Internal Quality Assurance and Challenges Inhibiting its Effectiveness in Public Primary Schools: A Case of Chato District, Tanzania

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Abstract: This paper set out to examine teachers' perception on internal quality assurance in public primary schools and challenges inhibiting its effectiveness in Chato District, Tanzania. It used Case study design and involved the sample of 88 stakeholders. Interviews, focus group discussion and documentary were used to collect data. The findings reveal that teachers had a positive perception on their involvement in the establishment and introduction of Internal School Quality Assurance as a mechanism for provision of quality education. However, ISQA committee members were de-motivated by factors such as lack of training, inadequate time to execute ISQA Programs, lack of cooperation from teachers and teachers overloaded. The study concludes that despite the challenges impeding the effectiveness of ISQA committee, the program is important in monitoring and supervising the provision of quality education. Based on the conclusions, the study recommends that the school administration should encourage mutual collaboration between teachers and ISQA committee members for effective results to be realized.

Keywords: Quality education; internal school quality assurance; teaching and learning; self-evaluation.

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Introduction

Internal School Quality Assurance (ISQA) is a cornerstone for making sure that teachers can identify their strengths and weaknesses during teaching and learning. The teaching and learning process is transmission of knowledge from teachers to students. It is referred to as the combination of various elements within the process where educators identify and establish learning objectives, develop teaching resources and implement the teaching and learning strategy (Sequeira, 2012). ISQA is a new style of school quality management that primarily focuses on improving the internal school performance. It is the process of monitoring, supervising, evaluating and executing day-to-day school activities for the sake of improving the provision of quality of education (Amiruddin, 2018). ISQA guidelines charge school teams to ensure that teachers prepare teaching and learning documents such as the schemes of work lesson plans, lesson notes and teaching and learning materials. It also requires teachers to fill in subject log books and adhere to the required teaching schedule as allocated in school timetable. The team is also obliged to ensure proper allocation and utilization of the school resources. It is further tasked to coordinate in-school teachers' capacity building

training and encourage teamwork spirit among the staff members. In addition, ISQA team is charged with the responsibility of conducting a detailed and professional evaluation of internal, mock and National Examination results of the schools. The policy has given power to the ISQA to recommend the actions to be taken against those teachers and students who are negligent in academics and on cross-cutting issues and try to suggest the kind of motivation to be given to teachers, non-teaching staff and students who perform well (URT, 2018).

While ISQA is acknowledged for improving the quality of education in schools, the effectiveness of internal school quality assurance in primary schools is hindered by many factors. A study by Farrell (2011) in Canada found that shortage of funds, teaching and learning materials and school infrastructure hindered the effective implementation of the internal school evaluation in public schools. In Cyprus, Karagiorgi et al. (2015) observed that ISQA lacked the systematic structure and national framework to guide the process. As a result, each school was responsible for determining their own ways for evaluation. Furthermore, the process was viewed as consuming much time and increasing workload to teachers. In Malaysia, Yusnad (2017) found that ISQA was hindered by the absence of qualified educators and required facilities. In South Africa, Setlalentoa (2014) reported the factors limiting the ISQA effectiveness include lack of involvement of educators in the process, lack of appropriate follow-up and lack of collaborative culture among teachers. Moreover, the study by Garira (2014) in Zimbabwe revealed that educators had no awareness of the use of SSE in improving the quality of primary school education. Furthermore, there was no clear policy to guide the SSE practice in Zimbabwean schools. In Nigeria, Adebisi (2021) revealed that inadequate funding hindered the quality provision of teaching and learning.

In Tanzania, the MoEVT (2014) emphasized that in order to strengthen the provision of quality education, supervision needs stakeholders' involvement. To achieve this requirement, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2017) introduced the ISQA as a tool for supervising and monitoring the provision of quality education in school. Attainment of quality education will not be achieved if all stakeholders and policy makers do not pay attention to the effective implementation of the Internal School Quality Assurance. Hence, this study was conducted.

Methodology

Design
The study employed the qualitative approach using the case study design, which permits an in-depth examination of factors in a study.

Population and Sampling
Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample size of 88 respondents, which included 8 head teachers, 2 District School Quality Assurance Officers, 2 Ward Education Officers, 36 Internal School Quality Assurance committee members and 40 teachers.

Instruments
The study employed an interview, focus group discussions and documentary reviews as methods for data collection.

Validity and Reliability
To ensure the validity, the data collection instruments were designed in such a way that they effectively addressed the study problem. Reliability was ensured through the triangulation method where data was collected by using multiple tools.

Treatment of Data
Data was subjected to thematic analysis where it was systematically unbundled and organize to emerge with the specific themes.

Ethical Consideration
Respondents were informed about the objectives of the study, the way in which it was to be conducted and the significance thereof. Respondents were to participate willingly and they were free to withdraw at any time.

Results and Discussion
This section presents results and discussions of the study regarding quality assurance effectiveness and challenges experienced.

Objective 1: To establish the perception of teachers regarding the effectiveness of internal quality assurance.

This section seeks to establish the perception of teachers regarding the effectiveness of internal quality assurance. The results are arranged according to emerging themes as follows:

Teachers' Involvement in the Establishment of ISQA

Study findings revealed that teachers got involved in the establishment of the ISQA committees in schools despite the fact that other respondents had a negative perception on their involvement. One of the respondents reported that: "Yes, all teachers involve themselves in establishing ISQA in my school. Members of ISQA committee are chosen democratically through staff meetings by considering the person's competence and experience" (Interview with head teacher, B of school B).

Through interview, one of the head teachers stated that the ISQA system is a good approach that involves all teachers who are free to express their weaknesses to the committee rather than they can do to the school administration. ESQA assurers. Reported that:

> As far as the democratic process is concerned, all teachers are involved in the establishment of ISQA committees in our school. That is why most of the teachers are happy with the style of supervision because before the establishment of the ISQA committees, teachers were being inspected by the head teacher and the external school quality assurers. Teachers were lazy and weak in preparing the teaching and learning materials. With the introduction of ISQA committee, teachers now prepare their teaching documents on time, something that increases their accountability.

Other respondents had negative perception about teachers' involvement in establishing ISQA committee as declared by some head teachers, who confessed to have been forming the committees without involving teachers. One of the heads of the schools was quoted saying,

> Frankly speaking, the appointment of ISQA members in our schools is informal. However, we were oriented on having these programs in our school. Nothing was explained about how to do or what qualifications were needed for the formation of ISQA team. Lack of guidelines allowed me to use my common sense of selecting such members as I always do in appointing other school leaders such as academic heads of department, discipline

heads and others. As you know, I have power by the law to handle all issues in this school.

Another head teacher reported that:

> Deliberately, appointing ISQA members is under the authority of head teachers. Now, there is no need of gathering teachers and discussing the issue you ask about. But because I am committed and prefer team working, I usually encourage teachers to take full participation in the preparation of the whole school development plan which includes the ISQA programs. Therefore, in our school, I do appoint ISQA committee the way we fill other positions in the school.

Moreover, through FGD, one teacher had this to report:

> We can't ignore the truth that we were appointed without the involvement of the teaching staff meeting; the Head teacher used the power he has to appoint teachers who can perform duties effectively. Thus, after the appointment he organized for orientations on how to undertake this program. This made other teachers to believe that we were appointed based on relationship with the Head teacher. They also thought that we are paid or we get many offers from the head teacher. But in our understanding, we were appointed because we have enough working experience and we perform our responsibility efficiently.

The experience of choosing committee members without involving the rest of teachers was also found in South Africa whereby Setlalentoa (2014) revealed that many schools did not involve teachers in the process of establishing ISQA board members. As a result, the implementation of ISQA was not effective.

Introduction of ISQA Program

Regarding teachers' perception toward the introduction of ISQA program, data was collected through interview with the head teachers and FGD with ISQA committee members and teachers. The respondents supported that teachers had positive perception on the ISQA system as it was acting as an agent towards positive change in supervising and monitoring the quality control of the education

within the schools. They believed that the ISQA committee facilitates teaching and learning. Narrations of ISQA committee members were captured:

> Teachers have a positive perception on ISQA because it facilitates teaching and learning, thus leading to effectiveness. Teachers have positive perception because they know that the team is working to help them in one way or another to master their teaching and other issues related to the teaching profession.

In the interview, the head teacher, of school E, was quoted as saying:

> Teachers have positive perception on the ISQA system because the team motivates them and pupils to be active. It helps to maintain teaching and learning effectiveness. The committee, to a large extent, helps teachers to be always accountable and responsible for their teaching duties.

In addition, teachers perceived the ISQA committee duty as user-friendly. They reported that in assessing and evaluating teachers, the committee openly discusses strengths and weaknesses of the teachers. They use a friendly approach compared to what was being conducted by the school administrators and external school quality assurance officers before. Therefore, teachers had positive attitude toward the School Quality Assurance program as it helped them to improve their performance. This is in line with what Dismas (2020) found out that ISQA members were user-friendly and they demonstrated care.

ISQA Activities
With regard to teachers' perception toward ISQA activities one of respondents revealed that:

> Teachers perceive ISQA programs positively because the programs are helpful to teachers as it enables them to effectively carry out their responsibilities in preparing teaching and learning materials like scheme of works, lesson plans, lesson notes and subject logbooks. Also, they do solve teaching and learning problems with the intention of raising performance in the schools.

During the interview, WEO 1 from Ward 1 narrated that the ISQA committee was an essential approach where teachers were free to express their weaknesses to their team rather than they could do to school administration and ESQA. He further added that:

> Nowadays, most of the teachers are happy with the approach of supervision and monitoring. Before the establishment of the ISQA committees, teachers were being inspected by the head teachers and the external school quality assurers. Teachers were lazy and weak in preparing the teaching and learning materials because they believed that ESQA could visit schools regularly and teachers were not happy and they lost hope and confidence when inspection was being done by ESQA. But nowadays, I am telling you, they are free to be assessed by their fellow teachers and discuss the strengths and weaknesses observed together.

Therefore, teachers were happy with the ISQA undertaking as it had a constructive impact on school development plans mainly. This relate with the findings of Uzoechina and Nwankwo (2017), in Nigeria, who found that teachers agreed that the ISQ control was one of the best ways of supporting pedagogical practice. Furthermore, Nevo (2010) in Israel, found that teachers considered that internal evaluators created harmonious relationships that increased teachers' involvement in the decision-making process.

Ability of ISQA Members to Performing ISQA Activities
The study sought to find out teachers' perception on the ability of ISQA committee members to perform ISQA activities. In this sub-theme, data was collected from head teachers, ISQA committee members and teachers themselves. The researchers interviewed head teachers and conducted Focus Group Discussions for teachers and ISQA members. The study found that teachers had positive attitudes about the ability of ISQA committee members to fulfil their tasks. The head teacher of school D, was quoted as saying: "Teachers have positive attitude towards the ISQA members' ability in fulfilling their duties during checking teaching and learning documents like lesson plans, scheme of works and subject logbooks "The head teacher of school H, added: "The way ISQA members are perceived by

other teachers depends much on their personal commitment to fulfil teaching and learning activities. Those who manage fulfil their roles on time view ISQA committee as helpful and supportive to them."

Out of the FGD with teachers, it was further revealed that teachers had positive feelings about the ability of ISQA committees to fulfil their duties. In this respect, one of respondents was quoted saying: "Teachers perceive ISQA committees positively as they believed that ISQA committees have new things to learn, especially when observing teaching documents like class journals, schemes of work and lesson plans."

Objective 2: To establish challenges facing the ISQA in Supervising and Monitoring Teaching and Learning

This section presents challenges that face ISQA in supervising and monitoring teaching and learning. Several challenges were revealed as follows:

Lack of Training on Evaluation Skills
The findings indicated that members of the ISQA committee had inadequate training on technical evaluation skills. It was also found that ISQA committee members lacked in-house seminars and workshops on how to implement the ISQA program. This was found to hinder the effectiveness of the ISQA system.

One of the committee members had this to report:

> Frankly speaking, we have not attended any training. Sometimes it becomes difficult to implement the ISQA programs because we don't have clear approaches when we conduct such tasks. The guidelines are not clear because they rely only on the teacher's experience for one to be a member of a team. Now, how can we know who is a more expert teacher while we have not attended any seminars or workshops to equip us with this new programme?

One teacher through FGD revealed that:

> ISQA committee members have not studied quality control as an education program. So, it is not easy for them to inspect teachers and the school administration while lacking important knowledge and skills on how to conduct

the program. This is a professional practice but then why does a class teacher become a school quality assurer without training while for one to become ESQAO has to attend training?

Head teachers who were interviewed revealed similar feedback regarding the incompetence o the committee members as revealed by one of the school heads: "Of course, we do face some difficulties in appointing teachers as members of ISQA committee. This is because most of them are incompetent and have not attended any training. This is a problem as it hinders efficiency."

Limited Time for Executing ISQA Activities
The study found that shortage of time was one of the serious challenges in the process of implementing the ISQA activities. On this, respondents acknowledged that ISQA team members lacked time for conducting consistent assessment and evaluation because they had other duties. Furthermore, schools had few teachers but who had many periods to teach and do extracurricular activities. This was supported by an ISQA committee members in the FGD who was quoted as saying:

> We are teachers; therefore, we have other responsibilities to fulfil as teachers. Therefore, being a member of ISQA team adds more responsibilities, something that makes us very busy because we are needed to prepare teaching and learning documents and attending our daily responsibilities. At the same time, we should work as school quality assurers. Actually, we lack time to conduct classroom observation because of the interference of periods with time for inspection. Through this, we can't manage to handle the task of supervising all teachers and at the same times meeting the personal teaching responsibilities.

Another teacher revealed similar view about time limitation as follows:

> There is a problem of time between the set time for teaching and that of ISQA activities. Many times, the ISQA committee has been failing to give feedback to teachers because of collision of time table. Conducting classroom observation for every teacher at school is

impossible because ISQA members have other responsibilities.

Therefore, the shortage of time was a big challenge. Similarly, Ekyaw (2014) revealed a similar experience in Ethiopia where internal school assurers were having the same teaching hours as other teachers and as a result, they did not have enough time to fulfil both responsibilities. Basing on this point of view it can be stated that a shortage of time for ISQA reduced their ability in executing ISQA activities effectively.

Lack of Motivation

Observation from the study showed that the ISQA team members were not motivated to do ISQA activities while overloaded with ISQA requirements. The respondents commented that ISQA team members had many duties and responsibilities to accomplish in terms of classroom teaching since some of them were also carrying out the ISQA programs. To make them work more effectively, the ISQA members should be paid extra payment.

During the interview with one of the heads of school, it was revealed that:

> In my school, now and then, members of the ISQA team demand extra payment as they do claim that the ISQ is located in a different department and that it is the work which has special qualified personnel which are the school quality assurance officers to perform such duties and responsibilities. Due to this notion, some ISQA committee members do not effectively do the activities they have been assigned.

Additionally, through FGD, an ISQA committee member gave the following comment:

> Obviously, ISQA practice is a work that needs professional personnel because the work itself is a tiresome kind of activity which sometimes puts us into conflicts with lazy or rigid teachers when we assess and evaluate them. It is better if we could be paid extra payment. Truly, we are using a lot of efforts and energy during assessment and evaluation. Sometimes we are doing ISQA tasks on extra time without any allowances.

Lack of Cooperation from Teachers

The study discovered that some teachers were reluctant to be inspected by their fellow teachers. The teachers showed little cooperation to ISQA committees and teachers. Some teachers believed that the ISQA team could not change anything in their career because of their working experience, the level of education they had attained and the fact that ISQA members had no any training concerning ISQA activities. For example, in the FGD, a teacher from school A commented: "Teachers disrespect the ISQA members because they have a similar level of education. They know their performance and their level of competence. Thus, some teachers resist to be inspected."

A teacher from another school reported that,

> For the case of our school, the programme is very limited because many teachers do not give much cooperation to ISQA team members. Several times we are abused and undermined by some of them as we do inspection especially when we do classroom observation and when we advise them on areas which need modification. This makes them reject even our recommendations.

Furthermore, an interview with a head of school G, revealed the following:

> In my school, some teachers do not give much cooperation to ISQA team members. They are rigid; they do not want to change. They do think that ISQA is a tool for driving them to work hard. Sometimes they don't like to accept the advice given by the team and occasionally they reject it. All the time, there are quarrels between teachers and the ISQA committee members especially with lazy teachers who always have many reasons behind their failures. Thus, their main claim is that members have nothing new to do with their professionals because all of them have similar level of education and others claim to have more experience than ISQA committee members.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This section presents the conclusion of the study and then gives the corresponding recommendations. Based on the findings, the study concludes that the introduction of the ISQA system and committees was positively perceived by teachers. Those appointed as team members shared their knowledge, skills and experience for the sake of improving performance. However, the implementation of the ISQA was affected by teachers' lack of expertise, teaching overload and absence of incentives. Based on the conclusions, the study recommends that the school administration should encourage mutual collaboration between teachers and ISQA committee members for effective results to be realized.

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