

# **Challenges Facing School Quality Assurers in Improving Teachers' Accountability in Public Secondary Schools in Iringa Municipality, Tanzania**

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## ***Abstract***

*This article critically assesses school quality assurance challenges in improving teachers' accountability in public secondary schools in Iringa Municipality. The study employed a qualitative approach under a descriptive research design. Purposive sampling was applied to obtain a sample of 30 participants who were teachers (n=20), Heads of School (n=4), Secondary School Quality Assurers (n=4), District Secondary Education Officer (n=1), and Zonal Chief School Quality Assurer (n=1). Data were collected through interviews and documentary review and analysed through content analysis. Findings of the study revealed that the major challenges facing school quality assurers were incompetent of teachers in their subject of specialization, school quality assurers lack financial resources, in schools there was lack of implementation of School Quality Assurers' recommendations, lack of in-service opportunity for training and retraining; lack of educational materials and lack of specialist for teachers in guidance and counseling.*

**Keywords:** Accountability, Quality Assurers, school quality assurers.

## **1.0 Introduction**

Quality assurance has been used for overall improvement of institutions and management (Prisacariu, 2015). Basically, quality assurance should be the responsibility of everyone in an educational institution, though the top management sets the policies and priorities. However, to make things run smoothly, there are quality assurers in the school organisations, who are mandated to supervise quality-related issues.

The origin of school quality assurers can be traced back to France under the Napoleon regime at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Adewale, Adeleke, Toyin & Rotim, 2014). In other European countries, school quality assurers were introduced during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (De-Grauwe, 2007).

Why does the educational organisation need a quality assurance unit or section? Quality assurance unit or section is responsible to the institutions and the public to assure that the education and experience providers deliver of a good standard to maintain trust in the education system nationally and internationally (Prisacariu, 2015).

In 2012, the Ministers for Education in Europe gathered in the *Council of Europe* to discuss the theme titled: Governance and quality education. However, four important issues emerged as resolutions: preparation for sustainable employment, preparation for life as active citizens in democratic processes, personal development, and the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base (Prisacariu, 2015).

Nevertheless, the Council of Europe placed a great emphasis on a broad understanding of quality, which encompasses system quality as well as institutional quality and underscore the social dimension of quality: education system cannot be of high quality unless it provides adequate opportunities for all students (Prisacariu, 2015). However, the quality of education has been faced with some challenges.

Bowen (2001), Isolo (2000), Kamuyu (2001) and Ndegwa (2001) highlighted the challenges encountered by the school quality assurers in various countries. Such challenges included those associated with areas such as professionalism, attitudes and commitment, feedback and follow-up, collaboration, pre-service and in-service training, quality assurers' autonomy, means of transport, planning quality assurance, and quality assurance-university partnerships. Additionally, other challenges included the education system, cost of quality assurance, assurer's recruitment, selection, and deployment, adequacy of quality assurance, resourcing, quality assurance reports, post-quality assurance evaluation, and quality assurers' titles.

According to a report of the Sector Review and Development Direction of 2003, the work of the school quality assurers is hampered by inadequate legal provision which limit enforcement of quality assurance recommendations, inadequacies of requisite skills mainly due to lack of a specific policy on recruitment and deployment of assurers, which should take into account an officer's academic background and experience in the education sector and finally lack of a definite staff development policy (Republic of Kenya, 2003).

In addition to that, the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme of 2005-2010 outlines the challenges faced by the quality assurers department while in pursuit of quality assurance and standards such as lack of school level supervisory capacity, lack of tools to measure learning achievement, widespread weaknesses in teacher skills due to lack of in-service training, inability of the school quality assurers to reorganize sufficient subject based in-service courses to address shortcomings relating to curriculum, lack of a national system to teacher in-service training accreditation and lack of capacity to adequately assess special needs and respond to them (Republic of Kenya, 2005).

In Tanzania, school quality assurance started during colonial rule. During the colonial era, the department of education in Tanganyika established two groups of school quality assurers, namely: Education Secretaries and Supervisors of Volunteering Institutions (URT, 2020). These groups inspected schools, which were under private institutions. Furthermore, it can be observed that during this period, teachers perceived school quality assurers as threatening moments towards their carrier and profession (ibid).

After independence in 1961, the Government of Tanganyika formalized different school Education Acts for the purpose of regulating the provision of education and improvement of education quality (URT, 2020). Some policies passed, and school quality assurers focused on supporting and empowering teachers to fulfil their responsibilities. For example, the government passed the Education Act No. 37 of 1962 to regulate the provision of education in the country. Between 1967 and 1978, the government took several steps and enacted several laws to improve education.

With Education Act No. 50 of 1969, the government nationalized the non-government schools. The Education Act No. 25 of 1978 gave more power to the Commissioner for Education to ensure that every school in Tanzania is supervised according to the rules and orders. Through this act, the school quality assurer's structure and division of quality assurers' zones were established under the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) (URT, 2008).

A study by the MoEVT (2008) found that in the department of school quality assurance, inadequate personnel, lack of transport, inadequate office space, equipment and housing are some of the challenges that school quality assurers face in Tanzania. These challenges create a condition that a school is qualified about once every two years.

Similarly, a study done by Phillymon (2020) revealed that the quality assurance and control officers mostly visited secondary schools once per term leading to poor academic performance. In addition, inadequate funds, transport and communication problems and inadequate human resources limited effective school inspection.

Following the explanations on the challenges facing school quality assurers in other places as recounted in the background, there was a need to conduct a study on the challenges facing school quality assurers in improving teachers' accountability in public secondary schools in Iringa Municipality, Tanzania.

## **2.0 Material and Methods**

The study used the constructivist paradigm, which focused on how people construct knowledge and learn. The study adopted the constructivist paradigm because it enabled various individual perspectives from the teachers, head of schools, school quality assurers, and zonal chief quality assurer. Qualitative research approach was used to collect comprehensive and elaborative in-depth information on the challenges facing school quality assurers. It allowed interaction between researcher and participants, thus getting first-hand information. Also, it is the best for this study due to its theoretical underpinnings as it regards the difference in individual perceptions and uniqueness in interpreting the phenomena (Mushi, 2002).

The study employed a case study design because it helped the greater understanding of the topic studied. The design was chosen for one main reason: to develop an understanding of the particular thing in detail. This required the researcher to closely examine people to get detailed information (Hays, 2004).

The study was conducted in Iringa Municipality in Iringa Region. Iringa Municipality was established in 1988 according to local government Act No. 8 of 1982, CAP 288 R.E 2002 section 9 and 10. The municipal lies along latitude  $7^{\circ}$  South of the Equator and longitude  $34^{\circ}$  East of the Greenwich Meridian (URT, 2019). The researcher chose to conduct the study in Iringa Municipality because of having experienced not all schools are assured every year only a few were assured, and this led unimprovement to teachers' accountability. Therefore, the researcher assessed the

challenges facing school quality assurers in improving teachers' accountability.

The sample size of this study was about 30 respondents out of the population of 877 of Iringa Municipality. The said respondents were purposively regarded the key implementers of educational policies, directives and programmes. These respondents were drawn from the cadres of District Secondary Education Officer, Zonal Chief School Quality Assurer, District School Quality Assurers, Heads of Secondary School and Secondary Teachers.

Moreover, the study also considered interviews and documentary review in the process of gathering data from the respondents. The data analysis process was done in relation to the study's research questions. The data were synchronized, summarized, organized, and analyzed by using content analysis.

### **3.0 Findings**

This paper aimed at finding out the challenges facing school quality assurers in improving teacher's accountability in public secondary schools. The findings of the study were collected through interview and documentary review. A total of four school quality assurers, four head of schools and twenty teachers were involved in interview. The school quality assurer's process faces many challenges that may hinder their success in improving teacher accountability in secondary schools in Iringa Municipality. These challenges are the incompetency of teachers in their subject of specialisation, lack of financial resources, lack of implementations of school quality assurer's recommendations, lack of in-service opportunity for training, lack of educational

materials in schools, lack of specialist for teachers in guidance and counselling.

### **3.1 Incompetency of Teachers in their Subject of Specialization**

Incompetency of teachers in their specialised subject impeded efficiency and effectiveness of quality education. Most teachers were affected by change of curriculum. They were not ready to commit themselves to competence-based curriculum (CBC); they were still using knowledge/content-based curriculum because when CBC was established 2005 there was no any training done among teachers. They are supposed to teach what is in the syllabus. One of the school quality assurers, when interviewed, had this to say:

*It seems that change of curriculum in secondary school leads some teachers to skip some of the topics from the syllabus since they are new to teachers; this is because there is no training provided to teachers (Interview with SQA 3, 04/06/2021).*

The findings also were discussed by Momoh and O`gbonnaya (2013), who assert that the Ministry of Education should organize workshops and seminars for teachers to improve their qualities.

Another school quality assurer added that:

*When I made school quality assurance in some of the schools, I found that a form three Geography teacher is teaching only practical geography and skipped statistics. Same teacher did not prepare anything about*

*physical geography* (Interview with SQA 1, 04/06/2021).

From the foregoing findings, school quality assurers found that many topics were not taught. The reason behind was a change of curriculum done by the MoEVT. Some Geography teachers fear Mathematics, especially in statistics and others have problems drawing physical features of the earth.

### **3.2 Lack of Financial Resources**

As it is now popular, the capitation fund is the major source of school finance. School quality assurers claimed that lack of financial resources hinders their intention of improving the teacher's accountability. It was revealed that school quality assurers did not have enough funds to buy research reports, stationeries, tables, and chairs. Also, they lack offices for their working activities. Most secondary teachers are also located in remote areas, so school quality assurers need transport to visit all schools at the right time. The findings indicated that transport for school quality assurers is the major problem. All four school quality assurers mentioned lack of transport allowances as their major challenge in their daily activities. One of the school quality assurers commented:

*This is a big problem in our department because most of the school quality assurers are using private transport and others do not have a car because it is difficult to reach targeted secondary schools on time* (Interview with SQA 4,04/06/2021).

De Grauwe (2001) supported these findings as he found challenges associated with school quality assurers in four African

countries (Botswana, Namibia, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe) including the lack of resources, especially vehicles and funds impeded travel to visit schools. The finding also concurs with a study done by Matete (2009), who established that school quality assurers suffered from poverty, including lack of allowances for school visits.

It was revealed that it is practically difficult for school quality assurers to ensure control of teacher's accountability in secondary school because they were not systematically coordinated because of insufficient funds. Another school quality assurer commented that, "*Our department every year does not meet its annual action plan on time because of insufficient funds*" (Interview with SQA 2, 04/06/2021).

In contrast to the previous finding, the normal practice of a school quality assurance standard as recommended by MoEVT is that schools should be qualified at least once after 2 years (Education Sector Development Programme [ESDP], 2002). Apart from that, URT (2006) states that every school quality assurer is expected to assure 30 schools per financial year.

Also, the finding is as per Onasanya and Omosewo (2011), who opined that most developing countries fail to finance their school quality assurers since they are departments within the Ministries of Education and school quality assurance is not a priority.

### **3.3 Lack of Implementation of School Quality Assurer's Recommendations**

One of the legal bases was that every school quality assurer should make appropriate recommendations to the Head of School on the methods or ways of rectifying the observed problems during and after the inspection of the school quality to make a follow-up on the report. Most quality assurance reports are kept away from teachers and Head of Schools, even when submitted, they are kept in files without actions being taken on them.

A half of school quality assurers revealed that some teachers hesitate to comply with the school quality assurer's recommendations. Eventually, this situation hinders the efficiency and effectiveness of school quality assurer's activities. This ignorance of some teachers results in discouragement of assurers' efforts in executing their duties. School quality assurers observed that various mistakes already been cleared from the same teachers still exist. One of the school quality assurers stated:

*When I visited a school for the second time, I found the same earlier mistakes continued. For example, preparation of a lesson plan in the part of lesson plan development, a first column is an introductory part, whereas a second column involves the teaching activities. As advised, in this part, teachers should deal with prior knowledge of the student on what teacher is going to teach, but I found the same teacher is using six to eight minutes by asking students about the previous lesson (Interview with SQA 3, 04/06/2021).*

Another school quality assurer when interviewed added that:

*In lesson preparation, most of the teachers use only a single reference. At the same time, they have been insisted to use more than one reference to increase knowledge and expand their teaching methods and teaching activities. Most of the teachers are not using relevant teaching and learning materials. I found a teacher is using a geography review book of questions and answers in teaching map reading, which is not allowed because book review is for the student. Instead, teachers are recommended to use a textbook and other supplementary books (Interview with SQA 2, 04/06/2021).*

These findings also are supported by Mathew (2012), who found that adverse quality assurance reports from schools being blocked from reaching the appropriate quarters for fear of reprisal action that might be taken by government against such schools.

Due to this, Nkinyangi (2006) argued that school quality assurers expect to check continuously, review and assess the attainment and progress of pupils and teachers in schools.

### **3.4 Lack of In-service Opportunity for Training and Retraining of School Quality Assurers**

When school quality assurers were asked if they had been trained on secondary education assurance, they answered that only a few numbers were trained. In contrast, most of them were not trained on how to assure secondary schools but admitted that they were using teaching experiences. There is a tendency for school quality assurers to provide inappropriate pieces of advice to teachers due

to lack of expertise in the field where it may result in ineffectiveness in controlling the quality secondary education.

A Head of School 'D' when interviewed on the effectiveness of school quality assurers in improving teacher's accountability in school, he responded that:

*No, our school quality assurers, especially in secondary schools, are not well effective and professionally prepared in improving teacher's accountability because they use only teaching experience, they don't have professional qualifications, training and attitude towards school quality assurance (Interview with HoS, D,03/06/2021).*

This finding confirms what Wilcox (2000) said, that a professional school quality assurer should have applicable qualifications and experience in a subject area. Also, Ehren and Visscher (2006) contend that school quality assurers should have the knowledge base and a good understanding of how the school is managed. That is why school quality assurers should be subject specialists as they cannot offer advice and support in a subject they have not studied.

### **3.5 Lack of Educational Materials in School**

Research data shows that most schools lack such important materials as textbooks, reference books, subject syllabi, school heads guide, civil secular materials, and libraries. This leads to problems related to organising school committee, during the teaching and learning process and other related activities. One of the school quality assurers when interviewed stated:

*In schools, most heads of school lack school heads' guide and secular materials so they organise and lead school the way they think. Other schools lack books, syllabi and advanced libraries; so, during school quality assurance, teachers are using their smartphones searching materials, which is incorrect (Interview with SQA 1, 04/06/2021).*

The finding also corroborated with Mosha's (2011) study that the effectiveness of schools is due to the availability of teaching and learning materials, such as textbooks, teachers' guides, sufficient writing materials and other reading materials. Also, Mosha argued that many public secondary schools lack science facilities, equipment and laboratory technicians.

### **3.6 Lack of Specialists for Teachers in Guidance and Counselling**

Guidance and counselling are an integral part of education. A high level of stress could lead to various poor quality of classroom teaching. Stressed or tempered teachers in schools could be solved and come down through counselling and guidance. The majority of school quality assurers argued that all schools should organise specialists for teachers in guidance and counselling to help teachers be flexible and normal in working hours, especially when they are teaching. One of the school quality assurers, when interviewed, had this to say:

*Most teachers have psychological problems arising from many sources including their families, and others have conflicts with their fellow teachers, making them out of mood at the workplace. As a result, they are*

*affected to teach effectively. To improve same teachers' accountability, guides and counselors are needed in our schools (Interview with SQA 2, 04/06/2021).*

The finding is supported by Karip (2000), who viewed that in schools there are antagonism and misunderstanding between the staff members, which is associated with distribution of work among personnel, financial resources, use of power authority, negative personnel attitude, and assessment practices.

Also, the finding was supported by Omary (2006), who stated that since guidance and counselling is the process of helping an individual to gain self-understanding and self-directions; it is very important because for teachers as it seeks to facilitate teachers development, takes into account the social, psychological and physical environment of the teacher, provides an opportunity to work in collaboration with other teachers and parents and enable teachers to identify specific problems and needs of individual student.

#### **4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

School quality assurance plays a great role in ensuring the provision of quality education in secondary school. It is, therefore, important to make follow-ups that will enhance the implementation of the reports of school quality assurance and work efficiency of teachers. Moreover, funds should also be allocated towards the school quality assurer's department to increase school visits that lead to close follow-up, hence the quality of teacher's accountability.

The article recommends the following: first, the MoEVT needs to initiate special programmes to raise awareness among the teachers on the importance of the school quality assurers in improving teaching and learning. Secondly, heads of schools as internal school quality assurers should carry out in-door seminars to subject teachers and make sure teachers meet their planned goals on time and accept positively roles of school quality assurers. Thirdly, teachers should be trained on curriculum changes to implement the competency-based curriculum effectively and competence lesson plan during the teaching and learning process.

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