

**Teachers' use of Grading Rubrics and their Effectiveness in the Assessment of Learners
in the Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality.**

By

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Declaration

I, Naturinda Patience, declare that this dissertation with the title “**Teachers’ use of Grading Rubrics and their Effectiveness in the Assessment of Learners in the Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality**” is my original work and has never been submitted to any University or other higher institutions of learning for any academic award.

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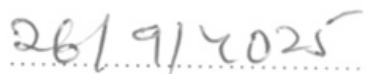
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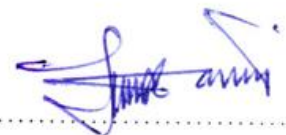
Approval

This dissertation, titled “**Teachers’ use of Grading Rubrics and their Effectiveness in the Assessment of Learners in the Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality**” has been done under our supervision and it is now ready for submission for examination.

Signed 

Rev. Canon. Asaph Kabakyenga
(University Supervisor)

Date 

Signature 

Enock Barigye
Supervisor

Date  Dr.

Dedication

To my friend

For your encouragement and thoughtful insights, unwavering friendship and belief in me. Your prayers, patience, and unconditional love have meant the world. This work is a tribute to the strength of your support. I wouldn't have done it without you.

This work is as much yours as it is mine.

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Lastly, I thank all the study participants, teachers, students, headteachers, and directors of studies, whose valuable time and contributions made this research possible.

List of Acronyms

BSU-REC	Bishop Stuart University Research and Ethics Committee
CBA	Competency-Based Assessment
CBC	Competency-Based Curriculum
ICT	Information Communication Technology
NAPE	National Assessment of Progress in Education
UCE	Uganda Certificate of Education
UK	United Kingdom
UNCST	Uganda National Council for Science and Technology
UNEB	Uganda National Examinations Board

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Definition of Terms

Grading Rubrics, in this study it is defined as the structured scoring guides used by teachers to assess student work based on predefined criteria (for example., analytic, descriptor-based, or competency-aligned rubrics).

Teachers' Effectiveness in Assessment, in this study is defined as the demonstrated ability of teachers to: align assessments with curriculum objectives; provide consistent, bias-free grading using rubrics; and deliver actionable feedback to students.

Abstract

The study examined the effect of grading rubrics on teachers' effectiveness in the assessment of learners in the Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality, Uganda. The main objective was to investigate how grading rubrics influence assessment practices among teachers. Specifically, the study was guided by the following objectives: to assess the use of grading rubrics in the assessment of learners in the Lower Secondary Curriculum; to examine teacher's effectiveness in the assessment of learners in the Lower Secondary Curriculum; and to determine the relationship between the use of grading rubrics and teachers' effectiveness in assessment of learners in the Lower Secondary curriculum in Bushenyi-Ishaka municipality. Using a descriptive survey design, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from 124 students, 26 teachers, 4 headteachers, and 4 directors of studies through questionnaires and interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation while qualitative data were thematically analysed. The major findings included the common types of grading rubrics identified included analytic rubrics, descriptor-based rubrics, criteria-referenced rubrics, and scoring guides, though their usage was inconsistent. The findings indicated that grading rubrics were used inconsistently, with 61.3% of students acknowledging their use while 38.7% showed no knowledge of rubrics thus indicating that teachers grade learners using traditional assessment methods. Teachers' effectiveness was moderate, with challenges in rubric clarity, alignment, and feedback provision. The study established a statistically significant positive relationship between the use of grading rubrics and teachers' effectiveness in assessment; students' responses showed a strong correlation ($r = 0.654$, $p = 0.000$), while teachers' responses indicated a moderate correlation ($r = 0.544$, $p = 0.004$). The study concluded that consistent use of grading rubrics enhances fairness, transparency, and teachers' effectiveness in assessment. It therefore recommended continuous teacher training, collaboration to standardize rubric use, and sensitization of students on rubric application. Further research should examine the impact of grading rubrics on students' academic performance and motivation in the Lower Secondary Curriculum since this study was inclined to effectiveness of assessment by using grading rubrics.

Chapter One: Introduction

This study examined the effect of the use of grading rubrics and teachers' effectiveness in assessment of learners in the Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality, Bushenyi District, Uganda. The study specifically investigated how grading rubrics contribute to assessment consistency, teachers' preparedness in using them, and their impact on student learning outcomes. Therefore, this chapter presents the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the general objective, specific objectives, research questions, hypotheses, scope of the study, significance of the study, and the conceptual framework.

Background of the study

This part includes historical background, theoretical background and contextual background for the study.

Historical Background

Rubrics as a distinct assessment tool emerged from broader 20th-century developments in educational measurement and criterion-referenced assessment. Early shifts away from purely norm-referenced, paper-and-pencil testing toward performance-based and criterion-referenced assessment created demand for instruments that could make qualitative judgments more explicit and reproducible. Foundational assessment scholarship emphasized feedback and formative uses of assessment as central to learning; these ideas provided the intellectual soil in which rubrics, documents that articulate performance criteria and levels of quality, took root (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Brookhart, 2013).

Through the 1990s and 2000s rubrics moved from practical classroom checklists into a subject of systematic research. Reviews of empirical studies show that rubrics can improve scoring consistency, make expectations explicit, and support targeted feedback, but the evidence about

direct gains in student performance is mixed and contingent on design and implementation (Jonsson & Svingby, 2007; Reddy & Andrade, 2010). Meta-analyses and subsequent reviews have argued that analytic, task-specific rubrics combined with exemplars and rater training tend to produce the most reliable scoring; however, simply introducing a rubric without teacher preparation or student engagement does not automatically improve learning outcomes (Jonsson & Svingby, 2007; Panadero, 2013).

The practice of systematically evaluating student work has deep roots in educational history, evolving from informal teacher judgments to standardized scoring systems during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Early assessment practices prioritized ranking and sorting students, such as letter grades and percentage scores, as schooling systems expanded and sought ways to compare large numbers of learners (Durm, as discussed in historical overviews of grading). Over time, educators and researchers called for clearer, more transparent criteria to make assessment fairer and to communicate expectations to students and stakeholders (Stevens & Levi, 2013).

During the 20th century the rubric, originally a term tied to authoritative directions, was reconceptualized as an analytic tool that lays out criteria and performance levels for tasks (Stevens & Levi, 2013). The rubric's formats diversified (holistic vs. analytic) and researchers began examining how scoring guides could improve reliability and clarity in judging complex performances such as writing, projects, and oral presentations. This period established foundational ideas: rubrics could make assessments more transparent, save grading time, and provide actionable feedback to learners (Stevens & Levi, 2013; IJEMT, historical review).

From the late 20th century onward, empirical work addressed rubric design, validity, and reliability. Scholars emphasized that well-constructed rubrics require clear criteria, exemplar anchors, and rater training to produce trustworthy scores (Moskal & Leydens, 2000; Moskal,

2000). Simultaneously, the formative assessment literature argued that frequent, criterion-referenced feedback, often operationalized through rubrics and descriptive criteria, supports learning gains when used to inform instruction and learner self-assessment (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Thus, rubrics came to be seen not only as scoring instruments but as pedagogical tools that promote self-regulated learning and formative uses of assessment.

In the 21st century many education systems integrated rubric-based assessment within broader curriculum reforms that emphasize competence, standards, and learner-centred approaches. Curriculum frameworks and teacher professional development programs increasingly recommend criterion-referenced assessment and the use of rubrics to align teaching, learning activities, and assessment practices (NCDC, 2024). Internationally, policy and research communities highlight that rubrics can support transparency, comparability, and communication among teachers, learners, and parents, provided rubrics are aligned to intended outcomes and teachers receive support to use them effectively (Stevens & Levi, 2013; Moskal & Leydens, 2000).

In Uganda, the shift to a competency-based, learner-centred Lower Secondary Curriculum (LSC) has foregrounded assessment for learning and the use of criteria-based tools to evaluate competencies rather than rote recall (NCDC, 2020; NCDC, 2024). The Ministry of Education's rollout of the LSC (beginning with Senior 1 in 2020) explicitly requires changes in classroom assessment practices, encouraging continuous assessment, practical tasks, and performance-based measures that lend themselves to rubric scoring. Implementation reviews and program briefs note challenges (teacher preparation, resource constraints, and disruptions such as COVID-19) that affect consistent, effective use of new assessment approaches (ACET/implementation briefs; NCDC, 2020).

At the municipal level, in Bushenyi-Ishaka, local education planning documents and municipal development plans identify improving academic performance and strengthening teacher capacity as priorities, creating a practical context for studying rubric use in lower secondary schools (Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipal Council, 2021). School lists and Ministry registers show a mix of government and private lower secondary institutions in the municipality where the LSC is being implemented (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2022). Given national curriculum changes and local capacity constraints, research into teachers' use of grading rubrics and their effectiveness in Bushenyi-Ishaka can illuminate how policy reforms interact with classroom practices and what supports are needed to make rubric-based assessment meaningful and reliable at the local level.

Theoretical Background

This study adopted to Constructivism Theory, which posits that learners actively construct knowledge through experience, reflection, and interaction with their environment (Vygotsky, 1978). According to constructivist principles, learning is most effective when it is student-centered, inquiry-driven, and grounded in real-life contexts. Learners are not passive recipients of information but rather active participants in the meaning-making process.

In the context of the New Lower Secondary Curriculum (NLSC) in Uganda, which emphasizes competency-based education, constructivism provides a valuable theoretical lens for understanding how students engage with assessment tools-particularly grading rubrics. Grading rubrics are not only scoring instruments but also learning tools that help students understand performance expectations, monitor their progress, and reflect on their learning journey (Brookhart, 2013; Andrade, 2019). By making assessment criteria visible and understandable, rubrics align with constructivist goals of promoting self-regulated learning, learner autonomy, and critical thinking.

Constructivism also underpins the shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered pedagogies-an essential feature of Uganda's new curriculum reforms (MoES, 2020). The use of grading rubrics enhances this transition by fostering dialogue, feedback, and reflection between teachers and students, which are crucial for deep learning (Shepard, 2000). When students are actively involved in understanding and applying rubric criteria, they construct their own knowledge and take responsibility for their performance-a core tenet of constructivist learning.

Moreover, the theory explains why teachers' assessment effectiveness is critical. From a constructivist perspective, teachers must not only deliver content but also facilitate learning by designing tasks, providing formative feedback, and guiding students in constructing understanding. Therefore, this study explores how effectively teachers use grading rubrics to support meaningful assessment aligned with learner-centered practices.

Conceptual Background

Grading rubrics and effective assessment play a crucial role in the implementation of the Ordinary Level curriculum, providing a structured framework for evaluating students' learning outcomes. According to Brookhart (2013), a grading rubric is a set of scoring criteria used to assess students' performance based on predetermined standards. Rubrics ensure consistency in grading and provide learners with clear expectations, which enhances their motivation and engagement in the learning process. Effective assessment, on the other hand, refers to the systematic process of evaluating students' knowledge, skills, and competencies using various assessment tools (Black & Wiliam, 1998). In the current study, grading rubrics were explored in terms of their use in assessing students' performance, providing feedback, and guiding instructional practices. Additionally, effective assessment methods were examined in the context of their impact on curriculum implementation, student achievement, and teacher effectiveness in Bushenyi Municipality.

The implementation of the New Lower Secondary Curriculum requires well-defined assessment strategies to ensure that learning objectives are met. Curriculum implementation is defined by Fullan (2007) as the process of putting into practice the intended curriculum through teaching, learning activities, and assessment strategies. In this study, curriculum implementation was analyzed concerning how grading rubrics and assessment methods contribute to students' academic performance and teachers' instructional effectiveness. The study also examined challenges associated with the use of grading rubrics, including subjectivity in grading and teachers' capacity to develop and apply rubrics effectively. By investigating these aspects, the study aims to provide insights into improving assessment practices and enhancing the quality of education in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality.

Contextual Background

Globally, the integration of grading rubrics and effective assessment strategies has become a focal point in educational discourse, particularly in secondary education. Research indicates that the use of formative assessment rubrics enhances students' understanding of expectations and promotes active learning. For instance, a study by Andrade and Du (2015) found that rubrics not only clarify instructional goals but also support self-regulated learning among students. Furthermore, Popham (2006) emphasized that rubrics make scoring more systematic and enhance students' knowledge retention. These findings underscore the global recognition of rubrics as essential tools in fostering effective learning environments.

In Asia, recent studies have highlighted the positive impact of grading rubrics on student learning outcomes. For instance, a study conducted in Kuwait demonstrated that the use of rubrics in writing assessments provided students with clear expectations and constructive feedback, leading to improved writing skills (Sanger & Gleason, 2020). Similarly, research in Indonesia found that implementing rubrics in peer assessments enhanced students'

understanding of biological concepts and increased the accuracy of self-evaluations (Rachmatullah & Ha, 2019). These findings suggest that the integration of rubrics into assessment practices can foster better learning experiences and outcomes in various educational contexts across Asia.

In Europe, there has been a concerted effort to reform assessment practices to make them more inclusive and supportive of student learning. The European Education Area's working group on "Pathways to School Success" emphasized the importance of formative assessment and the use of diverse tools, such as rubrics, to provide effective feedback and support individual learner needs (European Education Area, 2023). Additionally, the European Schools system introduced a new marking system aimed at enhancing and standardizing assessment, focusing on clear performance descriptors and attainment levels to better support student learning (Office of the Secretary-General of the European Schools, 2018). These initiatives reflect a broader European trend towards utilizing structured assessment tools like rubrics to improve educational outcomes.

In Africa, educational systems have increasingly acknowledged the importance of competency-based curricula and the role of assessment in achieving educational goals. A study conducted in Rwanda highlighted that formative assessment rubrics support secondary school students' progressive learning in organic chemistry, with 87.8% of participants noting enhanced critical thinking through rubric use (Nsabayezu et al., 2022). Similarly, in Kenya, the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) has introduced formative assessment rubrics as a key component to support individualized learning and provide feedback, despite challenges such as overcrowded classrooms and limited resources (Atak, 2021). These developments reflect a continental shift towards integrating structured assessment tools to improve educational outcomes.

Within East Africa, countries have been reforming their educational frameworks to incorporate effective assessment practices. In Rwanda, the adoption of formative assessment rubrics has been shown to improve students' understanding and motivation in science education (Nsabayezu et al., 2022). In Kenya, the CBC emphasizes formative assessments, including rubrics, to enhance teaching and learning processes, though challenges such as time constraints and resource limitations persist (Atak, 2021). These initiatives indicate a regional commitment to leveraging assessment tools to foster deeper learning and skill acquisition among students.

In Uganda, the education sector has recognized the need to nurture learners' higher-order thinking skills through effective assessment practices. The revised Lower Secondary Curriculum, launched in February 2020, emphasizes competence-based learning and formative assessments to support skill development (Ahabwe, 2022). However, studies have identified challenges in implementation, including limited teacher training and resource constraints, which affect the effective use of formative assessments and rubrics in classrooms (Mitana et al., 2021). Addressing these challenges is crucial for the successful integration of rubrics in the assessment framework.

In Western Uganda, educational institutions are gradually adopting formative assessment practices to enhance learning outcomes. However, challenges such as inadequate teacher training and limited access to resources hinder the effective implementation of these practices. A study focusing on secondary schools in Gulu City highlighted the need for professional development and support for teachers to effectively implement competency-based curricula and associated assessment strategies (ResearchGate, 2024). This underscores the necessity for targeted interventions to support educators in this region.

In Bushenyi District, the implementation of grading rubrics and effective assessment strategies at the ordinary level faces similar challenges. Teachers often encounter difficulties due to large

class sizes, limited resources, and insufficient training on the use of formative assessment tools. Addressing these issues requires concerted efforts from educational stakeholders to provide adequate training and resources, ensuring that teachers can effectively utilize rubrics to enhance student learning outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

The successful implementation of Uganda's Lower Secondary Curriculum (LSC), introduced in 2020, requires teachers to adopt competency-based assessment methods, including the effective use of grading rubrics. Grading rubrics serve as structured tools that outline performance criteria, improve consistency in assessment, and provide students with clear expectations (Brookhart, 2013; Andrade, 2019). Despite their benefits, the integration and effective use of grading rubrics remain limited across many Ugandan secondary schools. According to the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB, 2023), only 45% of secondary school teachers in Uganda consistently use grading rubrics in their assessments, and 58% lack adequate training in competency-based assessment techniques (UNEB, 2021).

In Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality, these national challenges are reflected at the local level. Tumusiime, Kabonesa, and Mbabazi (2022) revealed that only 38% of teachers in the area utilize grading rubrics regularly, with private schools showing slightly better adoption than public ones. Teachers cited constraints such as limited training, lack of standardized rubric templates, large class sizes, and time constraints as major barriers. Additionally, 62% of students reported being unfamiliar with how rubrics are used in their assessments (UNEB, 2023), which further limits the intended feedback and self-regulation benefits of rubrics (Panadero & Jonsson, 2013).

The limited integration of rubrics also contributes to inconsistencies and subjectivity in grading, resulting in students receiving unclear or delayed feedback, which undermines

learning outcomes and instructional quality (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hattie, 2009). While grading rubrics are intended to enhance teacher effectiveness in assessment, their impact remains questionable where implementation is inconsistent or unsupported. Therefore, this study seeks to establish the relationship between grading rubric use and teachers' effectiveness in the assessment of learners in the lower secondary curriculum.

Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

General Objective

The study examined the role of grading rubrics in promoting teachers' effectiveness in assessing competencies in the Lower Secondary Curriculum.

Specific Objectives of the Study

The study was guide by the following objectives:

1. To assess the use of grading rubrics in the assessment of Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi- Ishaka Municipality in Bushenyi District.
2. To examine teachers' effectiveness in assessment of learners in the Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi- Ishaka Municipality Bushenyi District.
3. To determine the relationship between the use of grading rubrics and teachers' effectiveness in assessment in Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality in Bushenyi District

Research Questions

1. How are grading rubrics used in the assessment of Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi Municipality in Bushenyi District?

2. How effective are the teachers in the assessment of learners in the New Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi District?

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no statistically significant relationship between the use of grading rubrics and teachers' effectiveness in assessment of learners in Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi Municipality.

Scope of the Study

This study encompasses content, geographical, population, and time scope.

Content Scope

The research focused on the role of grading rubrics in the assessment of the New Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality, Bushenyi District. It specifically examined the types of grading rubrics used in secondary school assessments, evaluated teachers' effectiveness in utilizing these rubrics, and determined the relationship between the use of grading rubrics and teachers' effectiveness in assessment of learners in Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality. The study aims to determine how grading rubrics influence fairness, transparency, and learning outcomes in secondary education.

Geographical Scope

The study was conducted in Bushenyi- Ishaka Municipality, located in Bushenyi District, Western Uganda. Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality comprises several government-aided and private secondary schools implementing the Ordinary Level curriculum. The area is selected due to reported inconsistencies in the use of grading rubrics and the need to enhance assessment practices in secondary education.

Population Scope

The target population includes secondary school teachers, directors of studies, Headteachers, and Ordinary Level students in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality. Teachers, directors of studies, and Headteachers provided insights into assessment practices, grading consistency, and challenges associated with rubric use. Ordinary Level students contributed perspectives on how rubrics impact their learning experiences and academic performance.

Time Scope

The study focused on an eight-year period (2017–2024), during which educational reforms and assessment practices have been evolving in Uganda’s secondary schools. This timeframe is relevant because it aligns with efforts to improve assessment strategies under the Ordinary Level curriculum. The whole study, including proposal writing, data collection, and analysis, took 12 months, from September 2024 to August 2025, to allow sufficient time for gathering comprehensive findings and preparing the final research report.

Significance of the study

The findings of this study may provide valuable insights to education stakeholders, including school administrators, policymakers, and teachers, on the use of grading rubrics in the assessment of students within the Ordinary Level curriculum. Specifically, the study may offer data to the Ministry of Education and Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) on how assessment rubrics are being utilized and their effectiveness in ensuring fair and consistent evaluation of student performance.

Furthermore, the study may highlight challenges that hinder the effective use of rubrics in secondary schools and provide recommendations for improving assessment practices. These findings may be useful for education inspectors and curriculum developers in designing teacher

training programs that enhance the capacity of educators to implement standardized assessment tools.

For school administrators in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality, the study may serve as a resource to evaluate whether teachers are following best practices in assessment and if grading rubrics align with curriculum objectives. The insights gained may help school leaders make informed decisions on professional development programs and the integration of assessment tools to improve student learning outcomes.

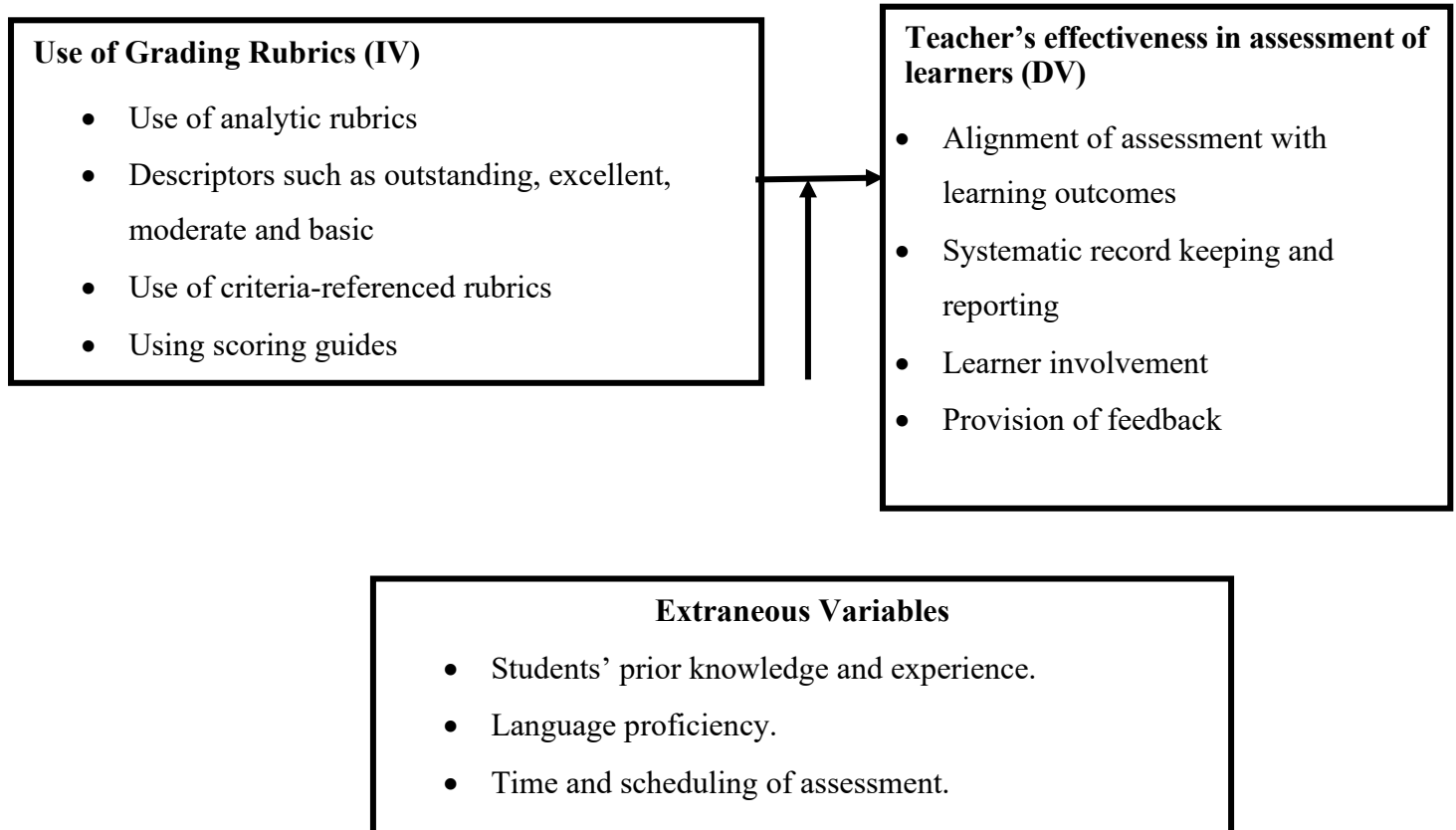
Furthermore, the study may contribute to the body of knowledge on assessment strategies in Uganda, providing a foundation for future research on grading rubrics and their impact on student performance. Researchers interested in improving competency-based assessment practices in secondary education may find this study useful in shaping further investigations and policy recommendations.

Justification of the study

Grading rubrics are an essential tool in educational assessment, ensuring fairness, transparency, and consistency in evaluating student performance. Research has shown that rubrics improve students' understanding of expectations and enhance their learning outcomes. For instance, a study by Reddy and Andrade (2010) found that 78% of students who used rubrics performed significantly better than those who relied on traditional assessment methods. Similarly, Panadero and Jonsson (2013) reported a 65% increase in students' comprehension of assessment criteria when rubrics were utilized. In Uganda, however, the implementation of grading rubrics remains inconsistent. A report by the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) (2023) indicated that only 45% of secondary school teachers regularly use rubrics, leading to discrepancies in grading and assessment fairness. This issue is particularly prevalent in Bushenyi District, where a study by Tumusiime et al. (2022) revealed that only 38% of teachers integrate rubrics into their assessment practices. The lack of standardized grading

methods results in subjective marking, unclear feedback, and misalignment with curriculum objectives, ultimately affecting students' academic performance and motivation. If this study is not conducted, the persistent inconsistencies in assessment may continue to compromise educational quality in Uganda. Students may remain uncertain about grading criteria, leading to decreased motivation and unfair academic outcomes. Moreover, the credibility of the assessment process was undermined, affecting students' preparedness for further education and employment. Therefore, this study is crucial in evaluating the effectiveness of grading rubrics in Bushenyi Municipality and recommending strategies to enhance their adoption, ensuring a fair and effective assessment system.

Conceptual framework



Source: Brookhart (2013) and Black & William (1998).

The conceptual framework for this study illustrates the relationship between grading rubrics and effective assessment in the implementation of the New Lower Secondary Curriculum in

Bushenyi Municipality. Grading rubrics, as the independent variable (IV), provide structured assessment criteria that enhance clarity, alignment with learning objectives, and consistency in scoring. Key components of grading rubrics include well-defined assessment criteria, and clear expectations for student performance. When effectively implemented, grading rubrics help standardize assessments, ensuring that teachers apply uniform standards when evaluating students' work. This structured approach enhances transparency in assessment and allows students to understand their strengths and areas for improvement, fostering self-regulated learning and improved academic performance.

The dependent variable (DV), teachers' effectiveness in assessment, is influenced by the use of grading rubrics. Teacher effectiveness is measured by their ability to employ varied assessment methods, align grading practices with curriculum standards, and provide fair, consistent, and timely feedback. The use of rubrics enables teachers to assess students more objectively, reducing biases and inconsistencies in grading. However, extraneous variables such as students' prior knowledge, language proficiency, and assessment scheduling may impact the relationship between grading rubrics and assessment effectiveness. Addressing these factors through proper training and resource allocation was crucial in ensuring that grading rubrics contribute positively to the implementation of the Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter presents a review of existing literature on grading rubrics and teachers' effectiveness in assessment within the Ordinary Level curriculum. It provides an analysis of relevant theories, global and regional studies, and contextual factors influencing the use of grading rubrics in secondary education. The review is structured to examine key aspects related to grading rubrics, teachers' effectiveness in assessment, and the relationship between rubric use and instructional practices.

Theoretical Review

This study was informed by Constructivism Theory, a learner-centered approach that has gained widespread recognition in educational research and curriculum development. Constructivism, as advanced by scholars like Jean Piaget (1973) and Lev Vygotsky (1978), emphasizes that learners construct knowledge actively rather than passively receiving information. Learning is viewed as a process of personal interpretation shaped by prior experiences, social interactions, and real-world problem-solving contexts.

Piaget's cognitive constructivism focuses on how learners individually construct understanding through processes of assimilation and accommodation. This perspective underscores the importance of developmental stages and experiential learning. In assessment, this means learners must engage with assessment criteria (like those in grading rubrics) to understand expectations and modify their thinking accordingly.

On the other hand, Vygotsky's social constructivism introduces the idea that learning is fundamentally social and that cognitive development is heavily influenced by culture and interaction with more knowledgeable others (e.g., teachers). His concept of the Zone of

Proximal Development (ZPD) is particularly relevant to rubric-based assessment. Through teacher feedback and peer discussions facilitated by well-structured rubrics, learners are supported to move from their current level of understanding to higher levels of performance.

In modern education, constructivist theories have shaped the shift from summative to formative assessment, where feedback is continuous and instructional support is built into the learning process (Shepard, 2000). Grading rubrics, when designed effectively, serve as constructivist tools by clarifying learning targets, guiding student reflection, and supporting self-assessment (Andrade H, 2019). Rubrics promote self-regulated learning, which is a core constructivist goal, allowing learners to identify their own gaps and chart paths to improvement.

Within the framework of Uganda's Lower Secondary Curriculum, which emphasizes competency-based education, constructivism becomes even more relevant. The curriculum calls for active engagement, collaboration, and application of knowledge-principles central to constructivist pedagogy (MoES, 2020). However, the practical implementation of this approach depends heavily on how well teachers integrate learner-centered assessment tools like rubrics. If teachers lack the capacity or resources to implement these tools, the curriculum's constructivist goals may not be realized.

In conclusion, constructivism theory provides a comprehensive foundation for examining how grading rubrics can enhance assessment effectiveness. It highlights the need for active learner involvement, clear performance expectations, and formative feedback-all of which are central to effective teaching and learning in competency-based environments. This theoretical framework guided the analysis of how grading rubrics were applied in Bushenyi Municipality and how they influence both teacher practices and student outcomes.

Grading Rubrics in Lower Secondary Curriculum Assessment

Analytic rubrics. Breaking performance into components

Analytic rubrics allow learners to perform multiple distinct dimensions such as knowledge, skills and attitudes or values. Each criterion is scored separately providing more detailed feedback for both students and teachers. A study conducted in the United States by Panadero and Jonsson (2018) revealed that the use of grading rubrics significantly enhances student performance, engagement, and self-regulation in learning. Their research, which analyzed data from 1,500 students across 20 high schools, found that 82% of students who used rubrics for assignments demonstrated higher achievement levels than those who received traditional assessment feedback. Similarly, a report by the OECD (2021) emphasized that rubrics improve transparency and consistency in grading, ensuring fairness in assessment. These findings underscore the importance of rubrics in fostering student-centered learning and equipping learners with clear performance expectations.

Analytic rubrics are recommended to help teachers assess learners' competencies in a multi-dimensional way, aligned with the new curriculum focus on skills and values, not just content recall.

Descriptor-Based Rubrics

Descriptor-based rubrics use qualitative labels (e.g., Excellent, Very Good, Good, Basic, Below Basic) to define performance levels for each criterion. These descriptors guide consistent teacher judgment and help learners understand expectations. "Performance descriptors clarify the quality of work expected at each level, reducing subjectivity and enhancing reliability"(Andrade, 2005). Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) and

NCDC encourage the use of such descriptors in assessing learner-centered tasks, where holistic marks would obscure individual strengths and weaknesses.

In Europe, Taylor, Kisby, and Reedy (2023) explored undergraduate students' understanding and perspectives of rubrics in higher education. The study highlighted that while rubrics are commonly employed as an assessment framework, students engage with and perceive them in various ways. The research emphasized the importance of clear communication and training in the effective use of rubrics to enhance their utility in promoting fairness and consistency in grading.

In Africa, the implementation of grading rubrics in assessing student performance has gained increasing attention. Studies indicate that rubrics are essential in addressing inconsistencies in grading, particularly in large classroom settings. A study by Kyaruzi et al. (2018) in Tanzania found that the use of grading rubrics in Ordinary Level examinations improved teachers' ability to provide constructive feedback and minimized grade inflation. The study, which surveyed 150 secondary school teachers, revealed that 72% believed rubrics helped them assess students' work more objectively and aligned with the intended learning outcomes.

Criteria-Referenced rubrics

Criteria-referenced rubrics measure performance against fixed learning outcomes or standards, rather than comparing learners to one another (as in norm-referenced assessment). This approach fits well within competency-based education frameworks. “Criterion-referenced rubrics align assessment with curriculum standards, providing transparency in grading and support for equity in learning.” The Uganda lower secondary curriculum is competency-based, which requires that all assessments, including rubrics, be aligned to intended learning outcomes (ILOs) rather than general performance (Brookhart, 2013).

Scoring Guides or Bands

Rubrics often use numerical bands or ranges to quantify performance, such as 80–100% = Excellent, 70–79% = Very Good, etc. These support both summative grading and standards-based reporting. “Score bands enable teachers to translate rubric levels into marks or grades, ensuring alignment between qualitative judgments and quantitative reporting systems” (Popham, 2017).

Use of Grading Rubrics in the assessment of learners

Grading rubrics clarify expectations and help both learners and teachers to focus on what constitutes quality work. They often include performance levels such as Excellent, good, Fair, Poor among others and descriptors for each level across the criteria such as content mastery, presentation, creativity or application (Andrade, 2005). They ensure that learners are assessed based on specific competencies rather than general impressions (Brookhart, 2013).

Teachers can provide detailed feedback to guide learners improvement. (Popham, 2009) Rubrics provide clear standards, reducing bias and increasing consistency among teachers. (Panadero & Jonsson, 2013)

Teachers using rubrics were more confident in assessing CBC competencies like critical thinking and collaboration. (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development KICD, 2020). Rubrics in CBC contexts enhanced performance especially among learners with varied learning styles and needs. (Lombardi et al. 2018)

Some teachers lack training in designing and applying rubrics effectively. (Muthee & Gathumbi, 2020). Developing and using rubrics can be labour – intensive and difference in rubrics interpretation can affect consistency across classrooms. (Muthee & Gathumbi, 2020)

Teachers' Effectiveness in the Assessment of Learners in the Lower Secondary Curriculum

The shift from content-based to competency-based education demands a corresponding transformation in assessment practices. Effective assessment in CBC goes beyond mere testing; it emphasizes formative feedback, performance-based evaluation, and learner involvement (Kafyulilo et al., 2012). For teachers to be effective in assessing learners in a CBC framework, they must possess not only content knowledge but also a deep understanding of alternative assessment strategies such as rubrics, portfolios, peer assessment, and project-based evaluation (Mutua, 2021).

Alignment with learning outcomes. Teachers' tasks and activities should be systematically aligned with learning outcomes. Anderson, L. W. & Krathwohl, D. R. (2001) A taxonomy for learning and assessing: A review of Blooms taxonomy of educational objectives. Assessment is only effective if it directly measures the competencies or knowledge that the learning outcomes specify. Mis alignment can lead to teaching and testing irrelevant skills resulting in inaccurate evaluations of learners' achievements.

Provision of feedback. Wambua, P. (2021) The role of Feedback in CBC assessment. Kenya Educational journal, 8(4), 55-60: Providing timely and constructive feedback is essential to effective assessment. Feedback not only informs learners of their progress but also promotes metacognition and self-directed learning.

Teacher preparedness in learner-centered assessment. According to Oduor (2019), the successful implementation of CBC in Kenya was initially hindered by limited teacher preparedness in learner-centered assessment. Many teachers lacked the training and resources required to conduct continuous, formative, and authentic assessment, which are essential

components of the CBC model. Similarly, Kibui and Mugo (2020) found that while teachers generally understood the goals of CBC, their ability to design assessments that align with specific competencies was often inadequate.

Systematic record keeping and reporting. Kenya Institute of curriculum Development (KICD), 2020 Assessment Guidelines for the Competency -Based Curriculum: Systematic record keeping involves maintaining accurate documentation of learners' performance, including checklists, observation notes rubrics, and portfolios. These records help to track progression in specific competencies and inform personalized support.

In Uganda, the assessment of New Lower Secondary Curriculum has historically relied on teacher discretion and national examination frameworks set by the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB). While rubrics are used in continuous assessment, their application remains inconsistent across schools. A report by the Ministry of Education and Sports (2020) indicated that only 45% of secondary school teachers regularly use grading rubrics, leading to disparities in student evaluation. This inconsistency raises concerns about the objectivity and standardization of assessments, particularly in subjects requiring subjective evaluation, such as English and Literature. Moreover, a study conducted in Wakiso District by Naluwemba and Ssebugwawo (2021) highlighted the challenges of implementing grading rubrics in Ugandan schools. The study found that teachers faced difficulties in designing and interpreting rubrics, with 60% of respondents indicating a lack of training on rubric-based assessment. Additionally, 55% of students reported that they were unaware of how rubrics were used in their assessments, limiting their ability to self-evaluate and improve their academic performance.

In Bushenyi -Ishaka Municipality, the use of grading rubrics in Ordinary Level assessments remains limited. A study by Tumusiime et al. (2022) found that only 38% of secondary school

teachers in the district regularly utilized grading rubrics in their assessments. The study also revealed that teachers in private schools were more likely to use rubrics compared to those in public schools, citing better training opportunities and institutional support. This disparity suggests the need for capacity-building initiatives to enhance the use of rubrics in all schools.

Furthermore, student perceptions of grading rubrics in Bushenyi Municipality indicate a need for increased awareness and training. According to a survey conducted by the Uganda National Examinations Board (2023), 62% of students in the municipality were unfamiliar with how rubrics were used in their assessments. This lack of awareness may hinder students' ability to understand grading criteria and improve their performance. Addressing this gap through teacher training and student sensitization programs could significantly enhance the effectiveness of grading rubrics in the district.

Teacher training and professional development play a pivotal role in shaping assessment effectiveness. Wambugu and Changeiywo (2018) emphasize that effective assessment under CBC requires sustained in-service training and mentoring. This ensures that teachers are equipped to provide timely and constructive feedback, develop customized assessment tools, and make instructional decisions based on learner performance data.

Teacher attitudes influence assessment practices. Chege and Njiru (2020) note that some teachers remain skeptical about the practical utility of CBC assessments, especially in large classes where individualized assessment becomes logistically challenging. This skepticism, if not addressed, may affect the fidelity of assessment implementation.

Digital tools have also been highlighted as facilitators of effective CBC assessment. A study by Njuguna and Waweru (2022) indicated that technology integration enhances teacher effectiveness in tracking learner progress, creating individualized learning records, and

engaging parents in the learning process. However, disparities in access to ICT infrastructure remain a significant barrier in many rural and low-income contexts.

A study conducted in the United Kingdom by Panadero and Jonsson (2013) explored the effectiveness of grading rubrics in secondary school assessments. Their research, which involved 900 students from 10 different schools, indicated that students who were provided with rubrics before completing assignments had a 65% improvement in their understanding of assessment expectations compared to those who were not given rubrics. Moreover, teachers reported that grading rubrics reduced subjectivity in assessment by 40% and improved grading efficiency by 35%. These findings highlight the necessity of integrating grading rubrics into secondary school curricula to enhance the reliability and fairness of assessments.

In a study conducted at a university in Kuwait, Goodwin and Kirkpatrick (2023) investigated the effectiveness of rubrics in business writing classes. The study involved 104 students who were surveyed to evaluate their opinions on the use of rubrics. The findings revealed that students who used rubrics earned an aggregate rating of 94%, which is greater than the average score of 86% that was achieved in the previous semester without rubric use. Additionally, students reported that rubrics served as a valuable guide in crafting their essays, contributing to more consistent and fair grading practices. However, some students suggested that additional feedback beyond the rubric was desirable.

Relationship between the use of grading rubrics and teachers' effectiveness in assessment in Lower Secondary Curriculum

Grading rubrics are essential tools for ensuring clarity, consistency and fairness in competency-based assessment, playing a direct role in enhancing teacher effectiveness.

According to Oduor and Nyanga (2022), Grading rubrics and their impact on Teaching practice in Kenya's CBC. *International journal of Curriculum and instruction*: Rubrics help teachers to move away from norm-referenced to standards-based assessment, aligning evaluations with predetermined outcomes. By providing clear guidelines, rubrics help students understand the specific requirements of assignments, enabling them to focus their efforts more effectively and engage in self-assessment. For teachers, rubrics offer a framework that ensures uniformity in evaluating student work, reducing subjectivity and potential biases in grading.

The study emphasized that rubrics serve as valuable tools in promoting self-regulated learning by providing students with clear performance expectations and criteria, which in turn facilitate goal setting, self-monitoring, and self-reflection. This structured approach not only aids in improving academic performance but also contributes to the development of lifelong learning skills.

Mwangi and Muthoni (2023), emphasized the role of rubrics in effective competency-based assessment. The use of rubrics has been shown to improve teacher consistency, reduce subjectivity and support formative feedback. Teachers who use rubrics regularly are better to identify learner strengths and weaknesses, enhancing their diagnostic capability. The analysis concluded that while rubrics effectively guide students toward higher performance standards, the magnitude of their impact can vary based on factors such as educational level and implementation context. For instance, younger students might require more extensive interventions to benefit fully from rubric use, whereas older students may experience positive effects with shorter implementations.

Black and William (1998), developing the theory of formative assessment. *Educational assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*. Rubrics guide teachers to design tasks that match the desired competencies, thus improving instructional alignment. Integration of grading

rubrics into educational assessment has garnered significant attention for its potential to enhance teaching effectiveness, particularly within the Ordinary Level curriculum. Grading rubrics are tools that articulate expectations by listing criteria and performance level descriptions across a continuum of quality. Their structured nature not only clarifies assessment standards but also promotes consistency in grading, thereby supporting both educators and learners in the academic process.

A comprehensive meta-analysis by Panadero et al. (2023) examined the impact of rubric use on students' academic performance, self-regulation, and self-efficacy. The study revealed that rubrics have a positive and moderate effect on academic performance, with an effect size of 0.57. Additionally, rubrics were found to enhance self-regulation strategies and self-efficacy, albeit to a lesser extent. The study also highlighted that the design specifics of rubrics, such as the number of criteria or performance levels, did not significantly influence their effectiveness, suggesting that the mere presence of clear guidelines is a critical factor in enhancing student outcomes.

In a separate meta-analysis, Camargo Salamanca et al. (2024) explored the effects of scoring rubrics on self-efficacy and self-regulation among K-16 students. The findings indicated a statistically significant moderate to large positive effect on self-efficacy (Hedges' $g = 0.39$) and a large effect on self-regulation (Hedges' $g = 1.00$). These results underscore the role of rubrics in fostering students' confidence in their abilities and their capacity to manage and direct their own learning processes.

In Zambia, Malama and Musonda (2023), investigated the impact of using assessment rubrics on pupils' academic performance in senior secondary mathematics. The research revealed that the experimental group, which utilized rubrics, achieved a mean score of 59.8%, compared to 34.1% in the control group. This significant improvement was attributed to the clarity and

structure provided by rubrics, which helped students understand learning targets and engage in self-assessment. The study concluded that rubrics not only enhance academic performance but also promote a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts by encouraging students to critically evaluate their work and identify areas for improvement. Furthermore, the use of rubrics was found to facilitate more accurate and fair assessment by teachers, as it provided a consistent framework for evaluating student performance.

Similarly, Mphande and Kaluba (2023) research focused on the assessment of pupils' conceptual understanding of algebra demonstrated that the use of assessment rubrics led to higher mean achievement scores in the experimental group compared to the control group. The study concluded that rubrics not only facilitate effective assessment and grading but also clarify learning objectives, thereby enhancing student performance. The structured guidance provided by rubrics was seen to promote active learning and improve collaboration between students and instructors. Additionally, the study found that rubrics support the development of critical thinking skills and understanding, helping pupils develop personal habits of self-assessment such as checking their work, revising, and reflecting on feedback.

The effectiveness of rubrics extends beyond academic performance. Nyirenda and Chanda (2023), explored teachers' and students' perceptions of formative assessment rubrics in organic chemistry and found that 87.8% of participants reported enhanced critical thinking skills when using rubrics. The structured guidance provided by rubrics was seen to promote active learning and improve collaboration between students and instructors. Participants noted that rubrics facilitated a clearer understanding of complex concepts and provided a framework for self-assessment, enabling students to identify their strengths and areas needing improvement. The study also highlighted that rubrics serve as effective tools for providing constructive feedback, which is essential for the development of higher-order thinking skills and deeper comprehension of subject matter.

Ahmed and Riaz, (2024), Prospective teachers' perceptions of grading rubrics also highlight their value in education. A survey study involving 400 prospective teachers from universities in Lahore revealed that rubrics clarify expectations, facilitate transparent grading, and improve self-regulation among students. These findings suggest that incorporating rubrics into teacher training programs could enhance future educators' assessment practices. The study emphasized that rubrics not only aid in standardizing evaluations but also serve as instructional tools that guide students toward desired learning outcomes. By understanding and utilizing rubrics, prospective teachers can better communicate performance expectations to their students, thereby fostering an environment conducive to learning and academic excellence.

Despite the evident benefits, the successful implementation of grading rubrics requires careful consideration. Factors such as rubric design, clarity of criteria, and alignment with learning objectives are crucial for maximizing their effectiveness. Moreover, ongoing professional development and collaboration among educators are essential to ensure that rubrics are utilized effectively to support student learning. Challenges such as time constraints in developing comprehensive rubrics and ensuring their consistent application across different assessments need to be addressed. Additionally, involving students in the creation of rubrics can enhance their understanding and ownership of the learning process, leading to improved outcomes.

Research Gap

Despite the growing body of research demonstrating the effectiveness of grading rubrics in enhancing assessment consistency, student performance, and teacher efficiency globally and in some African contexts, there remains limited empirical evidence on their implementation in Uganda's Ordinary Level curriculum, particularly in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality. While studies in Tanzania and Kenya highlight the benefits of rubric-based assessment, Ugandan research indicates inconsistencies in their application, with only 45% of teachers regularly

using them, and significant knowledge gaps among students regarding their assessment criteria. Furthermore, previous studies have largely focused on rubric effectiveness in specific subjects, such as English and Mathematics, neglecting a broader curriculum-wide analysis. In Bushenyi Municipality, limited research has explored the extent to which grading rubrics are utilized, the challenges faced by teachers in their implementation, and their impact on assessment effectiveness. Additionally, the interplay between rubric use and teacher effectiveness in assessment remains underexplored, leaving a gap in understanding how rubrics can be institutionalized to improve grading fairness, transparency, and learning outcomes. This study seeks to bridge these gaps by examining the role of grading rubrics in effective assessment within the New Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality, providing insights into their adoption, challenges, and impact on both teachers and students.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter presents the research design, study area, target population, sample size, sampling procedure, inclusion and exclusion criteria, research instruments, data collection procedure, data analysis techniques, ethical considerations, community engagement plan, and dissemination plan. The methodology aims to ensure the reliability and validity of the research findings.

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods. According to Kumar (2011), descriptive research aims to depict the characteristics of a selected phenomenon by collecting data without manipulating variables. This design is suitable because it allows the researcher to obtain comprehensive data on the use of grading rubrics and their effectiveness in assessing students in the Lower Secondary Curriculum. The quantitative approach involved structured questionnaires to gather numerical data, while the qualitative approach employed interviews to capture detailed insights.

Study Area

The study was conducted in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality, Bushenyi District. This area has a mix of government-aided and private secondary schools implementing the Lower Secondary Curriculum. The study included six government schools and five private ones. The selection of Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality was based on reported inconsistencies in the use of grading rubrics and the need for standardized assessment practices to enhance student performance.

Target Population

According to Patton (2002), it is essential to clearly define the characteristics that the researcher intends to investigate by establishing a precise working definition of the target population. The target population for this study comprised both private and government-aided secondary school teachers, Ordinary Level students who were involved the study to encompass their views on how teachers use rubrics to effectively assess learners, directors of studies, and head teachers in selected schools that is two private schools and two government ones within Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality. These are presented as school W, school X, school Y and school Z. The selection of these four schools was based on their representation of both government-aided and private institutions, ensuring a balanced perspective on grading rubric implementation. Government-aided schools reflect standardized assessment practices under national guidelines, while private schools often adopted innovative approaches, providing comparative insights. Additionally, these schools were chosen due to their accessibility, diverse student populations, and reported inconsistencies in rubric usage, aligning with the study's objectives to evaluate fairness and transparency in assessment. Teachers were selected because they are directly involved in student assessment and grading, making them key informants on the use and effectiveness of grading rubrics. Ordinary Level students were included as they are the primary recipients of assessment, and their experiences provide crucial insights into how grading rubrics impact learning and performance. Directors of studies and headteachers were involved because they oversee policy implementation and provide institutional perspectives on assessment practices. These participants were chosen to ensure a comprehensive understanding of how grading rubrics influence assessment effectiveness in the Lower Secondary Curriculum.

Sample Size Determination

The target population for the study consisted of 278 individuals, including 30 teachers from selected schools, 240 Ordinary Level students, 4 directors of studies, and 4 head teachers. The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table, which provides guidance on selecting an appropriate sample relative to the size of the population.

Sample Size

According to Stevenson (2007), a sample is a subset of the population comprising selected members who serve as study participants. For this study, the sample was drawn using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, which indicated that for a target population of 278, a representative sample would fall at 181 participants.

The choice of this sample size was justified for three main reasons. First, it ensured representativeness of all key stakeholders in the study, teachers, students, directors of studies, and head teachers, thereby capturing diverse perspectives on the use of grading rubrics. Second, in the Ugandan research context, studies in education often face logistical and financial constraints, making it impractical to study entire populations (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). By selecting 181 participants, the study balanced methodological rigor with feasibility. Third, in line with Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB, 2022) recommendations, adequate sample sizes are necessary to capture variability across schools, which differ in terms of enrollment, staffing, and resource availability. Thus, this sample size was considered both statistically sound and contextually appropriate for Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality.

Table 1: Sample Size

Participants Category	Target Population	Sample Size	Sampling Techniques
Head Teachers	04	04	Purposive sampling technique
Director of Studies	04	04	Purposive Sampling technique
Teachers	30	28	Stratified random sampling
Students	240	145	Stratified random sampling
Total	278	181	

This resulted into total sample size of 181 study participants.

Sampling Procedure

To ensure a representative sample, a combination of stratified random sampling, and purposive sampling techniques was employed. Stratified random sampling was used to categorize schools into two strata based on ownership: government-aided and private secondary schools. This technique ensures fair representation of different types of institutions and accounts for variations in assessment practices. From each selected school, a random sample was selected from teachers and students using the same technique. This method eliminates selection bias and ensures each participant has an equal chance of being chosen, thus improving the reliability of the study findings. School administrators were purposively selected due to their specific roles in overseeing assessment policies and implementation. This targeted selection ensures that the study captures expert opinions and institutional perspectives on the use of grading rubrics in assessment. The combination of these sampling techniques enhanced the validity and generalizability of the study results across secondary schools in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria

The study included private and government-aided secondary schools in Bushenyi- Ishaka Municipality, teachers with experience in assessment, and students in Ordinary Level.

Exclusion Criteria

The study excluded schools outside Bushenyi- Ishaka Municipality, newly recruited teachers with no assessment experience, and students in Advanced Level.

Data Sources

This study utilized both primary and secondary data sources to ensure a comprehensive and reliable analysis of the research problem.

Primary Data

Primary data was obtained directly from the study participants, including Ordinary Level teachers, students, directors of studies and head teachers in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality. The researcher collected this data using questionnaires and interviews. These methods provided firsthand insights into the use and effectiveness of grading rubrics in assessing student performance, allowing for a detailed examination of the study variables.

Data Collection Methods

Questionnaire Method

A questionnaire is a structured data collection instrument comprising a set of questions related to the researcher's area of interest (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2004). In this study, the questionnaire was designed in alignment with the research objectives and include both closed-

ended and open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions facilitated efficient data analysis and easy response selection, particularly for students and teachers assessing the Ordinary Level curriculum. Open-ended questions allowed respondents to express their perspectives in detail, enabling a deeper understanding of the challenges and benefits associated with grading rubrics in assessment.

Interview Method

Interviews were conducted to gather in-depth qualitative data from key educational stakeholders. According to Kothari (2004), interviews involve direct oral communication between the researcher and respondents, facilitating clarification and deeper exploration of the research topic. In this study, face-to-face interviews were held with school administrators, such as Directors of Studies and Head Teachers. These interviews allowed the researcher to obtain rich, contextual insights into policy implementation, institutional support for grading rubrics, and the overall effectiveness of assessment practices in the Lower Secondary Curriculum.

Data Collection Tools

Questionnaire

The researcher utilized structured questionnaires to gather quantitative and qualitative data from teachers and students. The questionnaire was the primary instrument for collecting quantitative data in this study. It was designed to obtain information from secondary school teachers and Ordinary Level students in Bushenyi- Ishaka Municipality. The questionnaire comprised three sections: Section A: Collect demographic information about respondents, including their gender, teaching experience (for teachers), and school type (government-aided or private). Section B: focused on the use of grading rubrics in assessing the Lower Secondary Curriculum, examining teachers' knowledge, frequency of use, and challenges in

implementation. And Section C: assessed teachers' effectiveness in the evaluation of learners, measuring aspects such as assessment consistency, fairness, feedback provision, and alignment with curriculum objectives.

Sections B and C featured a five-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5) to allow for quantifiable data collection on key study variables where; SD = Strongly Disagree (1), D = Disagree (2), N = Neutral (3), A = Agree (4), and SA = Strongly Agree (5).

The questionnaire included predominantly close-ended questions to facilitate statistical analysis, supplemented by a few open-ended questions to capture additional insights. The use of questionnaires was advantageous as it allows efficient data collection from a large sample, ensures respondent anonymity, and minimizes researcher bias (Brookhart, 2013). The structured format also enabled a systematic comparison of responses across different participant groups.

Interview Guide

An interview guide was developed to facilitate structured discussions with Directors of Studies and Head Teachers. This tool included open-ended questions that enabled respondents to elaborate on key issues such as assessment policies, challenges in implementing grading rubrics, and recommendations for improving assessment practices.

Data Quality Control

Validity of Research Instruments

Validity refers to the extent to which a research method accurately measures what it intends to measure (Hand et al., 2022). It indicates the extent to which the results derived from data analysis truly reflect the phenomena being studied (Haydam & Steenkamp, 2020). In this study,

validity was considered as the degree to which the research instruments align with the study's objectives. According to Kumar (2011), validity pertains to the quality of data collection tools and procedures in ensuring that an instrument accurately measures what it was designed to measure.

To ensure the validity of the study's data collection tools, the instruments (questionnaire and interview guide) were reviewed by subject experts to confirm that the questions are relevant to the research objectives. The content validity index (C.V.I.) was calculated to assess the relevance of each item in the instruments. This index measured the proportion of relevant items to the total number of items in the instrument. A higher C.V.I. value indicated that the instruments are valid and aligned with the study's objectives. The validity of the study instruments was evaluated as follows:

In this study, content validity was ensured through expert evaluation of the questionnaire items. The experts were requested to assess each item's relevance in relation to the study objectives, using a two-point scale where 'Relevant' was rated as 1 and 'Irrelevant' as 0. The Content Validity Index (CVI) was then computed using the formula:

$$CVI = \frac{\text{Number of items regarded as relevant (n)}}{\text{Total number of items (N)}}$$

The questionnaires had 43 items, and experts deemed 37 of them as relevant, the CVI would be calculated as follows:

Total items in the questionnaires, N=43

Relevant items, n=37

$$CVI = \frac{37}{43} = 0.86$$

In this study, the calculated CVI was greater than 0.7, confirming the validity of the instruments in line with the threshold recommended by Zohrabi (2023). This implies that the questionnaire items were sufficiently aligned with the study objectives and adequately measured the constructs intended for investigation.

Reliability of Research Instruments

Reliability refers to the consistency of an instrument in producing stable results over repeated trials (Kerlinger, 2003). To enhance reliability, the study employed the instrument triangulation technique, which is widely accepted in quantitative survey research for improving the credibility of findings (Theodoridis & Kraemer, 2004; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013).

According to Theodoridis & Kraemer (2004), reliability is assessed through the consistency of measurement and is often evaluated using the test-retest method. The reliability of the research instruments was further strengthened by including multiple similar items in the questionnaire, selecting a diverse sample, and ensuring uniform administration procedures.

The study adopted Cronbach's Alpha to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. A pilot study involving teachers and students was conducted prior to the main data collection to establish reliability. The results showed Cronbach's Alpha coefficients well above the acceptable threshold of 0.70, as recommended by Mohajan (2021). Specifically, the students' questionnaire yielded an overall Cronbach's Alpha of 0.82, with Section B (Grading Rubrics) at 0.78 and Section C (Teachers' Effectiveness) at 0.81. The teachers' questionnaire exhibited an even higher overall Cronbach's Alpha of 0.85, with Section B at 0.80 and Section C at 0.83. These results indicate a high level of internal consistency, affirming that the questionnaire items reliably measured the intended constructs across different respondent groups. Therefore, the study confirmed that the questionnaires possessed strong content validity ($CVI > 0.7$) and high internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.7). These findings

establish that the instruments were both valid and reliable for collecting data on grading rubrics and teachers' effectiveness in assessment within the Lower Secondary Curriculum.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher began by obtaining approval from the Bishop Stuart University Research and Ethics Committee (BSU-REC). Following this, the researcher sought additional clearance from the headteachers of the selected secondary schools in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality.

Upon arrival at each school, the researcher distributed questionnaires to teachers and students. These questionnaires were collected on the same day, except for interviews, in cases where school administrators, such as head teachers and Directors of Studies, required appointments due to their demanding schedules. Additionally, document analysis was conducted on the same day the questionnaires are administered to ensure comprehensive data collection.

Data Analysis Techniques

To effectively analyze the collected data, a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques was employed. Each research objective was addressed using specific analytical tools to ensure comprehensive and accurate findings.

For Objective 1: To assess the grading rubrics used in the assessment of the Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality. The study employed descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) to summarize and present data on the grading rubrics used by teachers. Qualitative content analysis of grading rubrics from selected schools was conducted to evaluate their structure, alignment with curriculum objectives, and clarity in performance criteria.

For Objective 2: To examine teachers' effectiveness in the assessment of learners in the New Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi District. The study employed descriptive statistics

(frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) to summarize and present data on the grading rubrics used by teachers. Qualitative responses from interviews with teachers and school administrators were analyzed thematically to identify common patterns and perceptions regarding assessment effectiveness.

For Objective 3: To assess the relationship between the use of grading rubrics and teachers' effectiveness in assessment in the Ordinary Level curriculum. A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between grading rubric usage and teachers' effectiveness in assessment.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher obtained approval from the Bishop Stuart University Research and Ethics Committee (BSU-REC) after securing clearance from the Faculty of Education, Arts, and Media Studies before proceeding with data collection. Further authorization was sought from the head teachers of the selected schools.

A detailed work plan outlining the research activities was developed.

Schools where data collection took place were identified through a systematic sampling process.

The researcher printed adequate copies of the research instruments and familiarized themselves with the study locations by visiting the selected schools before data collection.

To ensure confidentiality, teachers and students were assured of anonymity, and numerical identifiers were used instead of names when recording data.

All information provided by participants was handled with strict confidentiality, and respondents' rights to privacy were respected even after the study concluded.

The researcher emphasized that the collected data would be used solely for academic purposes and that participation would be entirely voluntary.

Participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study or decline to provide any information at any stage without any consequences.

Informed consent was sought from all respondents through a written request, which was attached to the research instruments. Additionally, assent was obtained for minors participating in the study to ensure their rights and well-being are protected.

Parental consent was obtained by distributing informed consent forms through students, accompanied by translated explanatory letters (English/local language). Schools facilitated follow-ups via staff to ensure timely returns. For accessibility, community meetings were organized at schools to address queries and collect consents directly. Collaboration with school authorities and local leaders ensured effective communication, enabling parents to provide voluntary consent while adhering to ethical standards.

Community Engagement Plan

The community engagement plan involved collaboration with key stakeholders, including teachers, students, school administrators, and local education officials in Bushenyi Municipality. The researcher conducted preliminary meetings with school management to introduce the study objectives and seek their support. Regular consultations with teachers and students were held to ensure their active participation and address any concerns. Workshops and interactive sessions were organized to educate stakeholders on the significance of grading rubrics in assessment practices. Additionally, feedback sessions were conducted after data collection to share preliminary findings and gather community insights. This engagement

fostered transparency, encourage knowledge-sharing, and ensure the study outcomes contribute to the improvement of assessment strategies in the local education system.

Dissemination Plan

The findings of this study may be disseminated through multiple channels to ensure they reach relevant stakeholders. A formal research report was written and shall be submitted to Bishop Stuart University as part of the academic requirements. Additionally, presentations shall be conducted at educational workshops and seminars attended by teachers, school administrators, and policymakers to share insights and recommendations. A summary of the key findings shall be distributed to participating schools to facilitate direct application of the research outcomes in improving assessment practices. Furthermore, the study shall be published in an academic journal to contribute to the broader field of education research. Efforts shall also be made to engage local government education offices and the Ministry of Education to inform policy decisions on grading rubrics and assessment practices in secondary schools.

Chapter Four: Data analysis, Presentation, and Interpretation

Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the data collected regarding the role of grading rubrics in enhancing teachers' effectiveness in assessing competencies within the Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality, Bushenyi District. The chapter specifically addresses three objectives: to assess the grading rubrics employed in the assessment of the Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality; to examine teachers' effectiveness in assessing learners within this curriculum in Bushenyi District; and to establish the relationship between the use of grading rubrics and teachers' effectiveness in assessment under the Lower Secondary Curriculum. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations, while qualitative data from open-ended questions and interviews were organized through thematic analysis. The findings are presented as follows.

Response Rate

Table 2 Response Rate of Participants

Respondent category	Sample size	Study participants	Response rate
Students (questionnaires)	145	124	85.5
Teachers (questionnaires)	28	26	92.9
Headteachers (interview guide)	04	04	100
Directors of Studies (interview guide)	04	04	100
Total	181	158	87.3

The response rate of participants in this study was generally high, as shown in Table 2. Out of the targeted 181 participants, 158 responded, yielding an overall response rate of 87.3%.

Specifically, 124 out of 145 students completed the questionnaires, representing 85.5%, while 26 out of 28 teachers responded, giving a response rate of 92.9%. Additionally, all the targeted headteachers (n = 4) and Directors of Studies (n = 4) participated, representing a 100% response rate in both categories. According to Fincham (2008), a response rate of 80% or higher is considered excellent for social science research, while Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) recommend a minimum response rate of 70% for a study to be deemed representative of the target population. Therefore, the response rates achieved in the current study are considered satisfactory and sufficient for ensuring the credibility and reliability of the findings. These high rates strengthen the validity of the study outcomes, as they reflect broad participation from the intended respondents.

Demographic characteristics of study participants

Table 3 Gender of the study participants

Gender	Students		Teachers		Headteacher		Directors of studies		Total	
	Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent
Male	60	48.4	14	53.8	2	50	4	100	80	50.6
Female	64	51.6	12	46.2	2	50	0	0	78	49.4
Total	124	100.0	26	100.0	4	100	4	100	158	100

The findings in Table 3 show the gender distribution across participant groups. Among students, 60 (48.4%) were male and 64 (51.6%) were female, while among teachers, 14 (53.8%) were male and 12 (46.2%) were female. Headteachers showed an equal gender split, with 2 (50%) males and 2 (50%) females, whereas all 4 (100%) directors of studies were male. Overall, the total sample consisted of 80 (50.6%) males and 78 (49.4%) females, indicating a nearly balanced gender representation.

Table 4 Age of Students

Age	Frequency	Percent
Below 15	33	26.6
15-20	91	73.4
21 and above	00	00
Total	124	100.0

The results show that the majority of students, 91(73.4%), fell within the 15–20 age range, while 33(26.6%) were below 15 years old and no student was above 21 years of age.

Table 5 Class of study participants (Students, n=124)

Class	Frequency	Percent
Senior 1	31	25.0
Senior 2	31	25.0
Senior 3	60	48.4
Senior 4	2	1.6
Total	124	100.0

Results in Table 5 reveal that the majority of the student participants ($n = 124$) were in Senior 3, accounting for 48.4% ($n = 60$) of the sample. Both Senior 1 and Senior 2 students were equally represented, each contributing 25.0% ($n = 31$) to the total. In contrast, Senior 4 students were the least represented, making up only 1.6% ($n = 2$) of the participants.

Table 6 Years of experience for teachers

Years of experience	Frequency	Percent
1-5	5	19.2
6-10	5	19.2
11 and above	16	61.5
Total	26	100.0

Table 6 indicates that the majority of the teachers who participated in the study had significant teaching experience, with 61.5% (n = 16) having served for 11 years and above. Teachers with 1 to 5 years of experience constituted 19.2% (n = 5), and those with 6 to 10 years of experience also accounted for 19.2% (n = 5).

The use of Grading rubrics used in the assessment of Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality in Bushenyi District.

Table 7 Use of Grading Rubrics in Assessment (Students, N = 124)

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
My school uses grading rubrics to assess students' work.	19 (15.3%)	14 (11.3%)	15 (12.1%)	37 (29.8%)	39 (31.5%)	3.51	1.428
The grading rubrics used in my school are clear and easy to understand.	22 (17.7%)	20 (16.1%)	24 (19.4%)	35 (28.2%)	23 (18.5%)	3.14	1.375
The rubrics align with the learning outcomes.	14 (11.3%)	11 (8.9%)	32 (25.8%)	41 (33.1%)	26 (21.0%)	3.44	1.238
The rubrics provide clear criteria for different performance levels.	23 (18.5%)	12 (9.7%)	32 (25.8%)	32 (25.8%)	25 (20.2%)	3.19	1.371
Teachers consistently use grading rubrics across all subjects.	24 (19.4%)	34 (27.4%)	26 (21.0%)	17 (13.7%)	23 (18.5%)	2.85	1.385
The use of grading rubrics has improved assessment fairness.	16 (12.9%)	14 (11.3%)	21 (16.9%)	29 (23.4%)	44 (35.5%)	3.57	1.404
Averages						3.28	1.367

The findings in Table 7 indicate that the majority of participants (61.3%, n=76) agreed that their school uses grading rubrics, while 26.6% (n=33) disagreed, and 12.1% (n=15) remained neutral. The mean score (3.51) suggests moderate agreement, but the high standard deviation (1.428) indicates significant variability in responses. This implies that while most participants acknowledge the use of rubrics, a notable minority either do not experience or recognize their application consistently.

Nearly half (46.7%, n=58) of participants found the rubrics clear, whereas 33.8% (n=42) disagreed, and 19.4% (n=24) were neutral. The mean (3.14) reflects marginal agreement, with a relatively high standard deviation (1.375), signaling inconsistent perceptions. This suggests that rubric clarity may need improvement, as a substantial proportion of participants struggle to comprehend them.

A strong majority (54.1%, n=67) agreed that rubrics align with learning outcomes, while 20.2% (n=25) disagreed, and 25.8% (n=32) were neutral. The mean (3.44) indicates moderate-to-strong agreement, supported by a lower standard deviation (1.238), showing more consensus. This alignment is crucial for valid assessment, and the findings suggest that rubrics generally meet this criterion.

Approximately 46.0% (n=57) of participants agreed that rubrics delineate performance levels clearly, while 28.2% (n=35) disagreed, and 25.8% (n=32) were neutral. The mean (3.19) reflects tepid agreement, with notable disagreement and uncertainty. The high standard deviation (1.371) underscores variability, indicating that rubric design may lack sufficient transparency for some participants.

Only 32.2% (n=40) of participants agreed that rubrics are used consistently, whereas 46.8% (n=58) disagreed, and 21.0% (n=26) remained neutral. The low mean (2.85) and high standard

deviation (1.385) highlight significant inconsistency in rubric application. This finding raises concerns about equitable assessment practices, as inconsistent use may lead to unfair grading.

A substantial 58.9% (n=73) of participants perceived improved fairness due to rubrics, while 24.2% (n=30) disagreed, and 16.9% (n=21) were neutral. The highest mean (3.57) and a lower standard deviation (1.404) suggest strong agreement. This indicates that despite inconsistencies, rubrics contribute positively to fairness, reinforcing their value in standardized assessment.

The data suggest that while grading rubrics are generally perceived as beneficial, particularly in enhancing fairness (58.9%, n=73) and aligning with learning outcomes (54.1%, n=67), their clarity, consistency, and transparency require improvement. The variability in responses highlights disparities in implementation, urging targeted teacher training and rubric refinement to ensure equitable and effective assessment practices.

In response to the question on, *how can grading rubrics be improved in your school?*, students from several schools passionately expressed the urgent need to refine, clarify, and sensitize both teachers and students about grading rubrics. A student from school W emphasized that *“advising teachers to always teach us how they interpret and understand grading rubrics.”* Another echoed, *“the grading rubrics can be improved by setting them in a standard form for people to understand.”* (Interview with student 1 from school W)

Learner 2 from school W pointed out the institutional aspect, stating that *“the school should work hand in hand with department to make grading rubrics that favor all subjects especially the new curriculum because these students give irrelevant ideas but they are not considered due to grading rubrics”* In a more practical proposal, a student from school X suggested *“by consulting students and giving students answering formats of subject in the new lower secondary curriculum.”* (interview with student 1 from school X) Meanwhile, students from

school Y advocated for “*educating the teachers on the proper use of grading rubrics so that students can improve on the performance.*” Clearly, there is a call across the student body for systematization, clarity, and stakeholder inclusion in rubric design and implementation.

Table 8: Teacher effectiveness in using Grading Rubrics (Teachers, N = 26)

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
The grading rubrics used in assessment are well-structured and easy to follow.	2(7.7%)	5 (19.2%)	4 (15.4%)	14 (53.8%)	1(3.8%)	3.27	1.079
The rubrics clearly define performance expectations for students.	2(7.7%)	2(7.7%)	7 (26.9%)	11 (42.3%)	4 (15.4%)	3.50	1.105
The grading rubrics are aligned with the learning objectives of the curriculum.	3 (11.5%)	3 (11.5%)	5 (19.2%)	8 (30.8%)	7 (26.9%)	3.50	1.334
Teachers consistently use grading rubrics when assessing student work.	1(3.8%)	7 (26.9%)	3 (11.5%)	13 (50.0%)	2(7.7%)	3.31	1.087
The rubrics provide clear guidelines that reduce subjectivity in marking.	1(3.8%)	5 (19.2%)	7 (26.9%)	9 (34.6%)	4 (15.4%)	3.38	1.098
The use of grading rubrics improves the fairness and transparency of assessments.	3 (11.5%)	4 (15.4%)	3 (11.5%)	9 (34.6%)	7 (26.9%)	3.50	1.364
Averages						3.41	1.178

Regarding rubric structure, a majority of teachers (57.6%, $n = 15$) reported that grading rubrics are well-structured and easy to follow, while 26.9% ($n = 7$) expressed disagreement, and 15.4% ($n = 4$) remained neutral ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.079$). This suggests that while most teachers find the rubrics usable, a significant minority experience difficulties with their structure. Similarly, 57.7% ($n = 15$) of teachers agreed that rubrics clearly define performance expectations, with 26.9% ($n = 7$) neutral and 15.4% ($n = 4$) disagreeing ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.105$), indicating generally positive perceptions with room for improvement in clarity.

Alignment with curriculum objectives received agreement from 57.7% ($n = 15$) of teachers, while 23.0% ($n = 6$) disagreed and 19.2% ($n = 5$) were neutral ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.334$). These results suggest that rubrics are largely well-aligned, though some discrepancies may exist across subject areas. Implementation consistency showed a similar pattern, with 57.7% ($n = 15$) reporting regular use of rubrics, contrasted by 30.7% ($n = 8$) noting inconsistency ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.087$), highlighting potential variability in assessment practices among faculty.

Teachers were divided on rubrics' ability to reduce subjectivity, with 50.0% ($n = 13$) agreeing they provide clear guidelines, 26.9% ($n = 7$) neutral, and 23.0% ($n = 6$) disagreeing ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.098$). This finding suggests that while rubrics help standardize grading for many teachers, a substantial portion still perceive marking as subjective. The strongest agreement emerged regarding fairness and transparency, with 61.5% ($n = 16$) affirming rubrics' positive impact, though 26.9% ($n = 7$) maintained reservations ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.364$).

Overall, teachers demonstrated moderately positive perceptions of grading rubrics (average mean = 3.41), particularly valuing their role in ensuring assessment fairness and alignment with learning objectives. However, concerns about rubric clarity, implementation consistency, and subjectivity reduction suggest opportunities for professional development focused on rubric design and uniform application.

From qualitative questions, when teachers were asked “What challenges do you face in using grading rubrics for assessment?”, responses varied but a strong theme emerged around time consumption, lack of training, and complexity of the rubrics. At school W, Teacher 1 noted that *“They take no much time.”* However, Teacher 11 at the same school highlighted difficulties in fairness and accuracy, stating *“Allocation of scores of certain items is by weighted scores which are hard to get. This makes standard assessment of learners hard and difficult.”* (interview with Teacher 1 at school) Another Teacher 3 emphasized misalignment between rubrics and learner needs, responding *“Difficult to deliver and get alignment with the needs of the learners.”* Additionally, Teacher 4 cited multiple challenges including resources and training gaps, saying *“Time consuming. Lack of enough assessment tools. Lack of enough training to teachers.”* Similarly, Teacher 5 observed *“Subjectively in interpretation. Time wasting in developing and using it.”* Others pointed out contextual barriers such as learner mobility, *“Changing of learners from one school to another,”* and bias within rubric design, *“It generalizes categories of learners thus favoring some of the expenses of others.”* (interview with Teacher 5 at school X)

At school Y, Teacher 1 stressed gaps in teacher preparedness, stating *“Teachers are not well informed on what to do.”* Teacher 2 pointed to time and large class sizes, *“Lack of enough time for assessment. Large classes of over 60 students.”* Teacher 3 cited resource constraints, *“Limited resources to implement the rubrics. Limited knowledge about grading rubrics.”* while Teacher 4 shared similar sentiments, *“It takes long to mark and complete in time.”* Teacher 5 reaffirmed this by saying *“One needs more time to clearly follow the guidelines in the rubrics.”* (interview with teachers at school Y)

At school Z, time and workload continued to dominate. Teacher 1 said, *“It demands a lot of time in coding and scoring students.”* Teacher 2 pointed out training gaps, *“Time wastage. Not being well knowledge.”* Teacher 3 noted, *“Limited knowledge. Limited time.”* Teacher 4

echoed these concerns, *“Scoring students takes a lot of time and it is tiresome.”* Teacher 5 explained the exhaustion experienced, *“Teachers get tired easily due to doing so much work in assessing students.”* Teacher 6 summarized it simply, *“It is time wasting.”* Teacher 7 introduced another layer, *“Poor academic records of learners especially those who change schools. Bias about poor performers.”* (Interview for Teacher 7 at school Z)

At school X, challenges centered on lack of clarity and inconsistency. Teacher 1 responded, *“They do not clearly indicate performance and achievement of students.”* Teacher 2 mentioned the disconnect between implementers and frontline teachers, *“The implementers are not in the know of the exact score that leads to a certain qualities (say A or B or C...). Some information about the grading is well known to national bodies (UNEB) but not teachers.”* Teacher 3 pointed to limited knowledge and time, *“Inadequate time to assess the learners. Insufficient knowledge about the use of grading rubrics for assessment.”* Teacher 4 critiqued the rubrics’ depth, *“Sometimes these grading rubrics are shallow and outlined, not detailed enough to explain the underlined objectives.”* Teacher 5 emphasized inconsistency, *“Assessors may interpret rubric levels differently, leading to inconsistent grading. They do not always fit for all subjects.”* Teacher 6 returned to time constraints, *“Large classes. Lack of enough time.”* Teacher 7 summarized multiple challenges, *“Time consuming grading especially for large classes. Limited flexibility. It may not accommodate diverse perspectives.”*

In qualitative analysis, during interviews with headteachers and directors of studies, the following responses were obtained;

When the participants were asked, “How are grading rubrics currently being used in the assessment of learners in your school? What are the common types of rubrics used?”, varied but concrete responses emerged across schools, revealing common practices and shared gaps. At school W, the Headteacher asserted, *“Teachers who write items submit them to the D.O.S*

office together with the scoring grids. Types: Descriptive grading rubrics with clear performance levels and descriptors.” Similarly, the Director of Studies confirmed departmental consultation before assessments, stating, “Teachers set individual items for end of term assessment but must score them after consultations from other department members.” This highlights efforts towards uniformity but also hints at informal, department-level management of rubrics.

At school Y, the Headteacher reported more structured and formalized procedures: “Assessment items are timetabled and assigned to different officers for supervisors. No teacher is allowed to assess learners without showing guidelines for scoring and awarding marks. Types: Descriptive rubrics-explaining performance levels, descriptors; Analytic; Evaluation grids (RACE)-reliance, accuracy, coherence, excellence; and Scoring guides or Bands.” This structured approach points to a school-level policy enforcing rubric usage. The Director of Studies did not provide any responses.

At school Z, the Headteacher emphasized internal processes, saying, “Teachers set assessment items and submit their assessment criteria to the D.O.S office. The criteria must be measurable. Types: Scoring guides or Bands, Analytic rubrics, Holistic rubrics.” The Director of Studies confirmed collaborative development, noting, “Teachers in the same department set assessment items as a team and use a similar rubric for assessment. Common types: Descriptive rubrics.” (Head teacher from school Z)

At school X, teamwork in rubric usage is highly emphasized. The Headteacher noted, “We emphasize team assessment which is done in different departments. Teachers must first go through the grading rubric as a team before they embark on scoring. Types: Analytical rubrics, Descriptive rubrics.” Likewise, the Director of Studies highlighted purpose-driven rubric preparation: “They are prepared to provide for variety of responses from learners to test the

competencies achieved.” These responses strongly indicate that while schools appreciate and utilize grading rubrics, practices range from strict adherence with formal guidelines to collaborative but less standardized approaches.

Teachers' effectiveness in the assessment of learners in the Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi District

Table 9 Assessment Practices and Use of Grading Rubrics (Students, N = 124)

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teachers provide detailed feedback using grading rubrics.	26 (21.0%)	13 (10.5%)	30 (24.2%)	24 (19.4%)	31 (25.0%)	3.17	1.458
Teachers use a variety of assessment methods.	7 (5.6%)	8 (6.5%)	22 (17.7%)	45 (36.3%)	42 (33.9%)	3.86	1.129
Teachers' assessment aligns with learning outcomes.	6 (4.8%)	15 (12.1%)	23 (18.5%)	37 (29.8%)	43 (34.7%)	3.77	1.188
Teachers are well-trained in using grading rubrics.	24 (19.4%)	23 (18.5%)	21 (16.9%)	32 (25.8%)	24 (19.4%)	3.07	1.415
The assessment process is transparent and objective.	16 (12.9%)	12 (9.7%)	37 (29.8%)	38 (30.6%)	21 (16.9%)	3.29	1.235
Students understand how grading rubrics are used to evaluate their performance.	31 (25.0%)	24 (19.4%)	30 (24.2%)	27 (21.8%)	12 (9.7%)	2.72	1.316
Averages						3.31	1.290

The findings reveal that a significant proportion of students perceive inadequate feedback practices from teachers. While 44.4% ($n = 55$) of students agreed that teachers provide detailed feedback using grading rubrics, a notable 31.5% ($n = 39$) disagreed, and 24.2% ($n = 30$) remained neutral. The mean score of 3.17 ($SD = 1.458$) suggests moderate performance, indicating variability in teachers' feedback practices. These results imply that while some teachers effectively utilize rubrics, a substantial number of students do not receive comprehensive feedback, highlighting a need for improved consistency in assessment practices.

Teachers appear to employ diverse assessment strategies, as evidenced by a strong consensus among students. A substantial majority (70.2%, $n = 87$) agreed that teachers use varied assessment methods, whereas only 12.1% ($n = 15$) disagreed, and 17.7% ($n = 22$) were neutral. The high mean score of 3.86 ($SD = 1.129$) underscores effective implementation of multiple assessment techniques. This suggests that teachers in Bushenyi District are largely successful in diversifying their assessment approaches, which may enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

Students generally affirmed that assessments align with learning objectives, with 64.5% ($n = 80$) in agreement, compared to 16.9% ($n = 21$) in disagreement and 18.5% ($n = 23$) neutral. The mean score of 3.77 ($SD = 1.188$) reflects strong alignment, indicating that teachers design assessments that correspond with curriculum goals. However, the presence of disagreement and neutral responses suggests that further refinement may be necessary to ensure all assessments consistently reflect intended learning outcomes.

Students expressed mixed perceptions regarding teachers' proficiency in using grading rubrics. While 45.2% ($n = 56$) agreed that teachers are well-trained, a significant 37.9% ($n = 47$) disagreed, and 16.9% ($n = 21$) remained neutral. The mean score of 3.07 ($SD = 1.415$) indicates

only moderate competence, pointing to inconsistencies in teachers' rubric application skills. These findings suggest a need for enhanced professional development to ensure all teachers are adequately trained in rubric-based assessment.

Students reported moderate satisfaction with the transparency and objectivity of assessments. A combined 47.5% (n = 59) agreed that the process is transparent, while 22.6% (n = 28) disagreed, and 29.8% (n = 37) were neutral. The mean score of 3.29 (SD = 1.235) suggests room for improvement in ensuring clarity and fairness in grading practices. Addressing these concerns could strengthen student trust in the assessment system.

A concerning trend emerged regarding students' comprehension of rubric usage. Only 31.5% (n = 39) agreed that they understood how rubrics evaluate their performance, whereas 44.4% (n = 55) disagreed, and 24.2% (n = 30) remained neutral. The low mean score of 2.72 (SD = 1.316) highlights a critical gap in communication between teachers and students. Improving rubric clarity and providing explicit instruction on their use could enhance student awareness and performance.

In qualitative analysis for response from open-ended questions with students, when asked, *“What do you think should be done to improve teachers’ effectiveness in assessment?”*, the overwhelming consensus among students centered around the critical need for continuous teacher training and workshops. A student from school X powerfully noted that *“teachers should be sensitized about improving the effectiveness in assessment and they can be equipped with right information.”* Others, like one from school Z, stated that *teachers should be guided on how to assess students.*

School W students emphasized experiential learning, stating *“organizing workshops for teachers to explain more about assessments”* and *“teachers should always be given access to internet to search and give the children enough knowledge.”* Several highlighted that

orientation to the new curriculum is lacking, urging for more structured support: *“teachers should be oriented more about the new curriculum,”* and *“organizing teachers workshops in order to elaborate more on effective assessment.”*

This feedback demonstrates that students not only recognize the importance of teacher competence but are also critically aware of gaps in training that hinder effective learning experiences.

Table 10 Teachers' Use of Grading Rubrics (teachers, N = 26)

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teachers provide timely and constructive feedback based on grading rubrics.	0 (0.0%)	2 (7.7%)	13 (50.0%)	9 (34.6%)	2 (7.7%)	3.42	0.758
Teachers have sufficient training in using grading rubrics for student assessment.	5 (19.2%)	7 (26.9%)	8 (30.8%)	3 (11.5%)	3 (11.5%)	2.69	1.258
The assessment methods used by teachers align with the curriculum requirements.	3 (11.5%)	2 (7.7%)	7 (26.9%)	12 (46.2%)	2 (7.7%)	3.31	1.123
Teachers incorporate various assessment techniques beyond grading rubrics.	0 (0.0%)	5 (19.2%)	13 (50.0%)	5 (19.2%)	3 (11.5%)	3.23	0.908
Students understand how grading rubrics are used to evaluate their performance.	6 (23.1%)	6 (23.1%)	6 (23.1%)	8 (30.8%)	0 (0.0%)	2.62	1.169
Teachers engage students in the assessment process using rubrics.	4 (15.4%)	6 (23.1%)	5 (19.2%)	11 (42.3%)	0 (0.0%)	2.88	1.143
Averages						3.03	1.060

The findings reveal that when teachers were asked whether they provide timely and constructive feedback based on grading rubrics, a significant portion, 13(50.0%), remained neutral. A total of 11 teachers (42.3%) agreed with the statement, while only 2 (7.7%) disagreed. This pattern, supported by a mean of 3.42 ($SD = 0.758$), indicates a generally positive perception, although the high neutrality rate suggests inconsistency or uncertainty in the actual implementation of rubric-based feedback practices in classrooms.

Nearly a half of the teachers, 12 (46.1%), disagreed with the statement that they have sufficient training in using grading rubrics for student assessment. Only 6 teachers (23.0%) agreed, while 8 (30.8%) were neutral. This response pattern, coupled with a relatively low mean of 2.69 ($SD = 1.258$), suggests that a considerable number of teachers lack adequate preparation or confidence in using rubrics effectively. The findings highlight the need for targeted professional development programs to enhance teachers' skills in rubric design and application.

The majority of respondents, 14(53.9%), agreed that the assessment methods they use align with curriculum requirements. While 7(26.9%) were neutral, and only 5 (19.2%) disagreed. With a mean score of 3.31 ($SD = 1.123$), these results indicate that most teachers feel confident that their assessments, likely including rubrics, are appropriately aligned with educational standards. This alignment is essential for ensuring fair and valid assessments that reflect intended learning outcomes.

A half of the teachers, 13 (50.0%), expressed neutrality regarding the incorporation of various assessment techniques beyond grading rubrics. Only 8 teachers (30.7%) agreed, while 5 (19.2%) disagreed. The mean score of 3.23 ($SD = 0.908$) suggests moderate use of diverse assessment strategies. However, the large proportion of neutral responses may imply limited awareness or inconsistent use of alternative assessment tools, indicating the need for enhanced training in broader, student-centered assessment practices.

Most teachers, 12 (46.2%), disagreed with the statement that students understand how grading rubrics are used to evaluate their performance. Only 8 (30.8%) agreed, while 6 (23.1%) were neutral. The low mean of 2.62 (SD = 1.169) underscores a significant gap in students' assessment literacy. These findings imply that teachers may not be adequately involving students in understanding or interpreting rubrics, which could negatively affect student engagement, ownership of learning, and performance.

Among the teachers surveyed, 11 (42.3%) agreed that they engage students in the assessment process using rubrics, while 10 (38.5%) disagreed and 5 (19.2%) were neutral. With a mean of 2.88 (SD = 1.143), the data indicate moderate levels of student involvement. The close proportion between agreement and disagreement reflects variability in how consistently teachers involve learners in rubric-based assessments, suggesting an area that requires more emphasis for effective learning and accountability.

The overall findings show an average perception score of 3.03 (SD = 1.060), indicating a moderate stance on the use of grading rubrics by teachers. While strengths were observed in curriculum alignment and feedback practices, substantial gaps were noted in areas of teacher training, diversity in assessment methods, student understanding, and engagement.

From qualitative data collected, when asked "What strategies do you think can improve teachers' effectiveness in assessing students?", teachers consistently emphasized the need for training, reduced class sizes, resources, and motivation. At W, Teacher 1 proposed straightforwardly, *"Teachers being trained what to do."* Another Teacher added, *"Reducing on the teacher to student ratio in classes to ensure effective mentoring ad efficient learning to all levels of learners."* Professional development remained a key focus, with another stating, *"Teachers should be given refresher and on-job trainings to ensure that they are well aware of the current learners' needs so as to be effective."* Additional suggestions included resources

and timely assessments, *“Intensifying the training sessions of teachers. Issuing of more assessment tools inform of textbooks.”* Teacher 6 further recommended, *“Apply different methods of assessment. Give quick and timely feedback to the learners.”* and *“Motivating teachers by increasing their pay especially arts teachers.”* Finally, emphasis on assessment training was echoed, *“By training them more about assessment.”*

At school Y, similar ideas surfaced. Teacher 1 advised, *“Trainings should be prioritized.”* Teacher 2 suggested, *“Trainings on use of rubrics. Administration should provide templates. Learner involvement in preparing for assessment.”* Teacher 3 emphasized facilitation, *“Continuous training of teachers. Facilitation of teachers through provision of necessary equipment.”* Teacher 4 advocated for workshops, *“Workshops should be carried out in school to educate teachers how to handle assessments.”* Teacher 5 highlighted student involvement, *“Teachers should engage students in the assessment process using rubrics.”*

At school Z, Teacher 1 suggested, *“Yearly trainings.”* Teacher 2 mentioned, *“Motivating them in both short and long run.”* Teacher 3 pointed out the need for focus in assessment, *“Assessing one thing/ topic at a time not doing it once.”* Teacher 4 stressed continuous improvement, *“Continuous training of teachers to cater for the new and young teachers.”* Teacher 5 identified early training as crucial, *“Teachers getting information about assessment as early as in colleges and universities.”* Teacher 6 reinforced training and time management, *“Assessment being given enough time. Strict training of assessors.”* Teacher 7 concluded with fairness and inclusion, *“Effective learner involvement in assessment process. Consuming equity and fairness all the time.”*

At school X, the responses were consistent with calls for structured professional development. Teacher 1 said, *“Having trained well in refresher course for all teachers not some individuals for at least 3 months training.”* Teacher 2 emphasized continuous development, *“Teachers*

should be given more professional development courses about the assessment.” Teacher 3 echoed, *“Teachers need to be trained adequately.”* Motivation was raised by Teacher 4, *“Teachers should be motivated for example, marking allowances.”* Teacher 5 stressed clarity and language suitability, *“Making criteria clear and specific. Using student friendly language.”* Teacher 6 advised collaboration, *“Teacher collaboration. Learner involvement.”* Teacher 7 highlighted clear objectives, *“Clear learning objectives. Variety of assessment methods. Formative assessment and technology integration.”*

While in an interview session with headteachers and directors of studies, on the question, “In your opinion, how effective are teachers in utilizing grading rubrics for assessing student performance? What factors influence their effectiveness?”, responses consistently pointed to varying levels of teacher effectiveness and influencing factors such as time, training, and experience. At school W, the Headteacher observed, *“Not all teachers use them effectively, some base their assessment on past experiences. Having less learners to assess would increase effectiveness.”* The Director of Studies echoed similar sentiments, adding, *“Not very effective, competences are mostly measured using different parameters other than the rubrics. Factors: Timing of assessment e.g., B.O.T is more effective because of adequate time than E.O.T where everyone is exhausted and rushing to go home for holidays.”* (Headteacher at school W)

At school Y, the Headteacher remarked, *“Some teachers follow the evaluation grids while others prefer traditional marking methods. Factors for effectiveness: Time scope for assessment, Teacher’s experience, Subject content.”* (Head teacher at school Y)

At school Z, the Headteacher noted variability in practice: *“Teachers’ effectiveness varies depending on the subject area and teachers’ experience. However, some teachers still give vague comments like in criterion-based feedback. Factors: Teaching experience, Time given for assessment.”* The Director of Studies pointed out issues of superficial assessment, stating,

“Most teachers simply look for correct responses based on the target learning outcomes. Effectiveness is determined by timing, clarity and relevance of the rubrics.”

At school X, the Headteacher observed, *“Teachers are trying but not yet very effective in using rubrics. Some do not give detailed or constructive feedback to the learners. Some teachers are used to their traditional marking methods and don’t have rubrics. Factors: Teacher’s willingness to use rubrics, Time available for assessment, Motivation.”* The Director of Studies critically added, *“Teachers critically look for competencies without entirely referring to rubrics. Some teachers don’t even use them.”* These findings reveal a systemic weakness in the consistency and depth of rubric utilization, largely influenced by time constraints, experience, and teacher attitudes.

For the question, “What challenges do teachers face in implementing grading rubrics effectively? How do these challenges affect student learning and overall assessment practices?”, teachers cited time, training, and motivation. At school W, the Headteacher noted, *“Big classes aren’t easy to assess. Not being well trained. Not being well motivated. Impact: Half-baked learners are produced, curriculum goals aren’t met.”* The Director of Studies pointed out, *“Bias, some teachers feel they can grade learners without any rubrics. Effect of challenge: Inconsistent feedback to the learners.”*

At school Y, the Headteacher said, *“Limited learner engagement. Limited time. Impact: Limited feedback is given to the learners. Rushed assessment yields half-baked results.”*

At school Z, the Headteacher cited workload and time, *“Time constraints. It’s not easy balancing assessment with other responsibilities. Impact: Rushed assessment of learners may lead to improper results.”* The Director of Studies elaborated, *“Some don’t even understand them. Challenges: No proper feedback is given to the learners.”*

At X, the Headteacher identified training gaps, *“Lack of training and understanding of rubrics. Inconsistent assessment items. It’s not easy aligning rubrics criteria with learning items. Impact: Some learners get confused and end up performing poorly.”* The Director of Studies reflected deeper structural issues, *“Some learners demonstrate competencies that sometimes not catered for in the pre-prepared rubrics. Call for adjustment once in a while. Effects: Teachers being driven by learners responses may create bias. Any mistake or inconsistencies may spoil the name of the institution or misguide learners in other institutions.”*

Lastly, on the question of *“What strategies or recommendations would you suggest to improve the use of grading rubrics in the assessment of learners within the Ordinary Level curriculum?”*, participants strongly advocated for training and national standardization. At school W, the Headteacher recommended, *“Teachers trainings and motivation.”* The Director of Studies echoed, *“Training for teachers on assessment.”* At school Y, the Headteacher recommended, *“Continuous professional development programs both at school level and national level.”* At school Z, the Headteacher suggested, *“Support from school leaders in terms of facilitation and motivation.”* The Director of Studies recommended, *“Harmonization of rubrics at a national level.”* At school X, the Headteacher advised, *“Provision of templates that teachers can use to create rubrics. Improve on monitoring and evaluation.”* while the Director of Studies emphasized, *“Standard rubrics should be embraced by the whole school and be closely monitored by UNEB as the national assessment body.”*

Relationship between the use of grading rubrics and teachers' effectiveness in assessment in the Lower Secondary Curriculum.

Table 11 Correlation coefficient between the use of grading rubrics and teachers' effectiveness in assessment (responses from students)

		Grading Rubrics Used	Teachers' Effectiveness
Grading Rubrics Used	Pearson Correlation	1	0.654**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	124	124
Teachers Effectiveness	Pearson Correlation	0.654**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	124	124

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results of the Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between the use of grading rubrics and teachers' effectiveness in assessment within the Lower Secondary Curriculum. Specifically, the Pearson correlation coefficient was $r = 0.654$, with a p-value of 0.000. This indicates that an increase in the use of grading rubrics is associated with a corresponding increase in the perceived effectiveness of teachers' assessment practices. The strength of the correlation ($r = 0.654$) signifies a substantial positive linear relationship, while the significance level ($p < 0.01$) confirms that the observed association is unlikely to have occurred by chance.

This data suggests that when grading rubrics are consistently used, teachers are more likely to conduct assessments that are fair, transparent, and aligned with expected learning outcomes. The strong association implies that grading rubrics may serve not only as tools for scoring but also as frameworks that guide teachers toward improved instructional and evaluative practices.

Addressing the question, *“What challenges have you encountered in using grading rubrics for assessment?”*, students frequently cited lack of understanding, poor clarity, and non-alignment with their answers. One student lamented, *“failure to understand the grading rubrics of all subjects assessed”* (Student at school W), while another from school Z revealed that *“my level of understanding is quite low and it's really hard to interpret the rubrics.”*

Equally concerning were comments indicating that rubrics suppress creativity and personal expression, such as *“teachers only focus on answers given in the rubrics and do not focus on what we think and come up with our answers leading to poor performance”* (Teacher 3 at school Z). Others raised issues of misalignment and irrelevance, such as *“some grading rubrics can be containing wrong answers,”* and *“students don’t really understand how they are graded in different assessments since they are not provided with guidance from their teachers.”*

These experiences underscore a troubling disconnect between rubric application and learning outcomes, leading to a loss of morale, creativity, and confidence. Students see a direct link between rubric misapplication and ineffective teaching, where inadequate explanation and rigid grading frustrate rather than guide.

In response to, *“What support do teachers need to improve the use of grading rubrics in assessment?”*, students advocated for a multi-tiered approach including training, materials, internet access, and administrative support. According to one student from school X, *“teachers should be granted a chance to visit various institutions so as to check what they use and apply in their schools where they are lacking.”* Another stressed that *“teachers need to go for more workshops in order to be further trained about grading rubrics.”* (Teacher at school W)

Others suggested a broader support system, such as *“support from authorities, support from the government,”* and *“more training should be put for teachers to help students understand*

grading rubrics.” A notable insight came from school Z: “*teachers need more UNEB clarification on the use of grading rubrics in the assessment process.*” (Teacher 4 at school Z)

These reflections signify a well-informed student body that comprehends the systemic nature of assessment reform and recognizes that empowering teachers is essential for fairness, equity, and academic excellence.

Table 12 Correlation coefficient between the use of grading rubrics and teachers’ effectiveness in assessment (responses from teachers)

		Grading Rubrics	Teachers’ effectiveness
Grading Rubrics	Pearson Correlation	1	0.544**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.004
	N	26	26
Teachers’ effectiveness	Pearson Correlation	0.544**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.004	
	N	26	26

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation results from the teachers’ responses indicate a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between the use of grading rubrics and teachers’ effectiveness in assessment. The Pearson correlation coefficient was $r = 0.544$, with a p-value of 0.004. This positive correlation suggests that as the use of grading rubrics increases, teachers’ effectiveness in assessment also tends to improve. Although the strength of the relationship is moderate, the statistical significance at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) confirms that the observed association is meaningful and unlikely due to chance.

These findings imply that teachers who frequently utilize grading rubrics are more likely to conduct assessments that are structured, consistent, and aligned with learning objectives. The

use of rubrics may enhance clarity in expectations, reduce subjectivity, and promote fairness in evaluation. As a result, grading rubrics not only support students' understanding of assessment criteria but also contribute to improving teachers' overall assessment practices.

When asked "How can the grading rubrics be improved to better align with student learning outcomes?", teachers provided actionable suggestions focusing on collaboration, training, and clarity. At school W, Teacher 1 responded, "*The final assessors/ UNEB should engage with teachers on ground to let them know how and what to do.*" Another recommended, "*Through team setting and consulting from other examiners to ensure that the rubric directly aligns with the learning outcomes.*" Individual needs were highlighted, "*By tailoring them down through the individual needs of the learners rather than being directly imposed.*" Curriculum alignment was stressed, "*Should base on the content covered by all.*" Another called for standardization, "*There is need of calibrate grading to reduce subjectivity.*" 7 said, "*By retooling of teachers.*" and "*By narrowing the ranges in grading rubrics.*"

At school Y, Teacher 1 responded, "*Teachers should be prioritized i.e through enriching them with knowledge.*" Teacher 2 added, "*Timely assessment should be done.*" Teacher 3 emphasized sensitization, "*Continuous sensitization and training of teachers so that they can master the rubrics.*" Teacher 4 mentioned clearer expectations, "*Should clearly state the performance expectations for the learners.*" Teacher 5 stated simply, "*More trainings should be done in schools.*"

At school Z, Teacher 1 advised, "*UNEB and stakeholders in the curriculum should introduce training workshops for all teachers.*" Teacher 2 recommended, "*Re-tooling of the teachers.*" Teacher 3 aligned rubrics to syllabus content, "*Basing them on the covered content taught.*" Teacher 4 urged information sharing, "*All teachers being made able to have enough information concerning this.*" Teacher 5 stated, "*Both young and old teachers should be*

trained day in day out until they get well informed and used.” Teacher 6 pointed to clearer expectations, *“Teachers should be trained in the expectations at this curriculum.”* Teacher 7 advised teamwork, *“They should be formulated as a team. Align with learning outcomes and objectives.”*

At school X, Teacher 1 noted, *“By training all teachers how to assess and teach plus grading.”* Teacher 2 stressed clarity, *“There should be clarity about grading system; know which score/ attribute/ competence one needs to qualify to a certain level.”* Teacher 3 connected rubrics to curriculum, *“By aligning them with the learning outcomes of the curriculum.”* Teacher 4 recommended departmental collaboration, *“The teacher hours should sit as members of the departments and write a comprehensive grading rubric and marking guides.”* Teacher 5 encouraged clear language, *“Use of clear, simple and direct language. Giving clear descriptions to avoid confusion.”* Teacher 6 emphasized timing and training, *“More training for teachers. Proper timing of assessment.”* Teacher 7 concluded with guidance and technology, *“Provide clear explanations to students. Use technology. Train assessors to understand and apply it consistently.”*

During an interview with headteachers and Directors of Studies, respondents were asked, “How do grading rubrics impact the consistency, fairness, and transparency of student assessments in your school?” At school W, the Headteacher highlighted fairness, noting that *all learners are graded using the same guidelines which creates fairness.* The Director of Studies reinforced this by stating *they cause teachers to harmonize ideas before scoring the learners’ assessment items.*

At school Y, the Headteacher reported that *all teachers must work together for effective assessment. No subjectivity. Reduce complaints.*

At school Z, the Headteacher affirmed positive impacts that *it has a significant positive impact on assessment practices in our school. They provide a standardized framework for marking across all subjects. They reduce subjectivity. (Headteacher at School Z)* Similarly, the Director of Studies emphasized collaboration by saying that the use of rubrics *encourages consultations among different teachers thus collaboration and consistency. Removes bias from teachers before they assess. (Headteacher at School Z)*

At school X, the Headteacher emphasized equity and consistency saying; *Grading rubrics are good for assessment e.g., learners receive marks that reflect uniform expectations, regardless of the teacher. They promote equity which reduces complaints of favoritism or unfair grading. Ensures teachers objectivity in marking. Teachers are able to identify learning gaps. (Headteacher at school X)*

The Director of Studies at the same school stated that *“using grading rubrics facilitates decision making when awarding learners. It creates harmony when giving feedback to the learners. Teachers of the same class are able to be uniform and consistent in assessing their learners.” (Director of studies at school X)* These responses strongly show that grading rubrics, where used, positively influence consistency, fairness, and transparency. However, there are still gaps where rubrics are inconsistently applied.

Chapter Five: Discussion of findings, conclusions, and recommendations

Introduction

This chapter covers a discussion of findings, conclusions, and recommendations according to study objectives.

Discussion of Findings

Grading rubrics used in the assessment of Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi Municipality

The findings from both quantitative and qualitative data reveal a nuanced understanding and application of grading rubrics in Bushenyi- Ishaka Municipality secondary schools. Qualitative responses from headteachers and Directors of Studies revealed that three main types of rubrics are used: descriptive rubrics, scoring guides or bands, analytic rubrics, and holistic rubrics. Descriptive rubrics provide clear performance levels and indicators. Analytic rubrics, more common in structured subjects, are used to break down performance into distinct criteria, while holistic rubrics are often used for comprehensive judgments of student work. The use of evaluation grids such as RACE (reliability, accuracy, coherence, and excellence), suggests attempts to standardize assessment frameworks. This aligns with the study by Sadler (2009) that states different types of rubrics used in assessment. Thus leading to a conclusion that grading rubrics are widely acknowledged as essential tools the assessment of Lower learners in the Lower Secondary Curriculum.

Despite the reported usage, both students and teachers reported gaps in understanding the use of grading rubrics and that the rubrics often lack detail. These challenges indicate a disconnection between rubric design and classroom application. Sadler (2009) cautioned that

without proper comprehension of rubrics by both assessors and learners, their effectiveness is compromised and the intended impact is limited.

Furthermore, the use of rubrics was found to be moderately satisfactory. Teachers gave a mean score of 3.27 to the statement that rubrics are well-structured and easy to follow. However, this suggests room for improvement. Clarity in rubric structure is central, as Brookhart (2013) noted that ambiguous rubrics create confusion rather than support learning. Therefore despite their potential to improve transparency and performance evaluation, the inconsistent application and poor understanding of rubrics limit their intended impact.

While grading rubrics are present in the assessment ecosystem of the Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality, their application lacks uniformity, and teachers and students alike struggle with clarity and interpretation. For rubrics to be effective tools of competency-based assessment, as intended by Uganda's curriculum reforms, they must not only be available but also clearly structured, contextually relevant, and uniformly applied across all subjects. Additionally, training and orientation on rubric use are critical for teachers, and sensitization is equally vital for students to understand how their work is being judged.

The study also established that while a majority of students (61.3%) agreed that grading rubrics are used in assessment, considerable variability existed in their experiences. This echoes findings from Andrade (2005), who emphasized that rubrics must be both visible and systematically applied to ensure transparency and equity. However, the high standard deviation in student responses suggests that rubric use is inconsistent, possibly limited to specific subjects or teachers.

In terms of rubric clarity, the study uncovered mixed perceptions. Although nearly half of the students acknowledged that rubrics are clear (46.7%), a significant portion (33.8%) disagreed. This aligns with claims by Brookhart (2013), who asserted that the utility of grading rubrics

depends heavily on the clarity of criteria and language used. Students' open-ended responses vividly affirmed these concerns, with one student from St. Kaggwa B H/S stating that rubrics should be improved by *"advising teachers to always teach us how they interpret and understand grading rubrics."* The variability in clarity may stem from lack of standardization across departments and insufficient explanation to learners, thereby reinforcing Sadler's (2009) argument that assessment is only meaningful if learners fully comprehend the evaluative framework.

Moreover, alignment of rubrics with learning outcomes was moderately affirmed (mean = 3.44), which supports the theoretical stance that for assessment to be effective, it must be constructively aligned with intended competencies (Biggs & Tang, 2007). The qualitative accounts from headteachers and Directors of Studies confirmed efforts to align assessments with learning goals. This practice, though commendable, was not reflected evenly across all schools, which may explain the uneven student experiences.

The study also raised critical questions regarding the transparency of performance levels. Less than half (46.0%) of the students agreed that the rubrics clearly define performance standards, and qualitative responses from teachers added that rubrics are sometimes "shallow" and "do not clearly indicate performance and achievement of students." This supports Wiggins (1998), who warned that poorly constructed rubrics can lead to misinterpretation and ambiguous feedback, defeating their core purpose. This leads to a conclusion that there was limited transparency and clarity of grading rubrics.

One of the most alarming findings was the low mean (2.85) regarding consistency in rubric application across subjects. Nearly half (46.8%) of students disagreed that rubrics are used consistently, confirming both teacher and student concerns about uneven implementation. As pointed out by teachers, inconsistent use results from lack of adequate training, time

constraints, and resource limitations. These findings echo the conclusions by Jonsson and Svingby (2007), who stressed the need for institutionalized policy and consistent teacher professional development to maintain uniformity in rubric application. Thus the study concluded that there were inconsistencies in the application of rubrics across schools.

Nonetheless, rubrics were generally perceived as enhancing fairness in assessment (mean = 3.57), the highest rated item. Over 58% of students affirmed this benefit, highlighting the core value of rubrics as tools for transparency and equity. Teachers too supported this, albeit with caution, noting that while rubrics help standardize scoring, subjectivity and time-consuming processes persist.

Teachers' Effectiveness in the Assessment of Learners in the Lower secondary curriculum

The findings on teachers' effectiveness in the assessment of learners in the Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi District strongly affirm the critical and indispensable role of teacher preparedness, timely feedback, alignment with learning outcomes, and systematic assessment processes in the successful implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC). The quantitative data reveal that while teachers moderately provide detailed feedback using grading rubrics, there is a marked inconsistency in practice, as reflected in the mean score of 3.17. This inconsistency highlights a serious gap in assessment practice, underscoring the urgent need for strengthening teachers' assessment competencies. This supports the findings of Wambua (2021), who firmly argues that constructive, detailed, and timely feedback is a cornerstone of effective assessment that drives self-directed learning and boosts the credibility and effectiveness of assessment processes in schools.

Furthermore, the findings clearly demonstrate that teachers are relatively effective in employing varied and diverse assessment methods, as evidenced by a high mean score of 3.86,

with a substantial majority of 70.2% of students confirming this. This aligns convincingly with Kafyulilo et al. (2012), who emphasize that diverse assessment approaches are not merely important but are absolutely essential in competency-based education because they address the heterogeneous needs and abilities of learners. Moreover, 64.5% of students confirmed that teachers' assessments largely align with intended learning outcomes ($M = 3.77$), strongly echoing the assertions of Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), who maintain that the alignment of assessments with curriculum objectives is fundamental for ensuring the validity and reliability of competency-based evaluation and ultimately leads to better educational outcomes.

However, significant inconsistencies remain in the application and utilization of grading rubrics, with moderate mean scores indicating glaring gaps in teacher training and practical application of these critical assessment tools. These findings are strongly consistent with Oduor (2019) and Kibui and Mugo (2020), who explicitly pointed out that limited teacher preparedness continues to be a persistent and detrimental barrier to the effective implementation of learner-centered assessment strategies within CBC frameworks. Additionally, concerns about transparency and objectivity in the assessment processes mirror the troubling observations of Naluwemba and Ssebugwawo (2021), as 47.5% of students agreed on transparency. These scholars reported widespread challenges across Uganda, arising largely from inadequate training, weak institutional support, and lack of accountability in enforcing assessment standards.

Qualitative data from students and teachers further reinforce these glaring gaps, as many passionately called for continuous and well-structured professional development, targeted refresher courses, and improved resource provision to elevate teachers' assessment competencies to the required standard. These findings resonate strongly with Wambugu and Changeiywo (2018), who advocate for robust and sustained in-service training programs that comprehensively equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge required for effective

assessment within CBC frameworks. Without such capacity-building efforts, it will remain exceedingly difficult for teachers to deliver assessments that meet the expectations of the curriculum and the diverse needs of learners.

Moreover, the extremely low mean scores regarding students' understanding of grading rubrics ($M = 2.72$) expose a critical and alarming gap in communication, assessment literacy, and student empowerment. This finding resonates deeply with the studies of UNEB (2023) and Tumusiime et al. (2022), which reported similarly disturbing trends of low student awareness and engagement with rubric-based assessment practices in Bushenyi District. The moderate engagement of students by teachers in assessment processes further reflects and reinforces the findings of Njuguna and Omondi (2022), who emphasized that without deliberate and structured involvement of learners, supported by appropriate tools and clear communication, the intended benefits of assessment reforms under CBC will remain largely unattainable.

Finally, insights gathered from interviews with headteachers and Directors of Studies vividly reveal that persistent challenges such as large class sizes, limited time, lack of training, and insufficient motivation are not only hindering but severely undermining the effective assessment of learners. These findings strongly echo the broader literature by Chege and Njiru (2020) and KICD (2020), which stress that systemic and institutional barriers, if left unaddressed, will continue to cripple efforts aimed at enhancing assessment practices under CBC. The consistency of these findings with the reviewed literature underscores the urgent need for robust interventions, policy reforms, and practical support mechanisms to equip teachers with the skills, tools, and resources necessary to implement effective and meaningful assessment strategies that uphold the integrity and objectives of the Lower Secondary Curriculum in Uganda.

Relationship between the use of grading rubrics and teachers' effectiveness in assessment in Lower Secondary Curriculum

The Pearson correlation analysis from both students' and teachers' responses revealed a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between the use of grading rubrics and teachers' effectiveness in assessment, with $r = 0.654$ ($p = 0.000$) for students and $r = 0.544$ ($p = 0.004$) for teachers. These findings suggest that as the use of grading rubrics increases, teachers' assessment practices become more consistent, transparent, and aligned with curriculum objectives, leading to improved educational outcomes for students and enhanced confidence in the assessment process. The strength of these correlations demonstrates that grading rubrics play a crucial role in influencing how teachers assess learners, reinforcing the importance of integrating rubrics into everyday classroom practice to support fairness and clarity in student evaluation.

The results of this study are in agreement with Oduor and Nyanga (2022), who observed that grading rubrics enable teachers to move away from norm-referenced assessment approaches towards more objective, standards-based assessments, thereby enhancing consistency, fairness, and uniformity in evaluating student work. This alignment ensures that assessment outcomes are more reliable and valid, minimizing biases that can arise from subjective judgments. Similarly, Mwangi and Muthoni (2023) confirmed through their research that teachers who consistently use grading rubrics demonstrate improved diagnostic capabilities, enhanced provision of formative feedback, and better alignment of assessment with learning objectives and curriculum expectations. These findings resonate with Black and Wiliam (1998), who argued that grading rubrics provide structured guidance for teachers to design assessments that directly match the competencies and intended learning outcomes, thus promoting fairness, objectivity, and clarity in assessment processes. The literature clearly supports the notion that

grading rubrics are essential tools that contribute significantly to teachers' effectiveness in the assessment process.

Furthermore, the qualitative findings from students highlight persistent challenges such as lack of understanding of grading rubrics, unclear guidelines, and limited alignment with students' own approaches to learning, which hinder the intended benefits of rubrics in promoting fairness and transparency. Students expressed frustration with the application of rubrics, noting issues such as poor clarity, misalignment with content taught, and inadequate explanation from teachers. This echoes the concerns raised by Panadero et al. (2023) and Camargo Salamanca et al. (2024), who emphasized that the effectiveness of grading rubrics depends heavily on their clarity, proper alignment with learning objectives, and the extent to which they facilitate student self-assessment, self-regulation, and ownership of learning processes. The student feedback in this study underscores the urgent need for teachers to be adequately trained in rubric design and application to ensure students understand and can effectively utilize rubrics as tools for enhancing their academic performance and learning experience.

Teachers in this study also highlighted the importance of collaboration, training, and clearer alignment of grading rubrics with learning outcomes to improve their effectiveness in assessment practices. These observations mirror recommendations by Malama and Musonda (2023), who found that rubrics enhance clarity in assessment, support accurate and fair evaluation, and promote consistency across different teachers and schools. The teachers suggested that through collaborative efforts, regular professional development workshops, and continuous engagement with examination bodies such as UNEB, the quality and clarity of grading rubrics could be greatly enhanced to better serve both teachers and learners. Likewise, Nyirenda and Chanda (2023) noted that grading rubrics facilitate the development of critical thinking skills and self-assessment among students, further supporting the argument that rubrics contribute not only to teacher effectiveness but also to meaningful student learning and

academic growth. The alignment between these findings and the literature indicates that grading rubrics, when properly designed and implemented, can have far-reaching positive impacts on educational outcomes.

Lastly, school leaders such as headteachers and directors of studies reinforced the role of grading rubrics in promoting consistency, fairness, and transparency in assessment practices within their schools. Their perspectives align with the literature which emphasizes rubrics' potential to standardize assessment practices, reduce bias, and foster accountability in grading (Ahmed & Riaz, 2024). They noted that grading rubrics help harmonize teachers' approaches to assessment, ensure fairness across different subjects, and promote clear communication of performance expectations to students. However, these findings also reveal existing gaps in rubric application, such as inconsistency in usage, limited understanding among teachers, and insufficient training opportunities, indicating a need for sustained professional development and systemic support to maximize the benefits of rubrics in improving assessment effectiveness.

Conclusions

Use of grading rubrics in assessment of learners

This study concludes that grading rubrics are widely acknowledged as essential tools in the assessment of the Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality. However, their implementation remains inconsistent across subjects and schools. The findings reveal that while grading rubrics are intended to enhance fairness and align with learning outcomes, their effectiveness is undermined by lack of clarity, limited teacher training, and variation in use. This study therefore recommends that teachers receive regular training on the development, preparation and application of grading rubrics.

The study further concludes that schools use different types of grading rubrics, including descriptive, analytic, holistic, and evaluation grids (RACE). These rubrics are applied with varying degrees of structure, depending on school policies and departmental collaboration. Despite their potential to improve transparency and performance evaluation, the inconsistent application and poor understanding of rubrics limit their intended impact.

The findings reveal that while some teachers demonstrate effective assessment practices, particularly in aligning assessments with curriculum objectives and using diverse assessment methods, substantial inconsistencies remain in critical areas like feedback provision, student engagement, and understanding of grading rubrics. The mean score of 3.86 for the use of varied assessment methods indicates strong effort, yet the relatively low mean of 3.07 for teacher training and 2.72 for students' understanding of rubrics reflect significant gaps. Teachers generally agree that their assessments align with learning outcomes (mean = 3.77), but both students and teachers cite a lack of sufficient training and time, leading to shallow or rushed evaluations. These inconsistencies reduce the quality and objectivity of assessment outcomes and limit the potential of the competency-based curriculum hence calling for targeted and continuous professional development.

Qualitative responses further confirm these challenges. Students called for more workshops, digital resources, and curriculum orientation for teachers. Teachers themselves acknowledged limited training, high teacher-to-student ratios, unclear rubrics, and lack of motivation. Headteachers and Directors of Studies confirmed these concerns, citing limited time, variable teacher experience, and low institutional support as key impediments. These systemic and professional constraints compromise the effectiveness of assessment practices, reducing fairness, reliability, and learning impact.

The study revealed a significant positive relationship between the use of grading rubrics and teachers' effectiveness in assessment in the Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality. The correlation results from both students ($r = 0.654$, $p = 0.000$) and teachers ($r = 0.544$, $p = 0.004$) confirmed that increased use of grading rubrics enhances teachers' assessment effectiveness. Teachers who used rubrics consistently conducted assessments that were more structured, fair, and aligned with curriculum objectives. These findings affirm that grading rubrics strengthen teachers' assessment practices and promote transparency, consistency, and fairness in grading.

Recommendations

The study recommends that the Ministry of Education and curriculum developers standardize the use of grading rubrics across all schools to ensure uniformity and clarity in assessment. Schools should adopt a clear policy mandating the consistent application of rubrics in all subjects. This will promote fairness, transparency, and alignment with curriculum goals.

It is further recommended that teachers receive regular training on the development, interpretation, and application of various types of rubrics, including descriptive, analytic, holistic, and evaluation grids (RACE). Departmental teams should collaboratively design and review rubrics to promote shared understanding and reduce bias. Learners should also be sensitized on how rubrics work to enhance their engagement and performance in assessments.

To improve teachers' effectiveness in assessment within the Lower Secondary Curriculum, the Ministry of Education and Sports, together with curriculum developers and school administrators, should implement targeted and continuous professional development. Teachers need hands-on training on rubric development, application, and interpretation aligned with Uganda's curriculum. These sessions should be routine and include digital tools, collaborative lesson design, and mentorship. Standardized assessment templates and national harmonization

of rubrics, as recommended by Directors of Studies, would also reduce disparities and enhance consistency in assessments.

Additionally, schools should promote student-centered assessment practices by engaging learners in the evaluation process and demystifying rubrics. Efforts must also be made to reduce class sizes, increase teacher motivation through financial and professional incentives, and allocate adequate time for meaningful assessment. Institutions should invest in capacity-building workshops and monitoring mechanisms to ensure adherence to assessment standards. With deliberate planning and support, these strategies can transform assessment from a mechanical task into a powerful tool for learning, feedback, and academic growth.

It is recommended that schools and education authorities strengthen teachers' capacity through regular training on the effective use of grading rubrics aligned with curriculum goals. Teachers should collaborate through departmental meetings to develop clear, relevant rubrics and share best practices. Additionally, students should be sensitized on the purpose and use of grading rubrics to improve their understanding of assessment processes. These measures will enhance assessment consistency, fairness, and support better learning outcomes in the Lower Secondary Curriculum.

Areas for further study

A further study should be conducted to examine the impact of grading rubrics on students' academic performance and motivation in the Lower Secondary Curriculum. While this study established the relationship between grading rubrics and teachers' effectiveness, it did not deeply explore how the use of rubrics directly influences students' learning outcomes, engagement, and motivation towards assessments.

Based on the findings, a recommended area for further study is: An evaluation of the effectiveness of teacher training programs on the use and interpretation of grading rubrics in secondary schools. This would help determine whether existing training initiatives adequately equip teachers with the skills needed to implement rubrics consistently and effectively across subjects.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire for students

Dear student,

I am **Naturinda Patience**, registration number **23/BSU/MEMPA/0593**, pursuing a Master of Education Management Planning and Administration from Bishop Stuart University in my final year. I request that you take part in this study.

Thank you for taking part in this research study. This questionnaire aims to gather information on “Grading Rubrics and teachers’ effectiveness in assessment of learners in the New Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi Municipality.”

Your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and the data given will be handled with integrity. Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge and experience.

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Gender

- a) Male
- b) Female

2. Age

- a) Below 15
- b) 15-20
- c) 21and above

3. Class

- Senior 1
- Senior 2
- Senior 3
- Senior 4



Section B: Grading Rubrics Used in Assessment

Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
My school uses grading rubrics to assess students' work.					
The grading rubrics used in my school are clear and easy to understand.					
The rubrics align with the learning outcomes					
The rubrics provide clear criteria for different performance levels.					
Teachers consistently use grading rubrics across all subjects.					
The use of grading rubrics has improved assessment fairness.					

In your opinion, how can grading rubrics be improved in your school?

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What challenges have you encountered in using grading rubrics for assessment?

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Section C: Teachers' Effectiveness in Assessment

Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Teachers provide detailed feedback using grading rubrics.					
Teachers use a variety of assessment methods.					
Teachers' assessment aligns with learning outcomes.					
Teachers are well-trained in using grading rubrics.					
The assessment process is transparent and objective.					
Students understand how grading rubrics are used to evaluate their performance.					

What do you think should be done to improve teachers' effectiveness in assessment?



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What support do teachers need to improve the use of grading rubrics in assessment?

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End of Questionnaire

Thank you for your participation!



Appendix 2: Questionnaire for teachers on Grading Rubrics and teachers' effectiveness in assessment of learners in of New Lower Secondary Curriculum

I am **Naturinda Patience** registration number **23/BSU/MEMPA/0593** pursuing Master of Education Management Planning and Administration from Bishop Stuart University in my final year.

Thank you for taking part in this research study. This questionnaire aims to gather information on “Grading Rubrics and Effective Assessment in the Implementation of New Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi Municipality.”

Your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and the data given will be handled with integrity. Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge and experience.

Instructions:

1. Please tick (✓) the appropriate box that best represents your opinion.
2. Use the following scale for closed-ended questions:
1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree
3. Provide detailed responses for open-ended questions.

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Name of the school (optional):

2. Gender

a) Male ☐

b) Female ☐

3. Years of experience (for teachers)

a) 1-5 years ☐

b) 6-10 years ☐

c) 11 and above years ☐



Section B: Grading Rubrics Used in the Assessment of the Ordinary Level Curriculum

#	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	The grading rubrics used in assessment are well-structured and easy to follow.					
2	The rubrics clearly define performance expectations for students.					
3	The grading rubrics are aligned with the learning objectives of the curriculum.					
4	Teachers consistently use grading rubrics when assessing student work.					
5	The rubrics provide clear guidelines that reduce subjectivity in marking.					
6	The use of grading rubrics improves the fairness and transparency of assessments.					

7. What challenges do you face in using grading rubrics for assessment?

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8. How can the grading rubrics be improved to better align with student learning outcomes?

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Section C: Teachers' Effectiveness in the Assessment of Learners

#	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
9	Teachers provide timely and constructive feedback based on grading rubrics.					
10	Teachers have sufficient training in using grading rubrics for student assessment.					
11	The assessment methods used by teachers align with the curriculum requirements.					
12	Teachers incorporate various assessment techniques beyond grading rubrics.					
13	Students understand how grading rubrics are used to evaluate their performance.					
14	Teachers engage students in the assessment process using rubrics.					

15. What strategies do you think can improve teachers' effectiveness in assessing students?

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16. What are the major barriers to teachers' effectiveness in student assessment?

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End

Thank you for your cooperation



Appendix 3: Interview Guide for Directors of Studies and Headteachers

Dear respondent,

Thank you for taking part in participating on the study entitled “Grading Rubrics and Effective Assessment in the Implementation of New Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi Municipality.”

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. The purpose of this study is to examine the role of grading rubrics in the assessment of the New Lower Secondary Curriculum in Bushenyi Municipality. Your insights will be valuable in understanding how grading rubrics are used and their impact on assessment practices.

1. How are grading rubrics currently being used in the assessment of learners in your school? **Probe:** What are the common types of rubrics used?
2. In your opinion, how effective are teachers in utilizing grading rubrics for assessing student performance? **Probe:** What factors influence their effectiveness?
3. How do grading rubrics impact the consistency, fairness, and transparency of student assessments in your school?
4. What challenges do teachers face in implementing grading rubrics effectively? **Probe:** How do these challenges affect student learning and overall assessment practices?
5. What strategies or recommendations would you suggest to improve the use of grading rubrics in the assessment of learners within the Ordinary Level curriculum?

Thank you for your participation.



Appendix 4: Krejcie, Robert V., Morgan, Table for determining sample size from a given population

N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	100	80	280	162	800	260	2800	338
15	14	110	86	290	165	850	265	3000	341
20	19	120	92	300	169	900	269	3500	246
25	24	130	97	320	175	950	274	4000	351
30	28	140	103	340	181	1000	278	4500	351
35	32	150	108	360	186	1100	285	5000	357
40	36	160	113	380	181	1200	291	6000	361
45	40	180	118	400	196	1300	297	7000	364
50	44	190	123	420	201	1400	302	8000	367
55	48	200	127	440	205	1500	306	9000	368
60	52	210	132	460	210	1600	310	10000	373
65	56	220	136	480	214	1700	313	15000	375
70	59	230	140	500	217	1800	317	20000	377
75	63	240	144	550	225	1900	320	30000	379
80	66	250	148	600	234	2000	322	40000	380
85	70	260	152	650	242	2200	327	50000	381
90	73	270	155	700	248	2400	331	75000	382
95	76	270	159	750	256	2600	335	100000	384

Note: “N” is population size

“S” is sample size.

Source: Krejcie, Robert V., Morgan, Daryle W., “Determining Sample Size for Research Activities”, Educational and Psychological Measurement, 1970.