



Challenges Facing School Quality Assurance Officers in Enhancing Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Mwanaga District, Tanzania

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Abstract: *The study assessed the challenges that school quality assurance officers (SQAOs) face in enhancing academic performance in public secondary schools in Mwanaga district, Tanzania. Convergent parallel research design under a mixed methods research approach was used. The total sample size was 284 respondents from 12 public secondary schools in Mwanaga district. Respondents included 12 heads of schools, 8 SQAOs and 264 teachers. Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used; in particular, probability sampling to obtain public secondary schools, heads of schools and teachers, while non-probability sampling technique was used in getting school quality assurance officers. Questionnaires and interview guides were used to collect cross-sectional data. The study found that SQAOs face challenges such as lack of adequate motivation, inadequate quality assurance facilities, teachers' unwillingness to accept and implement recommendations from SQAOs, lack of training on current quality assurance skills, and a limited timeframe to carry out quality assurance activities. The study concluded that despite these challenges, the academic performance and the overall teaching and learning process in public secondary schools are satisfactorily influenced by the quality assurance strategies as employed by SQAOs. As a result, the study recommends that educational stakeholders, particularly policymakers and school leaders, ensure that quality assurance officers have adequate skills and knowledge, are properly motivated, accepted by teachers, and have an adequate timeframe to carry out quality assurance activities.*

Keywords: *Challenge, Assurance, Academic performance, Public secondary school, Mwanaga District, Tanzania*

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1. Introduction

Quality assurance is one of the key educational forces that influence academic performance in learning institutions. According to Allais (2017), quality assurance is a powerful way of monitoring an education system, tracking standards and performance levels over time. The

process of quality assurance involves monitoring, assessing, evaluating and reporting objectively on all features of school life to confirm that acceptable standards are being attained, preserved, and enhanced (Allais, 2017). Odele (2015) has further argued that quality assurance engages the systematic processes to maintain and improve quality, equity and efficiency in education with the common objective of improving teaching and learning processes to support schools to adapt to the

changing needs and best outcomes of learners. However, increasing the emphasis on educational quality may be ineffective if there is no or there is little consideration for quality assurance officers (Peter, 2017).

School quality assurance started in the form of a school inspection in the early days. School inspections in the world were first instigated in France under Napoleon's government at the end of the 18th century (Grauwe, 2018). In many African countries, the establishment of school inspection services was accompanied by the introduction of formal public education. After colonial liberation, there was a marked increase in the number of secondary schools in most African countries. However, the increased number of schools was complicated by the relatively slow growth in the number of inspection officers (Grauwe, 2018).

In Ethiopia, the quality assurance system was established due to external pressure (Gibson, 2002). It arose to meet external accountability and, according to Garwe (2014), this made quality improvement a by-product, not a control structure of quality assurance. In 2003, quality assurance in Ethiopia became one of the fundamental factors for education development. The Ethiopian education system is closed-controlled in its academic orientation and limited in its autonomy (Ololube, 2015). Although the quality of education is mentioned in the Ethiopian education and training policy, until 2003, the issue of quality was missing in both the Ministry of Education and the education system (Saccomanno, 2016). Since 2003, the government has recognised quality assurance by approving the higher education proclamation and establishing the agency in charge of education system relevance and quality (Gibson, 2002).

In Kenya, quality assurance strategies and the issues of school inspection are vital in educational organisations because they are deemed to improve academic performance in schools in the country. School quality assurance in Kenya is sufficient to confirm the excellence of education growth (Wasanga, 2014). The strategies used by school quality assurance officers improve the teaching and learning processes in the school, which enhance students' performance (Republic of Kenya, 2015). Different strategies used by quality assurance officers, such as classroom observations and mutual relationships with teachers, improve teaching and learning. However, as Wasanga (2014) observes, a lack of respect, trust and collaboration between teachers and school quality assurance officers tends to reduce working morale in institutions. However, Watson (2014) comments that schools that have a good relationship with school quality assurance officers have a positive impression since teachers are more open about their strengths and

weaknesses and more akin to improve academic performance.

In Tanzania, school inspections were started by German and British colonial rulers. After independence in 1961, the government of Tanzania introduced various school teaching acts with the purpose of regulating the provision of education and improving education quality in the country. School inspections were widely considered an essential instrument for quality education that aided the nation in competing in the ever-changing world economy. It was a form of evaluation, which involves measuring, testing, and assessing educational actions in school organisations to improve the standards and quality of education programmes offered (Komba & Nkumbi, 2018).

To implement the idea of improving the quality of education, the government of Tanzania, between 2013 and 2018, took some steps and enacted several laws to expand education. The government established a department responsible for school quality assurance across the country (United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 2009). However, maintaining quality through inspection of schools' structures leads to the predictable advance in learners' results. It was empty of standards and guidelines and was largely limited to diagnosis without helpful support for quality assurance officers (URT, 2009).

The desire to provide quality education prompted the Department of Education, Science and Technology in Tanzania to change from the ancient system of inspection to School Quality Assurance (SQA), using the Whole School Approach (WSA), involving various stakeholders, including members of the community (Macbeth, 2016). The SQA department has stirred from a school inspection approach to a more holistic system that strongly focused on school progress (Macbeth, 2006). In the model of school inspection previously employed, inspectors focused too much on process, with too little prominence on outcomes or on enabling schools to use the inspection feedback for development (Macbeth, 2016). Learning outcomes, prioritisation for school development planning, capacity development through school self-evaluation and sharing practise within and between schools, and community support and involvement are all features of the new approach to SQA (Macbeth, 2016).

Despite this shift, reports indicate that students' academic performance in Tanzania is currently threatened. The public is witnessing a deterioration of the performance of students in their national examinations because the aspect of quality in education is compromised (HakiElimu, 2020). According to Education Sector Performance Reports (2008-2020), the trend in the performance of the

students in the past four years of examination results has been quite bad. The statistics indicate fluctuations of the pass rate in Certificate of Secondary Education Examination (CSEE), in which the highest performance was witnessed in 2008 at 83.6 percent. However, the percentage of students who failed started to increase from 16.3 percent in 2008 to 46.4 percent in 2014, and in 2016, it increased tremendously to 56.9 percent. Furthermore, following the announcement of the results of CSEE of 2017 by National Examination Council of Tanzania (NACTE) on February 24th 2018, it was found that among the first 100 best schools, only 6 public schools were in the list, the rest (94) were private schools. The same situation was experienced in 2019, where the results indicated that among the best 100 secondary schools, only 7 public secondary schools were found while the rest were private schools (HakiElimu, 2020).

The same scenario is evident in Mwanza District, where public secondary schools lag behind privately established schools in national examinations. Reports in the subsequent years indicate private secondary schools continued to dominate the publicly established schools in the district in terms of academic performance. According to Education Performance Report (United Republic of Tanzania, 2021), all the top 10 performing secondary schools in the district were privately established. Either way, the top 10 best students came from private schools. This situation poses a number of questions among various education stakeholders about the quality of education in the district and thus continues to question the effectiveness of quality assurance officers in enhancing the academic performance of students in public schools.

It is mostly important when examining secondary school academic performance to assess the challenges of SQAOs in ensuring that standards are met, and management and performance of schools are improved. Hence, this paper assesses the challenges that school quality assurance officers face in enhancing academic performance in public secondary schools.

2. Literature Review

The study was guided by the Systems Theory by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in the 1960s (Von Bertalanffy, 1973). This theory looks at the structure and its properties in terms of the relationships from which new properties or wholes emerge. The systems approach to education examines inputs, processes and outputs, all encompassed in the chance boundary and the setting (Coyle, 2007). As such, in the current study, the provision of quality education in public secondary schools is viewed in terms of the input, process, and output. Therefore, provided that the quality of the educational product is determined by the school

graduates or is being viewed by any other forms of educational performance, then quality will entirely depend on the effectiveness of the school system.

Systems theory was a suitable lens to examine the effectiveness of school quality assurance officers in enhancing academic performance in public secondary schools in Mwanza district. The theory helped to examine the educational organisation as a system in which components are linked together so that the quality expected in the institution is the quality of each component. In this context, academic performance is the function of the quality of what gets in (the inputs), activities carried out in the institution (processes), and what gets out of the institution (outputs). In the context of public secondary schools, the inputs entail the learners who move from primary schools into secondary schools for the first time. Process, as a component of systems theory, encompasses all of the methods, learning styles, and strategies used by teachers throughout the teaching and learning process. The outputs (outcomes) include the number of students who have completed secondary education, who have attained the desired skills, knowledge, values, attitudes and the positive change of behaviour, and eventually pass the final national examinations. Hence, quality assurance and academic performance revolve around these three elements (Coyle, 2007).

Other theories reviewed to support the Systems theory include the Deming's theory of Total Quality Management (TQM). This theory involves key components, namely quality circles, customer focus, immediate benchmarking and unceasing development (Birzea *et al.*, 2006). It is based on the simple concept that frequent advancement can help increase quality while decreasing costs, or what we can call total quality management (Allais, 2017). Moreover, the theory aims to improve organisational performance through teamwork and collaboration among workers in the organization. One major weakness of this theory is that it is more systematic than many operational plans and thus may stand in the way of swift action. As contended by Mmbando and Hongoke (2010), the scheme may fail before all the development kinks are worked out. Even though this is the stated weakness, this theory was appropriate for this study. TQM, conceived together with Systems Theory, can help the SQAOs strive to provide schools with products and facilities that satisfy and exceed their needs. It may help them to ensure quality in all features of the school operation, with procedures being done right the first time and defects and waste eliminated from the operation. In this way, school management is involved in the continuous development of educational quality.

The effectiveness of school quality assurance officers (dependent variable) depends on the fulfilment of roles by

officers, which include monitoring, evaluating, assessing and supporting secondary schools to ensure that acceptable standards are attained, maintained and improved. Once the SQAOs effectively accomplish their roles, the quality of education provided by schools will improve, and the academic performance of the schools will improve too, as there will be effective and efficient education delivery, good leadership and management, school improvement, effective achievement of the students' learning outcomes, and teachers' teaching outcomes will be effectively accomplished.

2.1 Challenges Facing Enhancement of Academic Performance in Schools

Studies show that learning institutions with adequate instructional facilities and resources are register peak academic achievement among their students (Watson, 2014). Effective teaching cannot take place in the absence of relevant instructional resources. Teaching services and equipment help to stimulate interest and produce sound and well-grounded skilled graduates. As such, learning institutions are considered effective when they are stocked with adequate teaching and learning resources, which are then put to proper use for best academic outcomes.

However, the quality of school facilities seems to have a direct effect on learning, an effect that is hard to measure. For example, UNICEF (2008) notes that the quality of school buildings may be related to other school quality issues, such as the presence of satisfactory instructional materials and textbooks, working conditions for students and teachers, and the ability of teachers to undertake certain instructional approaches. Such factors as availability of latrines, clean water supply, classroom maintenance, furniture availability all have an impact on the student's academic performance and achievement. This implies that the presence of a favourable and supportive school learning environment may have a similar impact on the students' learning, as it has on school resources. According to Cameron and Casteel (2019), quality assurance officers play many roles in schools. They measure and evaluate the educational programmes at all levels. They assist in recognising children with learning disabilities to provide appropriate educational programmes. They provide educational support to teachers on all matters related to examination setting, moderation, proof-reading, administration and supervision. They also coordinate inspection at all levels. Lastly, they establish donor-funded projects and organise and coordinate co-curricular activities.

In East Africa, Uganda is one of the nations that have embraced the culture of quality assurance in education (Allais, 2017). The Ministry of Education and Sports

records that the administration and stakeholders strive to safeguard quality education for Uganda's children regardless of gender, status, ethics, social or cultural origin. Quality assurance is necessary not only for the learner, but also for the achievement of other national ambitions and objectives, such as economic growth, social progress, peace and equality. Because of these aspirations, Uganda embraced the idea of participating in a pilot project on quality assurance in basic education in the Nairobi group of five countries supported by UNESCO (Republic of Uganda, 2015).

In Kenya, the section of the Ministry of Education is charged with the duty of supervision of schools in the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards (Wasanga, 2014). The Directorate is given the order by the Education Act Cap 211 of the Laws of Kenya to enter and inspect schools. The Kenya Government, through the Ministry of Education, has made efforts to improve this Directorate to provide quality education (Republic of Kenya, 2005); for example, recruitment of the officers is done by the Public Service Commission and is on merit. One must be a student to qualify. The main functions of the Directorate include supervision, advisory, giving feedback through reports, and ensuring curriculum maintenance and implementation. The handbook for inspection gives the main purpose of quality assurance and standards to determine whether they are value-added in education (Republic of Kenya, 2012). In education, the government also encourages staff development activities (Wasanga, 2014). According to the Republic of Kenya (2012), the mission of the Department of Quality Assurance and Standards (DQAS) is "to establish, maintain, and advance educational values in the country" while its vision is "to deliver quality assurance feedback to all educational institutions in Kenya."

The significance of the issue of quality assurance monitoring and assessment is associated with the necessity of establishing the quality of educational services based on approved state standards (Yepaneshnikov, 2016). Furthermore, Komba and Nkumbi (2018) perceived monitoring and evaluation as an activity done by heads of school at the secondary school level or the head teacher in primary school. In this concept, monitoring is a means by which information is gathered daily on the teaching and learning process, while evaluation entails the judgement on the effectiveness of action taken based on the impact on the quality of students' learning. According to Ololube (2015), numerous activities are supervised and evaluated in the day-to-day teaching and learning development. These include the teachers' preparation documents, namely (lesson plan, schemes of work, lesson notes), the physical attendance of classes by teachers and students, and students and teachers' reporting time. The learners'

reaction is also evaluated to provide the response on whether the lesson was understood or not, therefore leading to a conclusion as to whether learning has taken place or not. Monitoring and evaluation are done in the education sector to monitor programmes like the quality of education. In education, two activities are typically carried out, namely teaching (by teachers) and learning (by students). The aspect of monitoring and valuation in education has proved to be crucial in the attainment of quality education globally (URT, 2009). It is a mandatory process, carried out at the school level, and follows a mixed internal and external approach.

In the evaluation process, aspects such as preparation for teaching, creation of a positive classroom environment, effective teaching for all the students and professional responsibilities are assessed. In the context of Tanzania, quality assurance officers are tasked with conducting regular monitoring and evaluation in public secondary schools to determine if teaching and learning processes are undertaken according to the set rules and regulations and if the standards are upheld (Greenwood, 2014). Thus, the current study assessed the effectiveness of strategies used by school quality assurance officers in enhancing academic performance in public secondary schools in Mwanza District, Tanzania.

2.3 Review of Empirical Literature

According to Gluesing and Gibson (2017), the advancement of teaching and learning in schools is the general purpose of supervision. School supervisors are an important part of a devolved responsibility system and quality assurance framework in education (Saccomanno, 2016). Moreover, the effectiveness of schools is determined by the effectiveness of their leaders (Saccomanno, 2016). However, for the effective and proper function of school supervision, the SQAOs are supposed to use quality assurance strategies and to establish a positive relationship with the heads of schools and the teachers in schools. In this way, teachers can share confidently and openly all the challenges they face in the implementation of the school curriculum.

According to Birzea *et al.* (2015), quality assurance is an important means to improve the efficiency of educational performance. Its key principle is that the main actors at the forefront of education, such as teachers, head teachers and other stakeholders at the school level (students, parents, school managers, and other staff members of the governing bodies, the community), are responsible for improving educational presentation. Therefore, school self-evaluation and growth planning developments are at the centre of quality assurance, and are used as a strategy in enhancing academic performance. Macbeth (2016) also added that more emphasis be placed on the school's self-

evaluation evidence as the starting point for quality assurance and the school's internal planning and as the route to securing regular input and feedback from users-pupils, their parents and the community in the school's development. This is supported by Ali and Shastri (2010) who aver that, in the United States, the procedure starts with an internal school evaluation process. This process is carried out regularly and is part of the school's development strategy.

Cheng (2016) argues that implementing quality assurance systems provides a formal mechanism for schools to gain the necessary legality for existence; it is a way to enhance academic performance. Greenwood (2014) adds that the concepts and practises of total quality management in schools are believed to be a powerful tool to increase educational quality and school effectiveness. Cheng further notes that the involvement of parents in the process of quality assurance is a strategy toward effective academic performance. The meeting between the quality assurance department and the parents is important. Moreover, according to Georgios, Joshi and Paivandi (2017), the government should ensure that qualified and adequate teachers are put in place in our secondary schools to facilitate quality teaching and learning and ensure proper allocation of the fund to the quality assurance officer. This might thus mitigate the challenge facing quality assurance in ensuring academic achievement.

3.1 Research Approach

This study employed a mixed methods approach in which both qualitative and quantitative approaches were adopted. Qualitative approach provided descriptive data through interviews. On the other hand, by using questionnaires with open and closed-ended questions the researcher was able to gather broad and quantifiable data on the challenges which SQAOs face in enhancing academic performance in public secondary schools. The combination of both approaches in this study was resourceful since each approach has its advantages (Greenwood, 2014). While the qualitative approach gives depth to the study, the quantitative approach adds breadth to the study (Creswell & Plano, 2017).

3.2 Research Design

The study used a convergent parallel design whereby the researcher collects both quantitative and qualitative data concurrent and conducts the analysis separately to get the comparisons of these multiple data sources (Creswell & Plano, 2017). This design helped the researcher to save time in data collection and understand the research problem better due to the use of a mixed approach.

3.3 Target Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques

The target population was 26 public secondary schools in Mwanza district, consisting of 26 heads of schools, 588 teachers and 8 school quality assurance officers (SQAOs); hence, the total target population was 622. Using the Yamane (1967) formula, a sample size of 284 was picked, comprising 264 teachers sampled from 12 public secondary schools, 12 heads of schools sampled from 12 public secondary school, and 8 SQAOs from Mwanza district. Below is the calculation of the sample size using Yamane's formula.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where: n is sample size; N is total population, e is significance level at 0.05.

Therefore, $n = \frac{622}{1+622(0.05)^2} \approx 286$

This paper used both simple random and purposive sampling techniques to get the research participants. Twelve (12) heads of schools and 264 teachers were sampled using simple random technique while 8 SQAOs were selected purposively.

3.4 Research Instruments, Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire method was used to collect data from secondary school teachers while interview guide was administered to School Quality Assurance Officers and Heads of Schools. Moreover, document analysis guide was used to collect data. Research instruments were validated through pre-testing to few selected teachers in two of the public secondary schools in Nyamagana district involving 15 teachers, 2 heads of schools and 2 school quality assurance officers before being used in Mwanza district where the actual study was undertaken. Validity was checked to determine the accurateness of the research instruments and ensure that they collect required information from the field. Additionally, the research instruments were checked by the research experts in the Faculty of Education at St. Augustine University of

Tanzania. Regarding reliability, the research instruments were tested for one testing session through split-half method to measure the consistency of the results.

3.5 Data Analysis

Analysis of quantitative data was done using descriptive statistics with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 21. Quantitative data was presented in form of tables by using frequencies and percentages. On the other hand, qualitative data was subjected to content analysis, whereby the collected data was written down with careful revision. During the transcription of the data, the researcher recognised and reorganised the themes based on research objective and question. The identified themes were later categorised for analysis and data presentation. Qualitative data was presented in narrative form and direct quotations.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Before data gathering, the researcher sought a permission letter from the Vice Chancellor of St. Augustine University of Tanzania to conduct the study in Mwanza district. The letter was used to introduce the researcher to the District Administrative Secretary of Mwanza to request the District Executive Director to provide written permission to the researcher to collect data in public secondary schools in the district. During data collection, the respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and that their participation was on voluntary basis.

4. Results and Discussion

The overall objective of the study was to identify the challenges that the School Quality Assurance Officers face in enhancing academic performance in public secondary schools in Mwanza District, Tanzania. The first research question was: What challenges do school quality assurance officers face when attempting to improve academic performance in public secondary school? With regard to this question, the study found that SQAOs faced many challenges that hindered their effectiveness in enhancing academic performance in public secondary schools in Mwanza district. These challenges were as summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Challenges Faced by SQAOs (n=284)

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of training on current quality assurance skills	46	16.19
Lack of adequate motivation among SQAOs	70	24.65
Teachers' unwillingness to accept recommendations from SQAOs	65	22.89
Limited timeframe to carry out quality assurance activities	38	13.38
Inadequate learning facilities	65	22.89

Source: Field Data (2022)

Table 1 shows that lack of adequate motivation (70, 24.65%) and inadequate learning facilities as well as teachers' unwillingness to accept recommendations from SQAOs (65, 22.89%) were major challenges faced by SQAOs. This was followed by lack of training on current quality assurance skills (46, 16.19%), and a limited timeframe to carry out quality assurance activities (38, 13.38%).

Lack of Training on Current Quality Assurance Skills

As presented in Table 1, 46(16.19%) of the respondents indicated that lack of training on current quality assurance skills posed a major challenge to the school quality assurance officers in Mwanga district. Therefore, lack of seminars and workshops to facilitate the implementation of school quality assurance guidelines was hindering the effectiveness of the SQAOs in public secondary schools in Mwanga district. Heads of schools and the SQAOs were interviewed on the same subject. They concurred that school quality assurance was a new way of supervising schools. However, they felt that quality assurance practices had been established without proper directives, seminars and workshops to equip the school quality assurance officers with knowledge of what to do. One SQAQO said the following during the interview: "Some of us have not been trained on quality assurance procedures. Occasionally, it becomes difficult for us to implement the school quality assurance guidelines in schools. If we don't have clear approaches and skills, how can we ensure that the information is given to the school?" (Personal Communication, SQAQO 7, 2022). Furthermore, one head of school had the following to say:

As heads of schools, a good number of them have not been trained fully in quality assurance issues. Thus, it's difficult to ensure quality in schools, among teachers, students and school administration when they don't have the necessary information and abilities to carry out this exercise. Quality assurance is a professional activity, but how does a quality assurance officer become a school quality assurance officer without any adequate training on current

quality assurance skills (Personal Communication, HOS 2, 2022).

Furthermore, as revealed during an interview, some heads of schools indicated that the composition of the team members of the SQAOs included incompetent officers with little quality assurance knowledge. For the school heads, this was an obstacle to the effective implementation of school quality assurance guidelines. "Some of the SQAOs are inept and have not attended any seminars or adequate training in quality assurance issues", said one head of school. This claim was supported by one SQAQO, who agreed that there seems to be a major problem in the school quality assurance process. Some members lacked proper training or knowledge on how to carry the quality assurance processes in schools. He said:

Introducing quality assurance guidelines without providing SQAOs with adequate seminars and workshops hinders quality assurance exercises. Thus, in most cases, they simply show schools the guidelines so they can read them and understand their roles and duties in putting the quality assurance guidelines into effect (Personal Communication, SQAQO 5, 2022).

The above views suggest the need for SQAOs to be trained to enhance their capacity in ensuring quality in the teaching and learning processes in schools. The study findings showed that SQAOs lack critical knowledge and abilities for assessing and evaluating educational practices. This was contrary TQM theory, which advocates for employees to be chosen, trained, and given the necessary human capacity to ensure total and quality participation. As such, seminars and workshops on curriculum and instruction can help enlighten SQAOs to effectively manage and enhance quality in schools.

The study results concurred with those of Birzea *et al.* (2015), who also found that some school quality assurance officers lack sufficient training in quality assurance issues. Moreover, according to Medard and Mwila (2022), the guidelines require SQAOs to have experience, but the criteria for selecting an expert SQAQO were unclear. This could be a hindrance to the overall

implementation of quality assurance services in secondary schools. Studies have shown that quality assurance officers endowed adequately with requisite skills and knowledge are likely to enhance students' academic achievement (Dalin, 2017). Therefore, education stakeholders, especially policymakers, should ensure that quality assurance officers are constantly exposed to seminars and workshops on quality assurance issues. Specifically, the capacity building for SQAOs should be geared towards ensuring reforms in the classrooms in line with what they have experienced in terms of new skills, knowledge and positive attitudinal change. The new knowledge of the SQAOs should also reflect in students' improved performance in the classrooms. Capacity building for SQAOs should equally seek to enhance positive relationship between the teachers and the SQAOs. It should also seek to give them confidence in their role of quality assurance in schools. Overall, the Directorate of Quality Assurance needs to scrutinize how best to implement and enhance the aspect of capacity building for the teachers and quality assurance officers on a regular basis so as to improve the teaching and learning process.

Lack of Adequate Motivation among SQAOs

The results in Table 1 also show that majority (70, 24.65%) of the respondents indicated lack of adequate motivation among SQAOs as one of the leading challenges that SQAOs face in implementing their quality assurance activities in secondary schools. In an interview with one of the heads of secondary schools, it was reported that some SQAOs demand for additional allowances as they do not receive enough remuneration for the duties they perform. Consequently, some SQAOs do not perform their work effectively (Personal Communication, HOS 4, 2022). Evidently, lack of enough allowances is one reason that school quality assurance office are demotivated. Affirming the above finding, one SQAO had the following to say:

It is possible that SQAOs should be compensated in some way. Quality assurance work is a taxing activity in and of itself. When SQAOs evaluate teachers, they occasionally run into problems with lazy or stubborn teachers. This, I suppose, is a career similar to that of other professions. During assessment and evaluation, we truly expend a great deal of effort and energy. We perform quality assurance tasks overnight on occasion, but without adequate allowances (Personal Communication, SQA0 6, 2022).

From the above comments, it is clear that SQAOs expect that being a part of the team of quality assurance officers they deserve some stipend.

Teachers' Unwillingness to Accept Recommendations from SQAOs

Regarding this challenge, 65(22.89%) of the respondents considered teachers' unwillingness to accept recommendations from SQAOs as major challenge faced by SQAOs. It was confirmed during an interview that some teachers believed the SQAOs were unqualified to change anything in their schools. The teachers regarded SQAOs as equals with the same job experience, level of education and other qualifications. As one of the SQAOs put it: "Teachers use bad language against SQAOs since they have a similar level of education and economic standing. As a result, some teachers object to being inspected or directed by the SQAOs" (Personal Communication, SQA0 5, 2022). This claim was supported by one HOS, who pointed out the following during the interview:

SQAOs are underrated by their fellow teachers. This is indeed obvious and expected, because if I examine a colleague who has similar education qualification it becomes quite challenging. Some teachers have extensive experience, and when the person examining them has only a few years of expertise, the exercise is hampered and disagreements arise (Personal Communication, HOS 5, 2022).

Teachers' rejection of recommendations from SQAOs renders the work of the quality assurance officers difficult. For his reason, schools continue to register poor academic performance. Affirming the above views, another school head said the following during an interview:

Some teachers at my school do not think highly of SQAOs. They are set in their ways and refuse to change. They believe this is a weapon to compel them to work more. They don't always appreciate or accept the advice and recommendations given by the SQAOs, and they may even reject it! In a large community like my school, such opposition is unavoidable. Overall, laws and regulations are in place to align individual interests, and individuals have little choice but to follow them (Personal Communication, HOS 2, 2022).

From the views above, some teachers were hesitant to embrace the recommendations from the SQAOs because they did not want to be scrutinized by their peers. These results are consistent with those of Mmbando and Hongoke (2010), who found that older and experienced teachers were less willing to follow SQAOs' recommendations. According to Mmbando and Hongoke,

teachers have negative attitudes towards instructional monitoring and are reluctant to adjust to the new methods used by the SQAOs. Ololube (2014) has also found that some teachers refuse to acknowledge their mistakes and are unwilling to accept deficiencies identified by internal assessors. On the other hand, Odele (2015) found that teachers in Nigeria were more willing and comfortable implementing the quality assurance recommendations from the district or regional quality assurance officers compared to those from school-based quality assurance officers.

Limited Timeframe to Undertake Quality Assurance Activities

The study results in Table 1 show that 13.38% of the total respondents saw this as a challenge. SQAOs lacked time to carry out quality assurance activities because the district has few officers for a large number of secondary schools. This was supported by one SQA, who remarked the following during an interview: “The SQAOs are generally highly busy because they are required to visit a number of schools in the district. They don’t have enough time to carry out their quality assurance activities because there is too much work on their desk” (Personal Communication, SQA 3, 2022).

Due to the limited number of quality assurance officers, the study revealed that some public secondary schools were hardly visited by SQAOs. The few officers available were overworked due to a lack of time to perform many tasks in accordance with quality assurance activities. According to Georgios *et al.* (2017), time constraints hinder quality assurance officers from fulfilling certain specified activities of their role. This was made worse by the fact that SQAOs had a variety of responsibilities in their schools.

Inadequate Learning Facilities

Another challenge facing the SQAOs, as highlighted by 65(22.89%) of the respondents, was a lack of learning facilities. Inadequate teaching and learning materials in public secondary schools as a challenge impeding the success of SQAOs’ work has also been underlined by HakiElimu (2020). In an interview, one of the heads of schools said the following: “Teaching and learning resources represent a major challenge in implementing quality assurance recommendations at our school. Lack of teaching and learning materials makes it impossible for teachers to implement the recommendations given to them by the SQAOs” (Personal Communication, HOS 4, 2022). This was also echoed by one SQA who said the following:

A lack of teaching and learning materials is a major challenge for most public

secondary schools. This makes it difficult even for us to carry out our roles effectively and thus effectively compromise quality. Teachers, on the other hand, also fail to meet some of the recommendations by SQAOs because of inadequate teaching and learning resources (Personal Communication, SQA 1, 2022).

This implies that the lack of enough teaching and learning materials is a challenge to implementing the quality assurance directives. These results were in line with those of a study by Ouma, Ting and Pasha (2017) that a lack of instructional materials forces many students to share one book, which makes it difficult to complete homework and assignments in time and hinders the effectiveness of the implementation of the educational curriculum. As pointed out by Garwe (2014), the quality of teaching and learning depends on the availability of teaching and learning resources. Teaching and learning materials constitute the most important aspect of the learning process that influences the students’ academic achievement. Similarly, Cameron and Casteel (2019) posit that teaching materials have a positive effect on students’ learning process because they enable students to acquire a combination of content mastery and command of a broad set of pedagogic skills.

Effective teaching cannot take place within the classroom in the absence of basic instructional resources. Teaching services and equipment help to inspire attention of students leading to a more stimulated learning. UNICEF (2008) notes that the quality of school buildings may be connected to other school quality issues, such as the presence of adequate instructional materials and textbooks, working conditions for students and teachers, and the ability of teachers to undertake certain instructional approaches. Latrines, clean water supply, classroom maintenance, and furniture availability all have an impact on students’ academic achievement.

The main purpose of the teaching and learning course is to bring about a desirable change in the learner by transforming their way of thinking and acting. According to Malekela (2000), this process does not take place in a space but rather in an environment structured to facilitate learning. A well-structured environment with sufficient teaching and learning resources is more likely to produce the desired educational outcomes. Studies show that learning institutions endowed with adequate teaching and learning facilities and resources are likely to improve students’ academic achievement because there is a strong association between instructional resources and academic performance (Greenwood, 2014).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

School quality assurance is a powerful way of monitoring, tracking standards and performance levels over time in public secondary schools. However, where there is no or little consideration for SQAOs, school quality assurance may be ineffective. This is because SQAOs are instruments for monitoring, assessing, evaluating and reporting the agreed quality of and adherence to standards in education. The study concludes that various challenges hinder the effectiveness of the school quality assurance in enhancing academic performance. These include lack of training on current quality assurance skills, lack of motivation among SQAOs, teachers' unwillingness to accept recommendations from SQAOs, and limited timeframe to carry out quality assurance activities.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the study findings and conclusions, it is recommended that educational stakeholders should ensure that the quality assurance officers are endowed with adequate skills and knowledge, well-motivated, are well accepted by teachers, and have adequate timeframe to carry out quality assurance activities. Moreover, the Ministry of Education and Science and Technology (MOEST) should provide SQAOs with the necessary working tools that could enable them to enhance the quality of education provided in public secondary schools in the country. Additionally, policy makers should design well-rounded quality assurance strategies that are centred on different characteristics of school environment. This will increase the effectiveness of SQAOs in enhancing the academic performance of students. School quality assurance systems ought to be a matter of collaboration and cooperation; all members of the school community should be advised to contribute their efforts to it.

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