook such that students feel at ease to approach them. A respondent disclosed that *"as a teacher, you serve as a parent in the school and so you have to be approachable. When students like a teacher, they do very well in the teachers' subject but once you make yourself inapproachable, students lose interest in your subject"*. This suggests that an open and healthy interaction with students can lead to positive attitude towards the subject, meaning that likeness for a teacher can result in likeness for the teacher's subject. The self-image that is conveyed by teachers therefore serves as an additional motivation for students to put up better performances in order to continue winning the attention and care of teachers. In the view of the respondents therefore, effective teaching, at the post-engagement phase, connotes opening up for students and attending to their concerns after class hours. This affirms the standpoints of Young and Shaw (1999) and Koutrouba (2012) that effective teachers show concern for student learning, and exhibit kindness, mindfulness, helpfulness, warmth, patience, and responsiveness to students' needs and interests. Furthermore, this finding corroborates Feldman's (1976) view that teacher availability and relationship or interaction with students is key to effective teaching.

Responses further revealed that it is necessary for History teachers to seek feedback from students in order to restructure instruction. A respondent underscored the value of feedback by stating that, *"sometimes, after teaching, it seems students have understood what you taught but when you give them exercises, assignments, and projects, you get to know their responses and decide to refine your teaching methods or resources... So feedback is necessary to ensure effective teaching"*. This is an indication that effective teachers seek constant feedback from students in order to be well informed on how to strategise for their subsequent lessons. Lumpkin and Multon (2013), in this light, describe effective teachers as those who seek feedback from students and make changes in instruction in response to this feedback. At post-engagement stage also, respondents pointed out the necessity for History teachers to update their knowledge in terms of content and pedagogy. *"As the world is evolving, things keep changing and new History books get published, So as a teacher, you need to update yourself constantly so that you will be abreast with time and at all times put your students at the forefront in terms of knowledge"*, a respondent remarked. Another respondent said that *"History teachers need to update themselves because the syllabus is updated very often with some topics removed and others added. When they update themselves History teachers, they will be abreast with these issues and prepare students to be at par with the tempest of the time"*. This suggests that History teachers need to join associations that would inform them on the changing trends in teaching, and also attend conferences, seminars and workshops to be exposed to research findings on History teaching in order to upgrade their knowledge in content and pedagogy. This reflects Yilmaz's (2008) explanation that it is necessary for History teachers to be part of professional organisations, read research papers, and participate in career conferences in order to be abreast with the latest developments in theory and research. Likewise, it corroborates Lumpkin and Multon's (2013) description that effective teachers are those who engage in professional endeavors and developmental activities to enhance their teaching.

Findings in relation to the post-engagement phase of teaching indicate that student-teachers conceived of effective teaching of History in the following ways: attending to students' concerns after class, being open and having an unconditional positive regard toward students, seeking feedback from students to revise instruction, and updating teachers' knowledge in content and pedagogy. Student-teachers, therefore, viewed effective teaching as a process that continues even after instruction has ended in the classroom.

Conclusion

The study has revealed that in the view of History student-teachers, effective teaching practices occur at all three levels or stages of teaching. At the pre-engagement phase, it was found that student-teachers view effective teaching as involving the acquisition of subject matter knowledge, knowledge about the philosophies and theories on the subject, and knowledge about students' characteristics. Also, teachers are supposed to plan adequately in terms of lesson objectives, methods of teaching, teaching-learning resources, and also consult other teachers on how to improve instruction. This leads to the engagement phase, where according to student-teachers, effective History teachers demonstrate overarching mastery over the content, teach events from multiple perspectives, show enthusiasm in content delivery, respond to students' questions effectively, relate lessons to students' prior knowledge, and use multiple instructional methods and resources in transmitting content to students. Furthermore, at this stage, student-teachers opined that effective teaching of History embraces effective classroom management, creating positive and supportive learning environment, and using a variety of assessment techniques to cater for all domains of learning. At the post-engagement phase, it was found that effective teachers attend to students' concerns after class, are open and positive towards students, seek feedback from students, and constantly update their content and pedagogic knowledge.

The findings indicate that the perception of History student-teachers on effective teaching of History is linked to four out of the seven knowledge-base areas espoused by Shulman (1987). These are; content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, and pedagogical content knowledge. Using Shulman's Knowledge base as the standard, one could say that student-teachers understanding of effective teaching of History is somewhat deficient. However, care must be taken in drawing such a conclusion because the concept of effective teaching is in itself a broad one, involving the interplay of a multiplicity of variables, some of which are implicit. From another direction, when the findings are examined in connection with the input, process, and product variables (Goe et al., 2008), student-teachers' perception on effective History teaching could be seen as tilted towards the input and process variables. This is because the findings relate to how factors such as teaching methods, teaching resources, assessment procedures, classroom management, teacher personal qualities, teaching skills, and subject matter mastery impact on teaching both in and out of class. Thus, every desired and observed change in behaviour of learners achieved at the end of the teaching-learning process is the result of certain input and process variables employed by teachers in the teaching process (Sekyi-Acquah, 2009). It is these input and process variables that make it possible for a History teacher to be effective in carrying out the teaching mandate, and not only product variables. From the foregoing findings and argument, History student-teachers could be said to be possessing an appreciable level of understanding regarding what constitutes effective History teaching.

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