
**ENHANCING SOCIAL STUDIES ASSESSMENT THROUGH
TABLE OF SPECIFICATIONS – AN EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

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Abstract

This study enhancing Social Studies assessment through table of specification. It adopted a quantitative research method that surveyed a cross-section of 120 sampled teachers from a population size of 1,405 within Jos-North local government area of Plateau State. This study adopted the use of the Teacher's Questionnaire on Table of Specification (TQTS) to obtain primary data from the selected research respondents. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was 0.75%. Mean score was used to analyze and, interpret the research questions respectively. Findings from the study showed that teacher's assumptions and perceptions affect their use of a table of specifications in Social Studies; affects their utilization of table of specifications; showed the nature of test items used to measure students performance in Social Studies; it revealed that most teachers only assess the cognitive domain in variance with the affective and psychomotor domains of learning, and also test items constructed by Social Studies teachers when constructed properly are valid and reliable in ascertaining students actual performance and achievement. The researchers, therefore, recommended that; Teachers' training should be conducted by the government educational bodies and school administrators to enable teachers to

construct test items properly using a table of specifications and also, teachers should make use of all cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains in constructing test items.

Keywords: Assessment, Social Studies, Table of specifications, Test items,

Introduction

How well students learn is the primary concern of most educators and teachers in various school disciplines especially in Social Studies. Therefore developing test items to evaluate and assess students' achievement and performance is vital in ensuring the success and actualization of the Social Studies curriculum as one of the core subjects in Nigerian schools. Quite sometimes students have experienced test contents to be irrelevant or in variance with what they have been taught, some learners at times admit some test questions and items to be difficult, another fraction view is relatively easy. The lack of coherence, validity, and reliability of test items leads to the unreliable and ineffective judgment of students' progress in Social Studies. Engagement is a key element that is needed in the teaching and learning processes of any Social Studies classroom, not all teachers engage students in all learning faculties that involve their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Ethical decisions concerning the grading of students' performance and judging their achievement are very difficult in Social Studies. Many authors attribute these challenges to the professional expertise of teachers and the inability of school administrators to enforce standards and benchmarks in evaluating and assessing students' performance and achievement in school subjects such as Social Studies.

Teachers' assumptions and perceptions on the table of specifications in Jos North Local Government Area may be attributed to many factors such as inadequate training and awareness on how to use a table of specifications properly to develop test items in Social Studies. Olayinka (2016) asserts that teachers' teaching methods and use of instructional materials in Social Studies affect

their evaluation and assessment competencies particularly due to their expertise in the subject area. Okam (2011) and Okobia (2015) noted that evaluation and assessment are very important in Social Studies and are mostly neglected by teachers through their improper usage. The scope of Social Studies is qualitative which makes it difficult for teachers to assess students and knowledge on social issues and human society effectively (Fan, Usoroh & Umoetok, 2012).

Testing of students' performance still is professional expertise that ought to be imbibed by all Social Studies teachers. Teacher's expertise affects utilization of table of specifications and construction of test items. Iyamu (2009) asserts that teachers' understanding of Social Studies objectives affects their stating of behavioral objectives which can affect their evaluation and assessment of students' progress. Iyamu (2009) also asserted that appropriate utilization of teaching methods, instructional materials, and students' performance evaluation devices, should be guided by pre-determined Social Studies objectives, which will in turn help in test development reliable for students learning.

The nature of test development in Social Studies in the view of (Quansah, Amoako, and Ankomah, 2018) is a relatively passive accumulation of facts and discrete skills, which ought to recognize learning as a more active process in which learners construct knowledge and make connections among facts and concepts. The challenges encountered by teachers in the development of test items can be attributed to grading and examination patterns adopted by the school administration, relevance of instructional contents, level of teachers' expertise, and various teaching methods that are used by teachers to aid the learning process in students.

Tadesse (2020) attributed challenges associated with the development of test items, to time for instruction delivery, little support from school administrators, and resource materials for carrying out student assessment. The question of how well do test items measure students' behavioral performance and outcome in Social Studies is nonetheless important and most sort after goals of all Social Studies teachers. Osebhohiemen (2019) postulates that table of specifications is an empirical means within the teacher's

reach of building in a high level of content validity for an achievement test. Despite several studies and empirical findings supporting the use of a table of specifications, little or no efforts have been made to ensure it is properly used in Social Studies classrooms, this dilemma associated with teachers' inability to adopt a table of specifications is what has sparked the focus on enhancing Social Studies assessment through a table of specification in Jos-North Local Government Area of Plateau State.

The basic assumption and beliefs teachers have regarding the development of test items is that test questions ought to be retrieved from past questions or recommended textbooks that school administrators certify. Some teachers tend to have the notion that they cannot develop test items independently or that developing test items does not have a significant effect on Social Studies. This phenomenon has made the development of test items difficult which is primarily caused by teachers' unawareness of the rudiments and basics of developing, constructing, and building test items in cognizance of the learner's experience and needs. The table of specifications is the blueprint and most important toolkit that teachers ought to demonstrate in their workplace, but the inability of teachers to implement a table of specifications has led to instructional contents particularly in Social Studies to be ineffective, irrelevant, and unreliable to measure, judge, and value students' performance, progress, and achievement.

For any substantial growth and development in society to occur, how well and to what extent can learning contents are measured is important in enabling critical decision making among relevant stakeholders. The rote learning demonstrated in several academic institutions has led to a series of low performances, achievements, and the inability to the actualization of aims, goals, objectives, and philosophy of various school subjects especially Social Studies. It is in this regard that the crux of this paper hinges upon adopting an empirical review on enhancing Social Studies assessment through the table of specification.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate Enhancing Social Studies Assessment through Table of Specification, the specific objectives of this research study are to:

- i. identify teachers' assumptions and perceptions on the table of specifications;
- ii. find out how teachers expertise affects utilization of the table of specifications;
- iii. determine the nature of test items used to measure students' performance in Social Studies;
- iv. find out challenges encountered by teachers in the development of test items; and
- v. determine how well does test items measure students' behavioral performance in Social Studies.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this study:

- i. What are teachers' assumptions and perceptions on the table of specifications?
- ii. How does teachers' expertise affect the utilization of the table of specifications?
- iii. What is the nature of test items used to measure students' performance in Social Studies?
- iv. What are the challenges encountered by teachers in the development of test items?
- v. How well do test items measure students' behavioral performance in Social Studies?

Methods

The design for this study is quantitative research type that adopted a survey research design which the target group of the study consisted of all Social Studies in all Junior Secondary Schools in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State the population of teachers in the local government area is 1,405 which comprises of 22 government schools, 86 private and 12 religious schools

(Plateau State Ministry of Education Template 2017) which the study utilized 120 teachers within 17 selected schools within Jos-North Local Government Area. Data was collected using a 4-point Likert scale questionnaire instrument titled “Teachers Questionnaire on the Impact of Table of Specification on Social Studies Teachers Development Of Test Items in Jos-North Local Government Area of Plateau State (TQTS). The reliability index of the (TQTS). was 0.75 using Alpha Conbrach, which was face validated and content validated, a pilot study of 30 randomly selected pre-service teachers was used to obtaining the reliability and validity index. The research questions guided the development of the questionnaire items of which the mean score was used to analyze and interpret the research questions.

Results

Table 1: Teachers Assumptions and Perceptions on the Table of Specifications

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}
1	A table of specifications is not needed to construct test items	29	14	39	38	2.3
2	The use of a table of specifications covers the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains properly	33	50	13	24	2.8
3	The table of specifications is very technical and difficult to construct that's why I don't use it	16	29	49	26	2.3
4	I prefer textbooks and past questions in constructing test items instead of using a Table of specifications	58	36	11	15	3.1

Table 1 shows the teacher’s responses to the research question one “What are teachers’ assumptions and perceptions on the table of specifications?” The findings revealed that table of specifications (TOS) is needed in the construction of test items by teachers, Table of Specification can be used to cover cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains of learning, teachers don’t use a table of specifications just because it is difficult and technical and Social

Studies teachers use prefer using text and past questions in Social Studies to construct test items to assess students progress.

Table 2: Teacher’s Expertise and Table of Specifications

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}
1	Teachers don’t apply a table of specifications in developing test items because they have no prior knowledge	27	59	24	10	2.9
2	Teachers experience affects their construction of a table of specifications	61	18	29	12	3.1
3	Unawareness of students needs and interests by teachers affects the reliability and validity of test items Unawareness of students needs and interests by teachers affects the reliability and validity of test items	25	52	19	24	2.7
4	Most teachers don’t use a table of specifications because it is time-consuming	24	51	13	32	2.6

Table 2 depicts students response to research question two “How does teachers’ expertise affect utilization of the table of specifications?” The findings revealed that prior knowledge, teachers experience prevents teachers from utilizing the table of specifications also not taking into cognizance of learners needs and interest affects the reliability and validity index of Social Studies test items, the findings also showed that why most teachers don’t use a table of specifications is because they consider it to be time-consuming.

Table 3: Nature of test items used to measure Student's Performance in Social Studies

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}
1	Social Studies teachers use multiple objectives test items	74	23	19	4	3.4
2	The essay test items developed by test teachers ignore the affective and psychomotor domains of learning	24	29	54	13	2.5
3	Test items developed by Social Studies teachers place more emphasis on the lower level thinking than higher-level thinking faculty of the cognitive domain	12	34	27	47	2.1
4	Test items developed by Social Studies teachers do not incorporate learners experiences	49	51	7	13	3.1

Table 3 shows the student's responses to research question three "What is the nature of test items used to measure students' performance in Social Studies?" The findings show that majority of Social Studies teachers use multiple test items to assess students behavioral outcome in Social Studies classrooms, test items developed by teachers most at times fails to incorporate the affective and psychomotor domains, Social Studies teachers include both lower and higher-level test item questions in assessing students knowledge and understanding in Social Studies.

Table 4: Challenges encountered by Teachers in the Development of Test Items

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}
1	Inadequate resource materials restrict teachers from developing appropriate test items in Social Studies	33	27	15	45	2.4
2	Teachers don't have autonomy in setting up test items because school administrators influence	42	28	17	33	2.7
3	Teachers have difficulties in developing appropriate marking schemes and grading students performance in Social Studies	53	14	28	25	2.8
4	Teacher bias and expertise affects the development of test items in Social Studies	21	43	37	19	2.6

Table 4 depicts the teacher's responses on the research question four "What are the challenges encountered by teachers in the development of test items?" The findings revealed that inadequate resource materials can restrict teachers from developing effective test items, school administrators influence teachers decisions in making of test items in Social Studies, the marking scheme, and grading system on Social Studies contents is a challenge to most Social Studies teachers.

Table 5: Test items and Student’s Behavioral Performance in Social Studies

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}
1	Test items developed by teachers assess students progress in Social Studies properly	28	31	46	15	2.6
2	Test scores are reliable and valid in interpreting the actual performance of high and low performing students in Social Studies	31	29	12	48	2.4
3	Over-reliance of the cognitive domain for testing students knowledge and abilities limits the effectiveness of Social Studies test items	52	37	25	6	3.1
4	Some concepts in Social Studies are best measured and assessed using non-testing devices	14	27	51	28	2.2

Table 5 shows the teacher’s response to research question five “How well do test items measure students’ behavioral performance in Social Studies?” The finding showed that test items when developed properly can test the actual performance of Social Studies students, test scores of test items have a positive relationship on types of students learners in Social Studies classrooms, most test items constructed and developed by Social Studies teachers focus mainly on the cognitive domain, concepts in Social Studies disciplines can be measured and assessed with quantitative test devices.

Discussions

Research question one showed that teacher’s assumptions and perceptions affect their use of a table of specifications in Social Studies These findings subscribes to the views of Fives and DiDonato (2013) who carried out a study Classroom test construction the study showed that a Table of Specification is one tool that teachers can use to support their professional judgment when creating or selecting tests for use with their students. Table of Specification can be used in conjunction with lesson and unit planning to help

the teacher make clear the connections between planning, instruction, and assessment.

Research questions two showed how teachers expertise affects utilization of table of specifications these findings is in support of Olayinka (2016) who studied Effects of Instructional Materials on Secondary Schools Students' Academic Achievement in Social Studies, findings of the study revealed that teachers ought to adopt appropriate techniques like instructional materials and other professional expertise like a table of specification so ensure students have positive progress in their Social Studies performance

Research question three showed the nature of test items used to measure students performance in Social Studies revealed that, most teachers only assess the cognitive domain in variance with the affective and psychomotor domains of learning this supports the findings of Okobia (2015) who investigated evaluation techniques used by Social Studies Teachers in Junior Secondary Schools in Edo State Nigeria The findings revealed that majority of the Social Studies teachers were not using the appropriate evaluation techniques and evaluation of students was predominantly in the area of the cognitive domain

Research question four showed challenges encountered by teachers in the development of test items teachers the findings showed that time for instruction, teachers expertise and resource materials limits the development of test items, this correlates with Tadesse (2020) who carried out a study on the problems affecting the practice of student-centered approach in teaching Social Studies the findings revealed that lack of time and resources to implement affects adoption of effective methods along with the rigidity of the time table, to some extent teacher's attitudes, lack of instructional materials and administrative support limits the effectiveness of Social Studies instruction.

Research question five revealed how well test items measure student's behavioral performance in Social Studies education it found that those test items constructed by Social Studies teachers when constructed properly are valid and reliable in ascertaining students actual performance and achievement this subscribes with findings of Salihu (2019) who studied Teachers ability on test

construction and economic contents validity in Nassarawa State Nigeria the findings revealed that there is a significant mean difference between professional and non-professional teachers in construct validity of test items in favor of professional teachers.

Conclusion

The necessity of table specification in Social Studies assessment seeing through the empirical lens of the Jos-North local government cannot be undermined and neglected; it is important in ensuring proper assessment of students behavioral objectives by outlining appropriate values in line with their activity and progress, It defines as clearly as possible the scope and emphasis of the test, to relate the objective to the content and to construct a balanced test. Indeed its usefulness will help in measuring actual student's achievement, performance, and progress in any school discipline especially Social Studies, therefore, relevant stakeholders such as the teachers, school administrators, Social Studies experts, government institutions, and policymakers ought to encourage the adoption and utilization of table of specifications in all learning educational level in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the outcome and findings of this study the researchers suggested the following as recommendations to various stakeholders: Teachers training and workshops should be conducted by the government educational bodies, school administrators to enable teachers construct test items properly using a table of specifications. Teachers should utilize all cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains in constructing test items.

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