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Extensiveness of History Teachers' Preparation of Table of Specifications on Enhancing Students' Academic Achievements in Public Secondary Schools in Mwanga District, Tanzania

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Abstract:- Authentic determination of evidence of students' academic achievement is demonstrated in the best way by using a table of specification in which this study aimed at making its focus. Thus, study sought to investigatethe extent that history teachers prepare table of specification in enhancing academic achievements in public secondary schools in Mwanga district, Tanzania. Anchored on Validity theory, proposed by Messick in 1989, the study employed a convergent design under mixed methods approach to collect information from target population of 144 history teachers, 135 school quality assurers, 27 heads of school, 27 heads of history department, 1 chief quality assurer and 1 district secondary education officer made a total of 308 respondents. Sample size has total of 150 respondents that comprised 69 history teachers, 16 heads of schools, 16 heads of history department, 1 chief quality assurer and 48 school internal quality assurers that were selected through stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The study used questionnaire to obtain quantitative data from history teachers and school internal quality assurers and interview guide to acquire qualitative data from chief quality assurer. The study also used interview schedule to obtain the information from the history head of departments and school internal quality assurers. Validity of instruments was established through research experts in assessment and evaluation in the faculty of education from Mwenge Catholic University. Cronbach Alpha technique was used to establish the reliability of the Likert type items constituted in the questionnaires at a coefficient of 0.820. Dependability of qualitative data collection instruments was ensured through triangulation and peer debriefing. The study adhered to research ethical issues such as: signing consent forms, confidentiality, anonymity, and citation and referencing to avoid plagiarism. The study revealed that: history teachers in public secondary schools prepare and use table of specifications to outline the topics and skills to be assessed in exams or assignments to the low extent. The study concludes that, history teachers in public secondary schools do not prepare and use table of specification to outline the topics and skills to be assessed in exams or assignments and hence they fail to consider cognitive levels of learning. The study recommends to the District Chief Quality Assurer to create awareness to history teachers on viability of the preparation and usability of the table of specifications to ensure validity of testing and assessment procedures. The study also recommends that, heads of history department should ensure that history teachers prepare and use table of specifications during the entire assessment process to ensure students' higher academic achievements.

Keywords:- *Extensiveness, Table of Specifications, Academic Achievement, Assessment.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Students' academic achievement is the central part of the entire process of teaching and learning. Table of Specifications being an essential tool that education practitioners such as teachers, assessment carriers and evaluators use to ensure that assessment accurately reflect the curriculum and instructional goals (McTighe & Ferrara, 2021). The Table of Specifications (TOS) is a two-dimensional chart that aligns instructional content with cognitive levels of learning, ensuring a balanced representation of both (Bechard et al., 2021). According to Mohan (2023) the Table of Specifications is also known as a test blueprint, and a tool used by history teachers to ensure that assessments align with learning objectives and curriculum standards of the history subject. By systematically outlining the content and cognitive levels to be tested, the TOS helps teachers create balanced and fair assessments, which in turn can improve students' academic performance (Baffoe, 2021). The Table of Specifications (TOS) is crucial in teaching history for several reasons. It ensures alignment with curriculum objectives by covering essential content areas and cognitive levels specified in the curriculum, focusing on key learning objectives, and ensuring students are tested on expected material. As a blueprint, the TOS creates balanced assessments that encompass different historical periods, geographical regions, and themes, making the evaluation comprehensive (Ati-Ningsih &Siwi-Amumpuni, 2023). It also facilitates fair and

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objective assessments by distributing questions proportionately across content and cognitive levels, reducing bias, and ensuring equal opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, and analytical skills.

Additionally, TOS enhances instructional planning by helping teachers review the curriculum, identify key content areas and learning outcomes, and organize their teaching in a structured manner to cover all important topics, (Abate and Mishore, 2024). This structured approach is particularly beneficial in history, where the vast scope of content can be challenging to manage without a clear and organized plan. Overall, the TOS not only aids in creating effective assessments but also supports teachers in delivering comprehensive and focused instruction, ultimately improving student learning outcomes in history.

The extent history teachers prepare Table of Specifications (TOS) is a critical issue that impacts the quality of assessment process in enhancing academic achievements particularly in public secondary schools. Globally, the quality of education is a paramount concern for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders. The use of effective assessment tools like the Table of Specifications is recognized as essential in enhancing student learning outcomes. According to Anderson and Krathwohl (2019), well-constructed assessments based on a detailed TOS can provide a clear roadmap for both teachers and students, ensuring that the evaluation process is comprehensive and objective. The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) emphasizes that assessments must align with educational objectives to improve student performance (OECD, 2019). In many countries, the integration of TOS in educational practices is seen as a means to bridge the gap between curriculum design and student assessment. In the United States, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) highlighted the importance of standards-based education, where assessments are directly linked to predefined learning outcomes (Lawson, 2023; DeBoer, 2023).This approach has been instrumental in identifying and addressing educational disparities, thereby enhancing overall academic achievements. Further, research conducted by Shavelson et al. (2020) indicates that the use of TOS not only improves academic outcomes but also supports teachers in developing more structured and targeted instructional strategies. This alignment ensures that students are assessed on what they have been taught, which can help in reducing test anxiety and improving performance in the history subject.

Despite the recognized benefits, the global adoption and effective use of TOS is insufficient due to the need for comprehensive teacher training and the availability of resources to support the development and implementation of TOS (Anderson & Nderitu, 2022). Teachers often require professional development to understand how to construct and use TOS effectively, which is not uniformly available across all educational systems (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). In Africa, the education sector faces numerous impediments including inadequate resources, teacher shortages, and varied levels of curriculum implementation. The use of TOS in enhancing academic achievements is particularly relevant in this context. Research indicates that many African countries struggle with aligning assessments with curricular goals, leading to inconsistencies in student performance (UNESCO, 2020) In South Africa, for instance, the Department of Basic Education has emphasized the need for effective assessment practices to improve educational outcomes (Meier& West, 2020). Studies have shown that when teachers use TOS to plan their assessments, students demonstrate better understanding and retention of historical concepts (Maringe& Prew, 2021). Similarly, in Nigeria, the adoption of TOS in secondary schools has been linked to improved student performance in national examinations (Adewumi & Babajide, 2020).

In Kenya, TOS helped teachers to cover the curriculum more comprehensively and ensured that students were better prepared for exams (Wanjala and Mbugua, 2020). This approach also fostered greater accountability among teachers, as they were more conscious of adhering to the curriculum guidelines. Despite these positive trends, there remains a significant gap in the widespread use of TOS across the continent. Challenges such as lack of training for teachers and limited access to resources hinder the effective implementation of TOS in many African countries (Berhe et al., 2024). Addressing these issues is crucial for improving the overall quality of education and academic achievements. Additionally, cultural factors and educational policies in different African countries can influence the adoption and effectiveness of TOS (Asadullah et al., 2020). In regions where there is less emphasis on standardized testing, the use of TOS may be less prevalent. This necessitates a tailored approach to professional development and resource allocation to ensure that TOS can be effectively integrated into diverse educational contexts (UNESCO, 2020).

In Tanzania, the education system has undergone several reforms aimed at improving the quality of education and student outcomes (Makiya et a., 2022). The usability of history teachers' prepared TOS is an important aspect of these reforms. According to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2021), aligning assessments with the curriculum is vital for ensuring that students achieve the intended learning outcomes (Mashingia, 2023). Recent studies have highlighted the challenges faced by Tanzanian history teachers in developing and using TOS effectively. Teachers lack the necessary skills and knowledge to create comprehensive TOS, resulting in assessments that do not accurately reflect the curriculum (Mcharazo, 2022). This misalignment often leads to poor student performance in history examinations.

Despite the government's provision of guideline through NECTA, that outline the assessment procedures for secondary schools, students' performance in History subject as the main indicator for their history subject achievements remain questionable with large number of students(above 68%) scored "D" and "F" grades from 2019 to 2023 (NECTA, 2023). The study conducted exclusively in Mwanga District, which is located in the Kilimanjaro region and has been identified as having low academic performance

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in the history subject in national examinations according to NECTA reports 2023, Therefore, the study on the extent history teachers prepare Table of Specifications is a critical factor in enhancing academic achievements in public secondary schools and found its legality in Tanzania, particularly in Mwanga district as it addresses the gaps in teacher training and resource availability is crucial for maximizing the benefits of TOS in enhancing academic achievements in history education.

- *Statement of the Problem*

Negligence in construction and use of table of specifications (TOS) has become a topic of concern among history teachers that has rendered students with low academic achievement in public secondary schools. TOS is a crucial tool used by history teachers to ensure that assessments accurately reflect the curriculum and learning objectives (Adiyaa et al., 2022).History teachers have been questioned about having poor performance in history subject that have been associated with failure to prepare and use TOS which has led to inconsistent and unreliable assessments. It is also been observed generally that questions set by teachers do not adequately reflect the intended learning objectives or the appropriate cognitive levels, such as knowledge, comprehension, analysis, and evaluation (Maisiba&Azaliwa, 2024; Ndomondo et al., 2022). Previous interventions by educational administrators focused on teacher training programs and workshops that aimed to address the gap but have not systematically evaluated their impact on academic outcomes in history education. This study filled the gap by investigating the extent to which history teachers in Mwanga District prepare and use TOS to enhance students' academic achievements.

- *Research Question*

To what extent does history teachers prepare table of specifications to enhance academic achievements in public secondary schools in Mwanga district?

- *Significance of the Study*

The significance of this study is substantial for multiple stakeholders and the field of educational assessment. The study findings will ensure fair and valid students' assessment in history subject. Heads of school, quality assurers and the District Secondary Education Officer will benefit from this study. The study will also contribute to the body of knowledge and theory in educational assessment by providing empirical evidence on the extent that history teachers prepare table of specifications in Mwanga District.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was guided by Validity theory proposed by Messick in 1989, is a cornerstone in the field of educational assessment, providing a comprehensive framework for evaluating the validity of assessment results. Validity theory posits that validity is not an inherent property of an assessment instrument but rather an interpretation of the meaning and use of assessment outcomes (Christie &Alkin, 2023). Messick's theory challenges the traditional view of validity as a single, static attribute of tests and instead emphasizes the multifaceted nature of validity, encompassing various sources of evidence and interpretations. The validity theory also asserts that assessments should be evaluated based on the inferences and interpretations drawn from their results, rather than solely on their content or format (Chapelle & Lee, 2021). The theory emphasizes that validity encompasses both the test's intended purposes and its actual uses, considering not only the technical aspects of the test (e.g., reliability and fairness) but also the social consequences of its use (Findley et al., 2021).In relation to the study on the usability of history teachers' prepared table of specification in enhancing academic achievements in public secondary schools in Mwanga District, Tanzania, Messick's assumptions highlight the importance of ensuring that the table of specification accurately reflects the curriculum content and learning objectives it aims to assess. This involves verifying that the table aligns with the instructional goals and that it can effectively guide both teaching and assessment practices to improve student outcomes. Additionally, the social consequences of using such a table must be considered, ensuring that it promotes equitable educational opportunities and does not inadvertently reinforce existing disparities. By applying Messick's unified validity framework, the study can critically evaluate the efficacy of the table of specification in enhancing academic achievements, ensuring that it not only meets technical standards but also supports broader educational goals and fairness.

III. REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES

- *The Extent Do History Teachers Prepare Table of Specification to Enhance Academic Achievements in Public Secondary Schools*

In the realm of education, history teachers hold a significant responsibility in preparing assessments that effectively enhance students' academic achievements. One valuable tool that aids in this endeavor is the Table of Specifications (TOS). The TOS serves as a blueprint, guiding history teachers in designing assessments that comprehensively cover the curriculum, align with learning objectives, and assess different cognitive levels.

Gottlieb et al. (2023) conducted a seedy about Educator's blueprint: A how-to guide for developing high-quality multiple-choice questions in Chicago Illinois, USA. The study used a cross-sectional survey design with a mailed questionnaire for teachers. 73 Teachers were surveyed randomly to participate in the study. The findings of the study indicated that teachers' blueprint paper provides 10 strategies for developing high-quality multiple-choice questions. However, it is worth noting that the study findings are based solely on the responses of teachers, which represent a single category of respondents. The exclusion of other important stakeholders, such as school heads and quality assurers, limits the comprehensive understanding of how teachers prepare table of specifications that enhance students' academic achievement.

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AlFallay (2019) conducted a study about test specifications and blueprints: reality and expectations in Saudi Arabia. The study used a survey design with a questionnaire for teachers and students and an interview schedule for principals. The teachers and students were selected using probability sampling procedures such as stratified and simple random sampling while the principals were purposively selected. The study involved 5 schools, 50 students 20 teachers, and 5 principals. The study revealed that the study participants rarely follow the recommended guidelines in preparing their test specifications and blueprints. It was also found that the participants usually prepared their tests without prior planning. The study conducted by AlFallay(2019) focusing solely on students, teachers, and school heads may limit the reliability and comprehensiveness of the findings. To overcome this limitation, the current study adopted a more inclusive approach by involving a wider range of stakeholders. In addition to teachers, students, and principals, the study also engaged other relevant experts, such as assessment professionals and quality assurers.

Milawati (2019) conducted a study about a blueprint as a base for building better teacher-made tests in Indonesia. The study employed a case study design with school heads and teachers in the school as the key participants. The study involved 4school heads and 4 teachers who were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The study was conducted using an interview guide as the sole data collection instrument. The study found seven cornerstones of assessment, how to plan, and how to make a teacher-made test blueprint. Knowing more about that issue not only helped the teacher to assess the students more effectively, but it also provided the teacher with a means of evaluating the teaching-learning process and helped the teacher to produce tests that motivate the students to learn. The study solely relied on interviews as the data collection instrument. Interviews can be subjective and influenced by biases, such as social desirability or recall bias. The absence of multiple data sources or triangulation methods may decrease the reliability and validity of the findings. Therefore, the current study utilized a combination of interviews, observations, and document analysis to gather data. This mixed-methods approach provided a more comprehensive understanding of teacher-made test blueprints, allowing for triangulation of data and increased reliability and validity.

Egereonu (2023) conducted a study about the test-blueprint and its effects on the validity of teacher-made tests in Kenya. The sample consisted of six specialists in tests and measurement out of twelve teachers as a population. Three provided the course outline and questions and the other three rated the instrument. A rater-reliability coefficient using the sum of squares method, and Rank order correlation gave respectively .92 and .71. Generally, from all indication's alt schools displayed interest in setting mainly lower aspects of taxonomy levels in Basic knowledge and comprehension than other higher levels of Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation. School C had better coverage than schools A and B. The study only included specialists in tests and measurement as participants. Excluding other stakeholders, such as teachers who develop and administer the tests, may lead to a narrow understanding of the factors influencing test validity. The perspectives of teachers who are actively engaged in the process of creating teacher-made tests may provide valuable insights. The current study engaged not only specialists in tests and measurement but also teachers who are actively involved in creating teacher-made tests. This broader inclusion of participants provided a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing test blueprint development and validity.

Amani et al. (2021) conducted a study about secondary school teachers' knowledge on procedures for constructing quality classroom tests in Tanzania. This study was conducted with a convenient sample of 246 secondary school teachers who were drawn from four regions in Tanzania, namely Lindi, Mtwara, Kilimanjaro, and Arusha. The study employed a quantitative research approach with the use of semi-structured questionnaires as the data collection tool. The findings show that the majority of the participant teachers lacked competences for preparing quality classroom tests, particularly on the use of Table of Specification and test-item analysis. The results showed that more than 70% of the teachers had never received in-service training on the subjects of assessment and testing. It was further found that the teachers lacked professional support on how to prepare matching items, short answers, and multiple-choice test items. The study by Amani et al. (2021) use convenience sample, which may introduce sampling bias and limit the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, the current study aimed to improve upon the methodology by employing a more rigorous sampling technique, such as stratified random sampling.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a convergent design under a mixed methods research approach involves the collection of qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously in a single phase for the determination of understanding of the research problem in detail (Dawadi et al., 2021; Manzoor, 2020). Mwanga district has a total of 27 public secondary schools, witha total of 144 history teachers, 27 heads of schools employed by the government of Tanzania, 1 District Secondary Education Officer, 27 Heads of History Department, 1 Chief Quality Assurer, and 48 school internal quality assurer making a total of 248 population (BEST, 2023). Probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used to obtain the study sample of16 public secondary schools with a total of 69 history teachers, 16 heads of schools employed by the government of Tanzania, 16 heads of the history department, 1 chief quality assurer, and 32schools' internal quality assurer making a total of 127 respondents. Qualitative data were obtained through interview guides and analyzed thematically whereas, quantitative data were collected by using questionnaires and analyzed descriptively in the form of percentages, and means presented in the table. Cronbach Alpha technique was used to establish the reliability of the questionnaire at a coefficient of 0.820. The trustworthiness of the qualitative data was ensured by the triangulation of instruments.

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V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study assessed the extent to which history teachers prepare table of specification to enhance academic achievements in public secondary schools in Mwanga district. The information sought by the study from respondents was on the preparation and usefulness of a table of specifications enhancing academic achievements in public secondary schools.

Data is presentenced in frequencies percentages and mean scores that its average made a grand mean. It is given that: 0-39% is extremely minority; 40-49% minority, 50-60% moderate, 61-79% majority, 80-100% extreme majority (Taherdoost, 2019). It is also defined that: the mean score of 1-2.4 is negative perception; 2.5 moderate perception and 2.6-5 is positive perception.

Table 1. Teachers and Internal Quality Assurance Responses on the Extent Does History Teachers Prepare Table of Specification to Enhance Academic Achievements in PSS (N=69 Teachers, 16 SIQA)

Statements		VLE		LE		ME		HE		VHE		M
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
i.History teacher uses a table of specifications to outline the topics and skills to be assessed in exams or assignments	Teachers	19	25.3	27	36.0	9	12.0	14	18.7	6	8.0	2.48
	IQA	5	31.2	10	62.5	1	6.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	1.75
ii.History teachers define specific areas to be covered in the table of specifications to improve students' achievement	Teachers	16	21.3	33	44.0	5	6.7	16	21.3	5	6.7	2.48
	IQA	2	12.5	12	75.0	2	12.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	2.00
iii.History teachers consider the cognitive levels of learning in the table of specifications to improve performance	Teachers	15	20.3	31	41.9	8	10.8	16	21.6	4	5.4	2.50
	IQA	2	12.5	12	75.0	2	12.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	2.00
v.History teachers ensure that the table of specification represents a balanced distribution of topics.	Teachers	12	16.0	32	42.7	5	6.7	16	21.3	10	13.3	2.73
	IQA	3	18.8	12	75.0	1	6.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	1.87
v.History teachers include a variety of items in the table of specifications to measure critical thinking	Teachers	16	21.3	26	34.7	6	8.0	21	28.0	6	8.0	2.67
	IQA	5	31.2	10	62.5	1	6.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	1.75
vi.The table of specificationshelps to identify areas of strength and weakness in student learning	Teachers	20	26.7	23	30.7	7	9.3	15	20.0	10	13.3	2.63
	IQA	5	31.2	10	62.5	1	6.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	1.75
vii.The table of specifications assists a teacher in allocating appropriate time for each content area.	Teachers	15	20.3	28	37.8	7	9.5	15	20.3	9	12.2	2.66
	IQA	5	31.2	9	56.2	2	12.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	1.81
i.Tables of specifications promote fair and unbiased assessment practices.	Teachers	10	13.3	35	46.7	5	6.7	14	18.7	11	14.7	2.75
	IQA	5	31.2	10	62.5	1	6.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	1.75
x.Tables of Specifications help to evaluate student progress and adjust instruction accordingly.	Teachers	11	14.7	33	44.0	5	6.7	19	25.3	7	9.3	2.71
	IQA	8	50.0	7	43.8	1	6.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	1.56
x.The table of specifications contributes to improved academic achievements in the history subject	Teachers	10	13.3	32	42.7	5	6.7	14	18.7	14	18.7	2.87
	IQA	5	31.2	10	62.5	1	6.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	1.75

Source(Field Data, 2024)

Key: Very Low Extent (VLE) Low Extent (LE), Moderate Extent (ME), High Extent (HE), Very High Extent (VHE)

Data in Table 1 shows that the majority and extreme majority (61.3% and 93.7%) of the teachers and internal quality assurance rated very low extent and low extent to the statement that history teacher uses a table of specification to outline the topics and skills to be assessed in exams or assignments in a corresponding manner. This information indicates that teachers and internal quality assurance did not align with the statement that history teacher uses a table of specifications to outline the topics and skills to be assessed in exams or assignments. This finding specifies that history teachers in public secondary schools do not prepare and use table of specification to outline the topics and skills to be assessed in exams or assignments. The findings from the teachers and internal quality assurance were supported by the Chief Quality Assurance (CQA) during the face-to-face interview who stated that:

It is true that history teachers in public secondary schools do not prepare and utilize tables of specification when outlining topics and skills to be assessed in exams or assignments. This lack of structured planning can result in assessments that do not comprehensively cover the

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curriculum or accurately measure students' understanding and skills, ultimately affecting the quality and effectiveness of history subject (CQA, Personal Communication, May 17th, 2024).

The information from CQA suggests that history teachers in public secondary schools in Mwanga district do not be adequately preparing tables of specification, which could negatively impact academic achievement. This implies that without a structured framework to guide the assessment process, exams and assignments may not comprehensively cover the necessary topics and skills, leading to gaps in student learning and a potential decrease in overall academic performance. The lack of preparation and use of tables of specification highlights a need for improved planning and instructional strategies to enhance educational outcomes in history education. These findings reflect what was proposed by the study by Deghaye, (2021) that teachers, particularly in under-resourced or less supported educational settings, lack the training or awareness to effectively use tables of specification.

Also, Data in Table 1 indicates that the majority and greater majority (62.2% and 87.5%) of the teachers and internal quality assurance rated very low extent and low extent respectively to the statement that history teachers consider the cognitive levels of learning in the table of specification to improve performance. This shows that teachers and internal school quality are of the opinion that do not history teacher consider the cognitive levels of learning in the table of specifications to improve performance. The results implies that history teachers in public secondary schools in Mwanga district do not consider the cognitive levels of learning in the table of specifications to improve performance as they do not prepare and use the table of specifications when teaching and assessing history subject. The findings from the teachers and internal quality assurance were supported by the Chief Quality Assurance (CQA) during the face-to-face interview who stated that:

History teachers in public secondary schools in Mwanga district do not consider the cognitive levels of learning in the table of specifications, which impedes students' academic performance. A table of specifications (TOS) is an essential tool that helps teachers align their instructional objectives with assessment items, ensuring a balanced evaluation that covers various cognitive levels as per Bloom's Taxonomy: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (CQA, Personal Communication, May 17th, 2024).

The information from CQA specifies that history teachers do not specify the cognitive levels of learning in the table of specifications, a matter that has challenges to the academic performance of the students in public secondary schools.This finding suggests that history teachers fail to differentiate and target various cognitive skills, such as remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating, when planning their lessons and assessments. This lack of specificity can lead to suboptimal academic achievement among students because it prevents a comprehensive evaluation and development of their cognitive abilities.

The findings are in agreement with the study of Gierl et al. (2018) who found that, incorporating a well-defined table of specifications in curriculum planning significantly improves the reliability and validity of assessments. Similarly, Suurtamm and Koch (2019) argue that detailed and cognitively balanced instructional plans lead to better student engagement and higher academic achievement. Without such specification, there is a risk of focusing disproportionately on lower-order cognitive skills, thereby neglecting critical thinking and problem-solving abilities essential for academic success (Wang et al., 2020).

Likewise, Data in Table 1 indicates a slight majority and extreme majority (56.0% and 93.7%) of the teachers and internal quality assurance rated very low extent and low extent correspondingly to the statement that table of specifications contributes to improved academic achievements in the history subject. This information shows that teachers and internal quality assurance extend that table of specifications do not contribute to improved academic achievements in the history subject. This implies that history teachers do not prepare table of specifications and hence teachers believe that it not contributing to the improvement of academic achievements in the history subject in public secondary schools in Mwanga district. Karanja and Mbugua (2019) add similar findings that teachers who do not utilize tables of specifications often fail to provide balanced and comprehensive assessments, leading to a narrow focus on certain content areas while neglecting others. This can result in gaps in student learning and understanding, which negatively impacts academic performance. Research by Martone and Sireci (2020) suggests that the lack of a table of specifications can lead to misalignment between what is taught and what is assessed, causing students to be inadequately prepared for exams. This misalignment can create a disconnect between instruction and assessment, which can hinder students' academic achievements.

Moreover, Data in Table 1 indicates a slight majority and extreme majority (56.0% and 93.7%) of the teachers and internal quality assurance rated very low extent and low extent consistently to the statement that history teachers include a variety of items in the table of specification to measure critical thinking. This information from the teachers and internal quality assurance specify that history teachers do not include a variety of items in the table of specifications to measure critical thinking. The findings suggest that history teachers in public secondary schools in Mwanga do not prepare table of specifications and hence the items that measure critical thinking during teaching and assessment are not included.

During the face-to-face with the CQA on whether history teacher include a variety of items in the table of specification to measure critical thinking. The Officer claimed that:

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History teachers in public secondary schools in Mwanga do not prepare tables of specifications, which results in the exclusion of items that measure critical thinking during teaching and assessment. This omission is significant because tables of specifications are essential for ensuring that all cognitive levels, including critical thinking skills, are adequately addressed in both instruction and evaluation. Without this structured approach, assessments may focus disproportionately on lower-order thinking skills, such as recall and comprehension, while neglecting higher-order skills like analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, ultimately hindering students' overall academic development and preparedness (CQA, Personal Communication, May 17th, 2024).

The opinions from the DCQA show that history teachers in public secondary schools in Mwanga do not prepare tables of specifications, which results in the exclusion of items that measure critical thinking during teaching and assessment. This finding entails that the teachers' failure to create and utilize tables of specifications leads to an imbalanced and potentially ineffective educational experience for students. According to Kartowagiran and Rohaeti, (2021), tables of specifications are tools that help ensure that various cognitive levels, including critical thinking, are systematically covered in both teaching and assessment. By not preparing these tables, teachers may inadvertently focus predominantly on lower-order cognitive skills such as memorization and basic understanding, while neglecting higher-order thinking skills like analysis, evaluation, and synthesis.

In additional to the teachers and internal quality assurance, other respondents who provided information were heads of schools, internal school quality assurers, and history heads of departments through interview schedules. Table 2 illustrates the responses from the heads of schools, internal school quality assurances, and history heads of departments. The responses were in the form of YES and NO to the provided statement, hence the researcher decided to use NO responses from the respondents as they ranked higher than YES responses.

Table 2. Heads of the History Department, School Internal Quality Assurance, and Heads of Schools Responses on the Extent to Which History Teachers Prepare a Table of Specification to Enhance Academic Achievements in PSS (N=16 Hhsd, 16 SIQA and 9 Hos)

The extent does a history teacher preparing table of specification to enhance academic achievements in public secondary schools in Mwanga district	HHsD		SIQA		HoS	
	f	%	F	%	f	%
i. History teacher uses a table of specification to outline the topics and skills to be assessed in exams or assignments	15	93.8	16	100	8	88.9
ii. History teachers define clearly specific areas to be covered in the table of specification to improve students' achievement	14	87.5	14	87.5	9	100
iii. History teacher consider the cognitive levels of learning in the table of specification to improve performance	15	93.8	15	93.8	8	88.9
iv. History teacher ensure that table of specification represents a balanced distribution of topics.	15	93.8	16	100	9	100
v. History teacher include a variety of items in the table of specification to measure critical thinking	14	87.5	14	87.5	9	100

Source: Field Data (2024)

Data in Table 2 specifies that, extreme majority (88.9%, 93.8%, and 100%) of the heads of schools, and school internal quality assurance responded NO respectively to the statement that history teacher uses a table of specification to outline the topics and skills to be assessed in exams or assignments. The information from the respondents indicates that history teachers do not use a table of specification to outline the topics and skills to be assessed in exams or assignments since they don't take time to prepare them during the teaching and assessment process. This implies that suggests that there is a lack of systematic planning in the educational approach of these teachers. Tables of specifications are crucial for ensuring that assessments comprehensively cover the intended curriculum and various cognitive levels. Without these tables, there is a risk that assessments may be unbalanced, focusing too much on certain topics or lower-order thinking skills while neglecting others, such as critical thinking and analysis. This is supported by the study done by Filgona and Sakiyo (2020) that lack of preparation and use of table of specifications lead to inadequate preparation of students for exams, resulting in poor academic performance and a lack of essential skills needed for further education and real-world applications. The Validity theory proposed by Messick in 1989 emphasizes the importance of assessments accurately measuring what they are intended to measure and ensuring the fairness and relevance of the assessment process. When history teachers do not use a table of specifications (ToS) to outline the topics and skills to be assessed, it compromises the content and construct validity of their assessments. This means that important topics and cognitive skills may be omitted, leading to exams that do not fully represent the curriculum or accurately reflect students' abilities. Furthermore, the lack of systematic assessment planning can result in unfair or inconsistent evaluations, ultimately impacting students' learning outcomes and preparation for future academic challenges.

Data in Table 2 specify that the extreme majority (88.9%, 93.8% and 93.8%) of the heads of schools, school internal quality assurance responded NO in a corresponding manner to the statement that history teachers consider the

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cognitive levels of learning in the table of specification to improve performance. This information from the respondents indicates that history teachers do not consider the cognitive levels of learning in the table of specification to improve performance during teaching and learning as well as during the assessment processes.

This finding implies that history teachers are not systematically aligning their teaching, learning activities, and assessments with the cognitive levels of learning. Cognitive levels of learning, such as Bloom's taxonomy, are crucial for guiding instructional practices that promote deeper understanding, critical thinking, and application of knowledge. When teachers do not incorporate these cognitive levels into their table of specifications (ToS), they may inadvertently limit students' opportunities to engage in higher-order thinking tasks and demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of historical concepts. This gap suggests that the educational experiences in history classrooms may not sufficiently challenge students to achieve their full potential in terms of cognitive development and academic performance.

The findings also relate closely to Messick's Validity theory, proposed in 1989. According to Messick, validity in assessments encompasses various dimensions, including content validity, construct validity, and criterion-related validity. Content validity requires assessments to align closely with the content domain being measured, which includes the cognitive levels of learning. If history teachers fail to integrate these cognitive levels (such as knowledge, comprehension and application) into their assessment planning, they risk compromising the accuracy and fairness of their assessments in measuring students' understanding and skills in history.

VI. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study found that; history teachers in public secondary schools do not prepare and use table of specifications to outline the topics and skills to be assessed in exams or assignments. The study also revealed that, lack of preparation and use of tables of specification highlights a need for improved planning and instructional strategies to enhance educational outcomes in history education. Additionally, the study found that history teachers in public secondary schools in Mwanga district do not consider the cognitive levels of learning in the table of specifications to improve performance as they do not prepare and use the table of specifications when assessing history subject. Moreover, the study suggests that history teachers fail to differentiate and target various cognitive skills, such as remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating, when planning their lessons and assessments. The lack of specificity leads to suboptimal academic achievement among students because it prevents a comprehensive evaluation and development of their cognitive abilities. Generally, the study found that, the Table of specification (TOS) is prepared and used in History assessment to the lowest extent.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the study concludes that history teachers in public secondary schools do not prepare and use table of specification to outline the topics and skills to be assessed in exams or assignments and hence they fail to consider cognitive levels of learning. It is also concluded that, rare preparation and use of the table of specification affects assessment of student and general academic achievement in History subject.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions, the study recommends that; the quality assurers should create awareness among history teachers on the viability of the preparation and usability of the table of specifications to ensure validity during teaching and assessment procedures. The study also recommends that the heads of history department should ensure that history teachers are preparing and using the table of specifications to improve students' academic achievements.

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