

**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. The research used a qualitative approach, hence, purposive and snowball sampling technique employed to acquire the required data. Targeted populations involved the Quality Assurance Officer, public primary school teachers, district education officer, academic teachers and head teachers. Moreover, data were collected through interview and focus group discussion and data were analysed thematically with direct quotation. 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 to 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

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).

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(Mathew,2012). 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 (Orunbornand 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(Ayeni, 2018). 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 (Ayeni, 2018). 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 (Mgangaand 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.

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(European commission, 2018; De Grauwe, 2007).

1.4 Research Questions

- What are the teachers' attitudes towards the effectiveness of quality assurance in the public primary schools?

- What is the impact of School Quality Assurance on Teachers' Performance in the Public Primary School Education?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Teachers' attitude towards the effectiveness of quality assurance in the public primary schools

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 favourable 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 (Muchanje, 2020).

2.2 Impact of School Quality Assurance on Teachers' Performance in the 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 (URT, 2018).

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 (Ehren and Visscher, 2008).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

In this study, the qualitative approach was considered appropriate due to the constructivism (interpretive) philosophical paradigm and the intention of the study. The qualitative approach helped in collecting and analysing the respondents' views, feelings and recommendations in their natural settings. Qualitative researches can be described as meanings, concepts, definitions, metaphors, symbols and description of things (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 population of the study included school quality assurance personnel, public primary school teachers, academic teachers and education administrators such as head teachers as well as district education officers.

The sample was sample size included 20 public primary school teachers (4 from each school), 5 academic teachers (1 from each school), 5 head teachers (1from each school), 1 district education officer and 1 school quality assurance personnel for interviewing. This made a total of 32 participants. Though in qualitative approach, the sample size cannot be pre-determined, therefore, the researcher also considered the point data saturation the point when adding more participants to the study could not result in additional information (Guest *et al.*, 2006).

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 Instruments

In this study, information was collected through interviews and focus group discussion 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, and students focus group discussion was included.

3.5. Data Analysis

Data analysis is a process that implies editing, coding, classification and tabulation of collected data (Kothari, 2004). In this study, the data were analysed thematically by providing a summary and direct quotation from the respondents focusing on the objectives of the study. Thematic analysis tailored this study because it is used to analyse classifications and present themes (patterns) that relate to the questions. Berg and Howard (2012) define thematic data analysis as a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. The procedure involved six concurrent steps as proposed by Berg and Howard (2012) such as;

Familiarisation with the data: This phase involves reading and re-reading the data, to become deep and well familiar with its content. This stage helped the researcher to be familiar with the data which related to the questions.

Coding: whereby it involved generating summarizing of the main themes of the data that might be relevant to answering the research question. It involves coding the entire information, and after that, collating all the codes and all relevant quotations, together for later stages of analysis.

Generating initial themes; this phase involves examining the codes and organized data to identify significant broader patterns of meaning (potential themes).

It then involves organizing data relevant to each candidate theme, so that a researcher can work with the data and review the viability of each candidate theme. This stage assisted the researcher to generate the general themes and organizing relevant data to the related questions, reviewing themes; this phase involves checking the candidate themes against the questions, to determine that they tell a convincing story of the data, and one that answers the research question. In this phase, themes are usually developed, which sometimes involves themes being split, combined, or rejected. This stage abetted the researcher to determine the relevant or irreverent themes as provided by participants through checking or reviewing them again,

Defining and naming themes; this phase involves developing a detailed analysis of each theme, working out the scope and focus of each theme, determining the story of each. It also involves deciding on an informative name for each theme. This stage supported the researcher to analyse themes according to the scope of the content

The final stage is writing up the report hence, it includes the weaving together the analytic narrative and data extracts, and contextualising the analysis in relation to existing literature.

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 respective 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 two quality assurers and five academic master declare that teachers perceive quality assurance positively by doing their activities in accurate.

During the interview, one of the academic mater said;

In the context quality assurance, teachers seemed to use skills, and knowledge to ensure optimal performance to the students hence they teach, supervise and making fora up for academic matters in order to maintain standards. This imply that they doing their duties positively which are always motivated by intrinsic motivation”

In addition, quality assurance officer supported this by saying

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