

The effects of School Quality Assurance on Teachers' Performance in Public Primary Schools in Iringa District, Tanzania

ABSTRACT

The study focused on the effect of school quality assurance (SQA) on teachers' performance in public primary schools in Iringa District, Tanzania. Arguably, SQA involves systematic monitoring and review of education programs to maintain and improve the quality, equity and efficiency. For teachers, school quality assurance is believed to improve their work performance and professional growth and therefore positively influence the teaching and learning process. For instance, studies have shown that SQA activities help teachers to attend classes, improve their school curriculum delivery as well as classroom management skills. The findings showed that SQA helped the schools improve and was effective in aspects such as; teachers' classroom assessment, discussion with teachers after classroom assessments, providing classroom assessment reports, advising higher authorities on issues related to school improvement as well as strengthening internal SQA.

Keywords: School Quality Assurance, teachers' performance, public primary schools.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Concept of Teacher Professional

Development

The Adoption of quality assurance in education as an emerging policy perspective in the contemporary world originated at the World Conference on Education for All led by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 (Ayeni, 2018). Representatives of the international community agreed that all countries should pay greater attention towards improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all. This is to ensure substantial achievement of recognized and measurable learning outcomes in schools, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills (UNESCO, 2002).

In this direction, Quality assurance involves systematic monitoring and review of educational programmes and processes to maintain and improve their quality, equity and efficiency (Mathew,2012). Quality assurance approaches can include mechanisms that are external and internal to schools. Internal mechanisms may include school self-evaluation, staff appraisal and classroom-based student assessments. On the other hand, external mechanisms may include national or regional school evaluations and/or large-scale student assessments. External quality assurance mechanisms aim to provide objective, valid and reliable data on school performance (European Commission, 2028). In addition, Quality assurance is important for accountability as well as supporting ongoing development of schools and of teaching and learning to adapt to the changing needs of learners (European commission, 2018; De Grauwe, 2007).

The process of improving and monitoring the quality of education covers both teachers and learners (Mganga&Lekule, 2021). Teachers are the mechanism through which the goals of education in any nation can be realized. They exert a great influence on the students and the children look up to them for guidance, support and protection. They learn from them informally by observing their attitudes, mannerism, conduct and general behaviours and formally through their teaching in the classrooms (Adu, 2015). Studies have shown that teachers play a very central part in producing quality education. Thus, when teachers' productivity declines, it has a correlation to the quality of education in schools (Orunborn&Isaac-Phillips, 2020).

In Africa, most of the countries have been reported to experience the deteriorating quality in education stemming from among others, the impact of the Structural Adjustment Programmes, inadequate supply of resources as well as insufficient and unsustainable levels of funding for education (Wanjiru, 2014). In such contexts, the future of educational provision requires effective systems and mechanisms in controlling and monitoring the quality of education provided (Wilcox, 2020).

In Tanzania, quality assurance in education started during the colonial rule. Tanzania inherited a strict colonial school supervision system that sought to ensure control of teachers' behaviour in classrooms. Then after independence, the government enacted various laws that

were geared towards preserving the aspect of quality assurance in education (Mganga&Lekule, 2021). For instance, in 1978, Tanzania established a quality assurance organ within the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training that is empowered by law to conduct school inspection. Its role is also clearly stated in the 1995 Tanzania Education and Training Policy that “school inspection is vital as a means of monitoring the delivery of education, adherence to the stipulated curriculum and standards, and ensuring efficiency and quality in education” (URT, 1995). Even then, the old school inspectorate system did not meet the expected outcomes (Mganga&Lekule, 2021). Thus, the old inspectorate system was officially changed to the quality assurance system in 2016 mandated with the role of ensuring the quality of education.

However, some challenges hinder effective School Quality Assurance. For example, it has been mentioned that the quality assurance unit has not been as effective as expected due to inadequate personnel, shortage of transport, offices and office equipment and the inability of the quality assurance personnel to take immediate corrective measures where necessary (URT,1995). Then, the 2014 education and training policy explains that weakness in the management and administration of the school quality assurance structure has placed the quality assurers far from the schools together with the failure to make school committees, head teachers and the parents to be accountable on the question of supervision and control of the quality of education provided by our schools (URT, 1995; URT, 2014). This study therefore was aimed at assessing the practice of school quality assurance on enhancing teachers’ performance in public primary schools in Iringa district in Tanzania.

1.2 The Concept of Quality Assurance

According to Smit, Wilkinson and Buchner (2000), quality assurance is the commitment and approach used to continuously improve every process in every part of an organization, with the intention of meeting and exceeding expectations and outcomes. This can be done through establishment of standards which reflect a desired and achievable level of performance against which actual performance can be compared.

1.3 A Brief Historical Overview of Teacher Professional Development in Tanzania

The Rationale of Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is used generally used as a method to help make sure that certain quality standards are met. In education, quality assurance can be particularly important to ensure that a school develops and performs in line with the curriculum and standards in place (Ehren and Visscher, 2008). These standards can be assessed both internally and externally to ensure that every school meets them. In other words, this brings the idea that Quality assurance approaches can include mechanisms that are external and internal to schools. Internal mechanisms include school self-evaluation, staff appraisal and classroom-based student assessments to make sure that they are reaching their targets. It also develops trust between teachers and enhances strong collective focuses on improving instruction and learning (URT, 2018). On the other hand, external quality assurance is done by the third (outside) person or organ to ensure integrity and acts as a catalyst in improving the quality of education, thus helping schools with their accountability to ensure the quality of education (Askling, 1997). Harvey (2002) argues that it is essential to have both the approaches, internal and external quality assurance to ensure continuous and lasting improvements.

In Tanzania for example, currently, among the functions of the School Quality Assurance (SQA) section in Tanzania include: to conduct external quality assurance activities in order to ensure compliance to policies, legislation, standards and guidelines related to the delivery education; to carry out periodic school physical condition survey and recommend remedial measures so as to continuously improve the quality of the school facilities as well to monitor and evaluate the quality and implementation of internal quality assurance plans and services in the specified levels of education and advise as appropriate (URT,2017).

1.4 Research Questions

- i. What is the teachers' attitudes on the effectiveness of quality assurance towards public primary school performance?
- ii. What is the impact of School Quality Assurance Practices on Teachers' Performance in Public Primary School Education?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Teachers' attitudes on the effectiveness of quality assurance towards public primary school performance

Muchanje, (2020) did the study about Teachers' attitude towards quality assurance and standards officers in primary schools. This study aimed at finding out if teachers' attitudes have changed towards Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASO) since of new name and mandate. The study used a descriptive survey research design as it was able to obtain persistent and precise information concerning the current phenomena. The sample consisted of 228 statistically sampled using the Yamen formula. A structured and open questionnaire measuring the attitude of teachers was used. To check validity, expert opinion was sought while reliability was ensured at 0.70 using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient. ANOVA and t-test method of analysis was the main statistical methods used to test the three hypotheses. The study established that female teachers had a more positive attitude towards QASO compared to their male counter parts although the difference was not significant. Further, the results revealed that a significant difference exists between more experienced teachers and less experienced teachers with less experienced teachers having a less favorable attitude towards QASO than less experienced teachers. Finally, the study found that teachers who were visited regularly had a positive attitude towards QASO compared to teachers who are not regularly visited or visited few times. In conclusion, teachers have appreciated the role of QASOs in quality education. It is recommended that more frequent supervision may improve teachers' attitude for better teacher classroom performance.

2.2 Impact of School Quality Assurance on Teachers' Performance in Ensuring Quality of Public Primary School Education

study done by Doherty (2012) in the United Kingdom. The was about the quality assurance in education. The results showed the reluctance of academicians to accept the fact that students are becoming customers and will be looking for value of money. Historically, quality assurance has been associated with the manufacturing sector where the outcomes are products. Interest in quality assurance in schools goes a long way in history. For instance, in the United Kingdom, quality assurance was applied to education before the industrial

revolution was at its summit a number of countries have developed quality assurance measures that also involve the wider community. For example, in the Netherlands, there are community-based supervisory and representative advisory boards.

Mwaura (2014) in his study about quality assurance for public higher education: Context, Strategies and Challenges in Kenya used a qualitative approach and in depth interviews, review of historical materials and records as research tools the study found that the overall respondents strongly emphasized the need for Kenyan universities to have compulsory and effective external and internal quality assurance mechanisms. He further adds that, in Africa, quality assurance mechanisms are different as they are in any other countries in parts of the world. For instance, in Nigeria the National Policy on Education is an instrument par excellence for effective national development. Internal and external educational stakeholders and other government agencies are charged with ensuring quality assurance.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

Given the nature of this study, the mixed method research was considered appropriate. This entails the use of both the aspects of qualitative and quantitative aspects of research in the collection, analysis and presentation of the research data. The qualitative approach helped in collecting and analysing the respondents' views, feelings and recommendations in their natural settings. On the other hand, the quantitative aspect has been considered necessary so as to be able quantify some information so as to get clear illustration of trends of the research data in relation to the objectives of the study (Creswell, 2012).

3.2 Study Area

This study was conducted in Iringa district, Iringa region. The Iringa district council is among the four districts of the Iringa region of Tanzania. The study area was chosen due to the available evidence of low public primary school teachers' performance in the area (URT, 2022) and poor pupils' performance in the 2022 national examination results. This ensured the possibility of obtaining relevant data in relation to this study.

3.3 Research Design

Then, this study employed a case study design. A case study is an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context (Kothari, 2000), Therefore, multiple cases were selected to get a general understanding and interpretation of the question under study. These included one district and 10 public primary schools from which respondents were obtained to provide relevant information for this study.

3.3. Population, Sample and Sampling Procedures

Research population is a group of individuals from which samples are drawn. It is a set of all cases of interest to the researcher (Creswell,2012). The target population was secondary schools, teachers and quality assurance personnel in Iringa district in which the sample was 10 public primary schools, 50 teachers, 10 heads of schools, 1 district education officer as well as 5 quality assurance personnel including the chief quality assurance officer in the district.

The head of schools, quality assurance personnel and the education officer were purposively selected basing on the roles they played in relation to curriculum implementation and school quality assurance. On the other hand, teachers were randomly selected from their schools in which each member had an equal chance of being included in the study (Kothari,2000).

3.4 Data Collection Techniques

In this study, information was collected through interviews, questionnaire as well as documentary review. Interview sessions were administered to heads of schools, quality assurance officers as well as the district education officer. For accuracy and record, the entire interview was recorded. On the part of teachers, questionnaires were used. Through documentary review, documents that were consulted included school quality assurance reports on various aspects related to schools visited, teachers' lesson plans and scheme of works and other school records regarding the trend of school quality assurance visits in each respective school, quality teaching and the running of the schools in general.

3.5. Data Analysis Plan

The qualitative data obtained from interviews, and documentary reviews have been summarized and analysed through thematic analysis which involved reading through sets of data collected to identify common themes, ideas and patterns in relation to the objectives of the study (Berg & Howard, 2012). On the other hand, all data that were quantitative in nature have been analysed using descriptive statistics through frequency tables, graphs and figures so as to describe and summarize the data in a way that is logical and easy to understand (Creswell, 2012).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Teachers' attitudes on School Quality Assurance and their Responsibilities in the Process

Under this objective, the study aimed to determine teachers' attitudes on school quality assurance in respect to school performance.

The findings found that teachers have a positive attitude on quality assurance in primary schools particularly in Iringa District. This is evidenced when the quality assurers and academic teachers declare that teachers perceive quality assurance positively by doing their activities accurately.

During the interview, one of the academic teachers said;

In the context of quality assurance, teachers seemed to be in a positive attitude about quality assurance. Always they use skills, and knowledge to ensure optimal performance to the students hence they teach, supervise and make a follow-up for academic matters in order to maintain standards”

In addition, the quality assurance officer supported this by saying

Most of the teachers have a positive attitude about quality assurance in education because they implement the teaching process and supervise academic issues accordingly. Apart from that they asked my office to provide seminars and training

about a proper supervision and implementation of a standard and accuracy in education to ensure quality assurance in education

On the other hand, teachers also showed a view that they themselves in their individual schools were responsible for school quality assurance. This was evident when they were responding to the question that asked whether they thought there are other parts involved in the school quality assurance activities apart from the school quality assurance officers. The responses were that teachers themselves, head teachers, academic masters, the school committees as well as the community were responsible for quality assurance, for example, through assessment and evaluation by giving quizzes, tests and assignment as well school visits and advice. These help to make sure that the schools' environment, infrastructure and equipment are well managed and functional.

The above quotation implies that teachers in Iringa District has a positive attitude in primary education schools hence, they perform their activities in an optimal performance to meet the required standard. This indication helps the head teachers, school quality assurers and academic teacher to runs academic activities in an appropriate manner. Also the needs of teachers to attend seminars and training about quality assurance help both school leaders and teachers to broaden the knowledge and skills which help them to attain the goals of a good education standard

4.2 the impact of School Quality Assurance Practices on Teachers' Performance in Public Primary School Education

The researcher found out that effectiveness of quality assurance helps to strengthen leadership hence, it has significant impact on teaching and learning process. Research has found that quality assurance makes school leader to carry out their activities diligently and professionally, which contribute to improve teamwork and teacher's professional growth.

Also, effective quality assurance creating mutual and trustful relationship between students, parents and the school personnel as being fundamental in improving teaching and learning activities whose end result is improved academic performance and achievement of quality of education.

Furthermore, effective quality assurance considers standard and create potation people. This was supported by Academic Teacher who said that;

Effectiveness of quality assurance make a teacher to create and enabled to distribute an accepted practice, innovation and better curriculum implementation. It is true that upon receiving directions from quality assurance as experts, teachers become more confident, competent, creative, and feel comfortable in implementing school curriculum. Also through quality assurance, education provided to young people is expected to meet the societal needs as directed

Moreover, one of the teachers said that;

“Enhancement of schools’ development projects is another possible outcome of effectiveness of quality assurance on public primary school”

The overhead evidence brings about that effectiveness of quality assurance in education contributes in enhancing efficiency and standard which meant to develop strong leadership who enhance teamwork, trustworthy and cooperation. Also, it shown that effectiveness of educational quality assurance helps learners to improve their academic performance, acquire appropriate knowledge which is improve quality of education achieved.

5. Conclusion

In the light of the findings in this study, it is concluded that school quality assurance among other things is connected with the accountability of teachers and other stakeholders in the provision of quality education. Its main purpose is to ensure that standards in education are met and the desired outcomes in education are achieved. There is no doubt that teachers and other stakeholders perceive school quality assurance as important and effective in in most of the aspects related to effective teaching and learning. This is very important since if school quality assurance need to continue as a major influence in enhancing the quality of education, it need to be broadly trusted and accepted by teachers and others involved.

6. Recommendations

In order to have effective school quality assurance practices, there is a need to provide adequate resources and facilities such as stationaries, offices, transport and enough funds to enable the school quality assurance officers serve effectively. In connection to that, the Ministry of education should make sure that there is an adequate number of qualified school quality assurers. This can be done through establish enough preservice and in-service training programs for school quality assurance personnel. It is very important to have an adequate number of the personnel in this section so as to match with the increasing number of primary schools and enrolment.

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