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School Quality Assurance Feedback: Its Role in Promoting the Teaching Process in Public Secondary Schools in Temeke Municipality, Tanzania

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Abstract: This study was conducted in Temeke District, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, to examine the role of school quality assurance feedback in improving the teaching process in public secondary schools. The research was driven by concerns regarding the effectiveness of school quality assurance visits conducted by School Quality Assurance Officers (SQAOs), as student learning outcomes in the district continue to underperform despite ongoing assessments. Guided by Scientific Management Theory and the Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) Evaluation Model, the study employed a qualitative case study design. A purposive sample of twenty-seven (27) participants was selected, with data collected through in-depth, face-to-face interviews and documentary analysis. Thematic analysis was used to organize, interpret, and present the data through direct quotations and narrative descriptions. The findings revealed that school quality assurance assessment is a crucial component of the education system, with feedback reports playing a significant role in enhancing teaching practices. However, the study identified key operational challenges. These included an insufficient number of officers per school visit, inadequate time spent during visits, and delays in the preparation and dissemination of feedback reports due to heavy workloads. While schools generally implement feedback recommendations, district-level responses remain limited. The study recommends increasing the number of officers and extending the duration of school visits, promoting the adoption of School Self-Evaluation (SSE) systems, and enhancing staffing and operational efficiency within the School Quality Assurance Directorate. These measures are essential for strengthening the quality assurance

framework and improving educational outcomes in Temeke District's public secondary schools.

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INTRODUCTION

In Tanzania, education is considered a crucial element that propels development in different human aspects, be it social or economic transformation, hence the demand for quality education as a strategy to this cause. School Quality Assurance in Tanzania is therefore charged with providing professional support and guidance as the means of assuring quality education (MoEVT, 2010).

School quality assurance is a measure to ensure that the education provided in schools is that of intended and desired quality for the community. The process of school quality assurance usually begins with an inspection procedure that includes the assessment of staff members on how they conduct their work, checking on the available resources and facilities, and assessing the working and, most importantly, learning environment. After the inspection, school quality assurance officers (SQAOs) are needed to provide feedback on the degree of what they have witnessed during their visit (Twaweza, 2011). A quality assurance visit is ineffective if no feedback is given on what has been observed, what needs improvement, what needs abolishment, or what needs praise or change. School quality assurance feedback is important in the education field because it is the major means of improvement in the sector; it enables evaluation and provides a way forward towards improving the quality of the services as well as the expected learning outcomes, hence improving the teaching process along with the quality of education (Macharia, 2014).

Tanzania transformed the system of MoEVT to MoEST and named the Department of School Inspectorate "School Quality Assurance" in 2016. School inspectors were then referred to as school quality assurance officers (SQAOs). Their responsibilities were to monitor and advise the heads of schools and teachers on school administrative activities and pedagogical skills (MoEST, 2017). Currently, the responsibility for the education system is vested in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) in collaboration with the Ministry of Regional Administration and Local Government (TAMISEMI).

Studies show that the frequency of school quality assurance visits in Temeke district and Tanzania in general is less effective, as officers mostly neglect the follow-up visits to check on changes made from their previous visit. In so doing, it is difficult to develop an adequate solution to intense problems if their progress is not properly monitored. This not only affects the next school quality assurance visit but is also a setback for teachers to improve their methods during the teaching process. Otherwise, a poor feedback mechanism, especially to the teachers during this process, tends to affect the effectiveness of the process. SQAOs tend to focus on failures and do not appreciate the effort made in other sections of the same individual. This tends to disappoint the individual, especially teachers, rather than motivate them to do better. In some cases, the recommendations given may be inappropriate for the actual situation, as SQAOs tend to give similar public schools to privately owned schools.

Some features based on the nature of the community lead to poor implementation of recommendations from SQAOs due to the lack of sufficient funds, technology and

resources. There is a serious scarcity of standard inputs, which includes low textbook/student ratios across schools and subject areas, which persistently affected much of the public secondary schools in their performance when compared with privately owned secondary schools. This has been so regardless of the strategies initiated by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. For instance, MoEVT (2010) identified strategies taken by the Government of Tanzania to enhance access and equity in the education sector through Secondary Education Development Plan (SEDP) I and II, which aimed at improving participation and performance in all education levels through the provision of resources for improving quality education to schools. So was conducted due to the persistence of poor students' academic performance despite all initiated strategies against it. Therefore, issues of quality assurance and control should be given emphasis to attain good student academic performance, as there would be no better results in public schools if the school quality assurance officers cannot work upon their strategies and styles used to inspect schools. Therefore, this study explored the role of school quality assurance feedback in promoting the teaching process in public secondary schools.

Literature review

The role of school quality assurance is to ensure that educational institutions maintain and deliver a high standard of education, student support, and overall operational excellence. Quality assurance processes are designed to monitor, evaluate, and improve various aspects of a school's functioning to ensure that it meets established standards and achieves its educational goals. Lillis (1990) insists that the main aim of school quality assurance is to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to ensure policy implementation and accountability at the school (Lillis, 1990). Matete (2009) explains the important role of quality assurance in improving teaching and learning through the advice and feedback given by SQAOs. It is explained in different studies that school quality assurance becomes helpful and brings change to the industry of education if feedback is given to the right authority, in this case, educational stakeholders, and it is given on time to rectify faults that have been observed and thus serve the main purpose of the whole process.

1. Providing Feedback

The main role of school quality assurance is through giving feedback, a process that contains more roles within it; it can be used as a source of staff motivation and improvement through improving teachers' professional skills and accountability, it can be used as a measure of education quality through different parameters, improving teaching and learning process to mention but a few.

An inspection results in providing feedback that is given in terms of a written report. It outlines what a school is doing well and what it must do to improve. The report is an instrument by which an institution may be held accountable for its quality of delivery (Wilcox, 2000). The report is expected to make recommendations and give advice regarding how to correct the identified weaknesses; these recommendations can then

form the basis of a school improvement plan (Wilcox, 2000). SQAOs provide feedback immediately to school management, which seems to provide the strongest impulse for school improvement (Ehren M. &, 2008). Good practices are praised, and criticisms are accompanied by recommendations for improvement and accountability in school (Scheerens Jaap, 2005). After assessment, the reports are prepared and distributed to school owners and the commissioner for education in the case of government schools. The report is also addressed to the District Education Officer (DEO). In Uganda, copies are addressed to key stakeholders, including other governing bodies, parent-teacher associations (PTAs) and head teachers. Quality assurance recommendations are taken as a means of steering education and part of the contemporary governing of education that sets criteria for what is to be regarded as good education (Lindgren Joakim, 2012). Furthermore, Matete (2009) comments that quality assurance becomes useless if the inspection recommendations are not acted upon by the relevant authority.

Christina (2022) revealed that a good number of secondary school teachers who were interviewed had a good perception of the feedback reports provided by the SQAOs and that these feedback reports helped them grow professionally and improve teaching and learning practices. It was also reported in the study that feedback may sometimes be a challenge, as it offers recommendations that are beyond implementation, for instance, comparison with other full-resourced secondary schools. Feleshi indicated that feedback from school quality assurance highly contributes to teacher efficacy, and feedback that was given during the small discussions immediately after a teacher's assessment during a school visit where teachers were guided and advised first-hand with professionals was mostly appreciated (Feleshi and Mwila, 2022). This study concluded that school quality assurance feedback and recommendations are vital to the growth of teacher efficacy.

To improve the teaching and learning process in schools, SQAQO feedback provides information to stakeholders, offers formative feedback to the inspected schools, provides information on targeted improvements and interventions for low-performing schools and accelerates timelines for general school improvement. The major purpose of quality assurance is to collect a range of evidence, match the evidence against a statutory set of criteria, arrive at judgments and make the judgment known to the public (Mmbando, 2010). Quality assurance is a collaborative course of action where the inspector works with the head of the school, the teachers and other stakeholders to improve the quality of the teaching and learning process in the schools (Wassene, 2009). Matete (2009) insists that SQAOs are obliged to provide feedback to schools, the government and other educational stakeholders on how to improve the education system. Quality assurance provides feedback to education stakeholders on the status of implementation of the curriculum in basic education (Mlaki, 2014).

Overall, the school quality assurance feedback report has far-reaching implications that impact various aspects of education, from individual student success to broader policy decisions. Its value lies in promoting continuous improvement, fostering collaboration, and ensuring that all stakeholders are working together to provide the best possible educational experience.

2. Improving Teachers' Professional Skills, Accountability and Motivation

According to Wanjiru (2014), SQA supervision had a positive impact on staff development in Limuru district. The study commented that the exercise helped both principals and teachers to perform their duties more effectively and became better educators. The major activities that SQAOs in Limuru districts engaged in were monitoring and advising schools on different activities, such as academic performance, sports, games, drama and music, and curriculum delivery and assessment. However, the results of the analysis revealed that the majority of the SQAOs were not engaging in monitoring and advising schools on environmental conservation and school provision of career guidance to teaching staff and students (Wanjiru, 2014).

Quality assurance is used as a strategy to encourage teachers' professional development with the goal of improving teaching and learning processes within the education system. The literature defines professional development in various ways. For instance, one can regard professional development as a process designed to positively influence the knowledge, attitudes or skills of professional educators to enable them to design instructional programs to improve the teaching and learning process. Or as the process of increasing or extending the capacity of staff for performance of various duties. SQAOs ensure that teachers are equipped to perform their duties as per profession. Equipment goes hand in hand with training and acquiring new skills and techniques to upgrade their methods; thus, SQAOs are expected to ensure that seminars, workshops and in-service training are prepared and that teachers attend them to upgrade themselves at the professional level and define their areas of responsibilities (Haule, 2012), (MoEVT, 2010). Additionally, Mmbando (2010) suggests that SQAOs should ensure that all teachers attend the prepared workshops or seminars to better familiarize themselves with, update and equip themselves. SQAOs are expected to provide professional support to schoolteachers and evaluate them during school visits through classroom observation, sharing experience and bringing uniformity across schools (De Grauwe, 2001). However, Ahmad et al. (2013) noted that in Pakistan, quality assurance is based on dictation rather than improvement. He found that some of the hurdles, such as lack of follow-up, teachers' negative attitude towards inspection, political influence, workload of school inspectors, isolationist approach, poor planning and bureaucratic underpinnings in the whole process of inspection, lead to inefficient school inspectors providing professional support to teachers (Ahmad Iqbal, 2013).

Matete (2009) adds that the report relating to teaching and learning that is presented by SQAOs at the school level may foster accountability among teachers and other staff members. Quality assurance has an indirect influence on teachers' accountability to their work. Machumu (2012) insists that the importance of SQA visits, among other things, ensures accountability among teachers and ensures that the standards in education are upheld. In England, Wales and the Netherlands believe that accountability in education through quality assurance may facilitate the attainment of the

desired outcomes (Wilcox, 2000) Thus, the involvement of SQAOs in staff development activities is seen as an avenue to improve the quality of education.

George's study that aimed to assess the contribution of quality assurance in improving teachers' work performance in secondary schools in Tanzania conducted in Pangani, involving 57 informants (14 students, 28 teachers, 7 heads of schools, 2 district education officers (DEOs), 3 zonal school inspectors and 3 district school inspectors), revealed that quality assurance plays a great role in the improvement of teachers' work performance. Teachers perceived quality assurance to promote their professional skills through the advice they provided after classroom observation (George L. , 2015). Furthermore, Mosha (2004) found that inefficiencies at the school level were common and resulted from a lack of effective teacher management and supervision. These inefficiencies translate into perverse teacher deployment, dropouts and repetitions among students.

For quality assurance to have meaning, teachers and school leaders need to be motivated. Matete (2009) explains that teachers can be motivated to perform their work when they realize that their problems and complaints are worked upon and SQAOs' recommendations are being implemented (Mathew, 2012). Ehren and Honingh point out that SQAQO support is a necessity to motivate teachers, hence stimulating school improvement (Ehren M. &, 2012). Mathew (2012) adds that for educational quality to be achieved, SQAOs need the opportunity to support teachers to make teaching and learning environments conducive for learners. According to Thomas (1996), SQAOs, however, may contribute to the demotivation of teachers as they fail to observe their code of conduct, giving an example of the United Kingdom where teachers perceived quality assurance as a potential danger and a threat to their work. Wanzare (2002) revealed that the behaviour of Kenyan school inspectors, mostly towards teachers, has led to mistrust in the process because it rarely contributes to education quality but rather results in conflicts between teachers and inspectors (Wanzare, 2012).

It is thus the responsibility of SQAOs to create an environment where different opportunities are built to enable teachers to grow and mature professionally. This comes with the combination of in-service trainings, seminars, workshops and conferences that aim at sharing experience and learning new methods and techniques in accordance with the evolving technology and advancement of the generation in question. Additionally, SQAOs should be able to encourage teachers to academically add the value of their education in terms of university degrees.⁴

3. Ensuring Quality Education

Quality assurance is achieved through inspection of schools and giving feedback on the findings to the school, the managers and the responsible Ministry (Mmbando, 2010). According to Apelis (2008), the quality of education can be achieved through the cooperation and interaction of SQAOs and teachers during the entire inspection process. The main purpose of quality assurance is to monitor the education process in schools, that is, the delivery of education and adherence to the stipulated curriculum to safeguard the

good quality of education provided. Mbwambo comments that SQAOs are responsible for inspecting all schools and offering suggestions and recommendations on the ways and means of improving the quality of education (Mbwambo, 1990). Similarly, Kabunduguru (2013) comments that after inspection, teachers should discuss issues raised during inspection with SQAOs, including the preparation of teaching and learning materials, lesson plans, schemes of work, lesson notes and log books (Kanduguru, 2013). Furthermore, MacBeath (2006), as cited by Matete (2009), claims that in England, quality assurance acted as a strategy of the inspection system, which involves evaluation, assessment and monitoring processes carried out by SQAOs regarding what teachers do in the classroom to improve academic standards and quality education.

The purpose of quality assurance is to improve the quality of education, and this can be measured in different parameters. Schools are expected to meet certain standards, such as having a good number of students and qualified teachers, well-maintained and adequate infrastructure (classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and toilets), and adequate and up-to-date teaching and learning materials for curriculum implementation. For example, Rosenthal found that in the United Kingdom, the frequency of quality assurance depends on the findings of previous inspection reports (Rosenthal, 2003). Moswela (2010) indicates that SQAOs must assess the teaching strategies and materials used by teachers when teaching to evaluate their appropriateness to students. Wanzare (2012) asserts that quality assurance is a major device employed by the Ministry of Education to monitor the quality of education in the country.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research approach and a case study design were employed in this study to explore how school quality assurance feedback promotes the teaching process in Temeke Municipality. The sample size was twenty-seven (27), which was drawn from five (5) selected public secondary schools and included the following informants: four (4) class teachers from each selected school, (1) the head teacher of each school and two (2) school quality assurance officers from the district.

Nonprobability sampling, specifically purposive sampling, was employed to select five (5) public secondary schools based on their performance in the NECTA. Convenience sampling was used to obtain a sample of respondents (teachers) who were well informed on the subject of school quality assurance, not exceeding the totality of four (4) teachers in each selected secondary school. Through snowball sampling, school quality assurance officers were selected. This method enabled the researcher to obtain information from respondents who had been in the process for longer periods and hence had more experience. The study employed multiple data collection techniques. Primary data were extracted from respondents through interviews, while secondary data were extracted through documentary analysis. Validity and reliability were ensured through five criteria for triangulation and trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability and

conformability. The data that were collected through tape recordings were summarized, classified, presented and analysed descriptively under thematic analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study's main objective was to explore the role of school quality assurance feedback in promoting the teaching process in public secondary schools. Participants were asked to describe the procedures used to conduct the assessment and feedback mechanism, thus responding to this objective. The following list gives the thematic summary of the findings:

1. Assessment process
2. Time taken to provide feedback
3. Career support for teachers

The school quality assurance process intends to ensure the provision of quality education in schools and hence requires a systematic assessment procedure, a time frame to conduct the process and produce feedback and a mechanism to be used to give feedback that will enable all education beneficiaries to receive the intended quality. Generally, it was discovered that teachers are aware of the process and how it is to be conducted and that the time spent in schools was very limited, thus making the process be conducted in haste and incomplete, that is, by leaving out some teachers without being assessed. The findings in this subsection have brought to life the need to allocate more officers per visit to a school to enable better utilization of the allocated time and ensure that all teachers go through a similar process during one visit.

1. Assessment Process.

This process begins even before the arrival of the SQAOs in the schools, and a good number of participants informed them that before a visit from external SQAOs, information is given to the schools and individual teachers to make them aware of the visit. Normally, even with the knowledge that SQAOs visit schools annually, officers send words to the head of the school three days prior to the actual visit. It is then the responsibility of the head of school to inform their teachers on the visit. According to the reviewed documents, it was observed that letters from the SQAOs reach the school and are directed to the head of school to make them aware of the visit beforehand, thus providing evidence of prior information before the actual visit.

The assessment process generally involves observation of the environment, checking the management and administration structure and functional system and, most importantly and for the case of this study, assessing teachers through classroom session observation and checking teachers' documents and materials used to deliver and transfer knowledge. Teachers are needed to provide their log books, scheme of work, lesson plan, lesson notes and teaching aids. After observation and checking, the process goes as far as to have a short discussion between the officer and individual teacher to advise on a way forward as a recommendation from the observations made.

These quotations reflect the extent to which the participants commented on the assessment procedures:

One participant, a head of school, commented the following when asked about the assessment process in their school:

“The SQAOs normally give heads up two days before their arrival, and an official letter is usually sent to us. Upon visiting our school, they first start with a short meeting with my office and afterwards with clear intentions attend some of the class sessions to assess teachers and listen in on how different class sessions are conducted, they sit in almost five different sessions each and there after call upon the teachers one by one for discussion in accord with their observation.” (Interviewee 6, May 2023).

Another participant, a class teacher, described the procedure as follows:

“Sometimes we receive words prior to their visit, but most times it is abrupt; luckily, we are normally prepared due to the presence of internal quality assurance officers appointed by the school. This helps to reduce mishaps and enables teachers to stay on track with curriculum updates. The SQAOs observe some classroom sessions but only for a brief moment, mostly the first ten minutes, thus making it difficult to accept some of the recommendations they give during the brief discussion we have after the assessment” (Interviewee 3, May 2023).

In fact, most teachers commented that the time spent by the SQAOs when observing the classroom session was very limited; thus, it becomes difficult to give a general view from that limited observation and even harder to accept the recommendations and corrections given to teachers during the short discussion they have with the officers after assessment. Teachers suggested that the SQAOs allocate more time in observing classroom sessions and, if possible, allocate more officers per visit or spend more time in one school to fully assess all the teachers.

“It would make more sense if the officers observed a full-length session, even two if possible, to better understand a teacher and see how the lesson escalates from beginning to end; having done so would make it easier for the individual teacher to accept and implement without doubt the recommendations given as a way forward to improvement from the officers”. (Interviewee 8, June 2023).

Other participants, SQAOs, mentioned that despite giving prior information on their visit so that the teachers can prepare, their main challenge in conducting the assessment process is the number of officers allocated per visit in a school in comparison to the size of the school, which results in a rushed procedure and ineffectiveness due to workload. They had the following to say:

“We normally send word to schools prior to our visit to make the teachers and heads of school aware of it and help them make necessary preparations. We not only

observe the classroom sessions but also have to go through different teaching materials, such as teaching aids, lesson notes, lesson plans and schemes of work; in so doing, we can relate their teaching method with the current curriculum and hence provide a way forward. We also observe and comment on the environment and necessary surroundings of the school, management and administration system” (Interviewee 27, June 2023).

“It is sometimes difficult to conduct our work due to the environment we are exposed to; in most cases, we are needed to visit many schools in a short period of time, thus making it impossible to attend a full-length session as well as assess all the teachers in one school. It would be easier if more staff was allocated at a school per visit or more time was spent in one school rather than the three-day visit in a single school. Some schools are big and have a lot of teachers, hence requiring a bigger team and more time for assessment” (Interviewee 27, June 2023).

In regard to the findings, the quotations above show that the participants were aware of the quality assurance assessment procedures and acknowledged their contribution to improving the quality of education provided. They mentioned that without this procedure, there could be a danger of misleading students, resulting in bad learning outcomes. It was also brought to light that the time allocated to assess teachers was limited and hence proved to be a challenge for SQAOs to effectively perform their duties efficiently and made it difficult for teachers to wholly accept the corrections given due to the short period of class session observation. These findings are consistent with those of Bibiana (2018), where it was found that due to few officers, the work of SQAOs is compromised and hectic. Rosemary (2022) also recommended that the government should allocate adequate resources such as manpower (qualified officers), funds and transport facilities to facilitate SQA practice.

The assessment process is a crucial aspect of the school quality assurance process that determines the actual situation that is present at a learning institution. It helps identify the problems present, challenges faced by educators as well as students, suitability of the learning and working environment, and managerial and administrative support and thus helps to recommend possible solutions, way forward and update the decisions made by the education ministry on different subjects. It is therefore through this process that SQAOs develop ways to enhance the teaching and learning process by understanding more about what actually goes on in the field of teaching. It was through this objective that the study was able to reveal some of the many challenges faced during the assessment period, mainly the inadequate number of SQAOs allocated to a school per visit without considering the size of the school and the number of teachers, resulting in less time spent on class session observation and making it difficult for SQAOs to better understand an individual’s teaching method, thus making general conclusions and recommendations for most teachers. This may be a setback for teachers’ improvement, as it brings doubt to teachers upon implementing the given recommendations due to poor observation.

2. Time Taken to Provide Feedback

In relation to the objective, the time spent between assessment until feedback is given is very important in terms of implementing the recommendations given by the SQAOs to improve the system. Most school heads commented that the feedback report normally takes up to two months to be returned to the respective school. Some argued that this was a very long time for a response, as in that time frame, many more defects could have occurred in the case of a serious situation.

One participant, a teacher from school C, had this to say:

“It is good that we have the short discussion with the SQAOs at the end of assessment day; this works well for a teacher as an individual to help improve and upgrade one’s skills. The challenge comes when waiting for the general report that takes up to two months to be received at school. Two months is a very long time for a student as well as a teacher, and this time frame can be used to build or ruin a student’s way forward. The report is normally more detailed, giving an in-depth review of all the shortcomings and praise of the school and hence helping the school to improve on its faults. Now with a two-month apart response, it is difficult to make adequate changes as were observed during the assessment time.” Interviewee 16 (June, 2023).

While the teachers argued that the time taken to receive the report was longer than necessary to wait, the SQAOs disagreed with that opinion and rather commented that it was necessary to take as much time as possible to give a well-detailed report that would properly cover all the components of the quality assurance assessment process. One of the SQAOs commented that sometimes they did not have an option other than to delay the report.

“We sometimes have many reports to prepare and submit at a time; hence, we take longer than intended to produce a report for each individual school because we normally visit all the selected schools around the same time of the year, and hence, the time to prepare a report for the schools is postponed until all the schools that were planned for assessment have been assessed and after a report is prepared for all the schools accordingly” (Interviewee 26, June 2023).

Based on the comment, it can be assumed that the directorate for SQA has inefficient manpower that obtains the work done at the field level; hence, the rate of response is slow, and the workload for the SQAOs is intense, resulting in delayed feedback and implementation of the recommendations. According to the reviewed documents at the school level, delayed reports result in poor implementation of the given recommendations. For instance, a report from one of the schools showed that it was recommended to construct more rooms for the purpose of laboratory and library function, but due to delay, more rooms were constructed but not for that purpose; they were instead used as classrooms since the amount of student intake had increased in that respective year. This is a clear indication that delayed response or feedback results in not

only poor or failed implementation of the recommendations but also may be a cause of misuse or misallocation of resources and effort and a waste of time.

The study showed that the delay in producing a detailed report after school quality assurance assessment is a setback towards the implementation of the recommendations given by the SQAOs and the report itself. The report may come too late after damage is already experienced, hence making it meaningless to adopt. It was advised that the report should come in with a range of up to two weeks after assessment to prevent further damage and to take a step towards quality education sooner rather than later.

3. Career Support to Teachers

One of the responsibilities of SQAOs is to offer professional support to teachers and the school's administration and management. Considering the objective of this study, SQAo feedback is considered a tool to aid teachers in building their profession by advancing their careers in more ways than one. In regard to teachers, SQAOs offer feedback through two methods: one is an immediate response that is received during a discussion immediately after the assessment process (that is, after class session observation), and the other is through a written document, which is the feedback report that gives the general overview of all the observations.

One participant, a teacher from school A, made the following comment:

“Normally, after the assessment process of the teachers, we each get an opportunity to have a short discussion with the SQAOs on the observation they had during the class sessions. The privacy of these discussions helps us to be more comfortable and confident in how to express ourselves to be better understood. These discussions are very helpful to grow as an individual because, through them, we get to be corrected on different faults, advised on how to handle certain situations in more ways than the ones we know of, and they also guide us on what to do depending on the situation. It is through these discussions that teachers build stronger bonds with the SQAOs and enable continuous support and improvement in their career” (Interviewee 1, June 2023).

It was noted that a private discussion between an individual teacher and the SQAOs helps teachers build confidence in themselves, as they are corrected in private and given detailed instructions according to the individual's area of weakness. It is through this also that the teacher considers building a friendly relationship between the two and hence helps to easily accept the corrections and challenges brought forward to them to improve their teaching methods.

Apart from the discussions between individual teachers and SQAOs after assessment, teachers commented that SQAo feedback reports play a very large role in their professional growth.

“The SQAOs help us to stay up to date with the changing curriculum as well as technology. Through their feedback and recommendations, we get to attend seminars and workshops that help us teachers grow professionally and help us to keep up with the dynamic technology, advanced tools and methods used to transfer

knowledge as well as keeping the mind sharper to allow room for innovations and coming up with better and simpler methods to enhance teaching process and produce better learning outcomes for the students” (Interviewee 3, June 2023).

As it is their responsibility, the SQAOs have mentioned that they participate in different events that help to create more room for career growth for teachers at different levels. They organize and carry out different activities, such as seminars and workshops, to help teachers become accustomed to new practices and the use of advanced tools and technology to stay up to date. They also recommend that teachers upgrade their level of education by motivating them to participate in different educational programs and even suggesting further studies for diploma and certificate holders. These findings are in support of Mwampamba (2016), whose findings indicated that school inspections contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning through the provision of seminars, workshops and professional support. Feleshi and Mwila (2022) also summarized in her findings that through the sessions conducted during school visits, teachers were guided, advised and instructed to improve their efficacy.

In summary, SQAOs support teachers’ career growth mostly by emphasizing in-service training, that is, being trained while in office, to enable teachers to upgrade their teaching techniques. Individual guidance is also considered one of the easiest ways to help build a friendly relationship between teachers and SQAOs, which helps accelerate the implementation of the given recommendations since advice or suggestion and corrections are given from a friend; thus, teachers can improve in their areas of weakness that have been observed. A strong relationship between teachers and SQAOs is very important to ensure constant communication and clearing of doubts, if any, therefore enabling consistent improvement. Despite being the responsibility of SQAOs to organize and carry out different trainings, it should also be a responsibility of teachers, especially the head of school, to ensure that they attend the recommended trainings as well as to send a request of being trained after a certain period of time. There should be a known time frame to provide training to teachers on different subjects to stay updated and help new teachers become easily accustomed.

Teachers’ Response to the School Quality Assurance Process

The researcher thought it important to understand teachers’ point of view on the school quality assurance process, as they are directly involved in the process.

Under this objective, the findings will be summarized in the following themes:

1. Teachers’ perception
2. Teachers’ preparation for SQA visits

It was through this objective that the researcher was able to collect useful information on the relationship between teachers and school quality assurance officers. While some respondents mentioned that the relationship between teachers and these officers was good, one head of school had this to say:

“Some officers use harsh language to instruct or correct teachers; they treat teachers as although they do not know what they are doing just like children. This kind of attitude sets back teachers’ morale in performing their duties” (Interviewee 11, June 2023).

This came in support of a study by Kasanda (2015), who mentioned that teachers were put off by the condescending behavior of some officers and were not pleased with the lack of feedback in some situations.

1. Teachers’ Perception

Generally, teachers have a very positive attitude towards the school quality assurance process; they consider it advantageous because it helps them boost their confidence and sharpen their skills. In so doing, it credits and adds value to their profession.

One respondent, a teacher from school B, said the following:

“We consider the prestige of the opportunity to be assessed by an SQAQ, as it is known that these officials are well trained and trusted to help us teachers to improve in our field. Therefore, after being assessed and corrected, a teacher’s confidence is boosted in their practice as they are sure that what they are doing is in accord with what is needed of them and thus this process is of great input for us to improve quality” (Interviewee 9, June 2023).

“I think this practice is of advantage to all education beneficiaries; it not only helps improve teachers’ skills in their profession but also ensures the provision of quality education to society. Through this process, there is better communication between the ministry and the field teachers” (Interviewee 17, June 2023).

Another respondent, the head of school B, said:

“The teachers in my school approve of this process that they sometimes request the SQAQs to extend their visit in our school to enable all teachers to have ample time to be assessed by these professionals, this is an indication that teachers perceive this process positively and a necessity towards providing quality education” (Interviewee 6, June 2023).

Despite the positive response of most participants, one respondent mentioned that some teachers knowingly avoid the SQAQ assessment sessions by reporting sickness on the respective day or sometimes prepare unannounced tests to avoid classroom sessions during SQAQ visits in the school. Such practice is a sign of immaturity and a setback towards improvement of one’s professional skills as well as the students’ learning outcomes.

In this review, it was summarized that teachers have a positive perception of the process, and most respondents have recommended that more time be allocated to the

assessment process so that each teacher in a school may have a chance of being assessed in at least two full class session observations, hence making it possible to generalize the observations and give adequate feedback and recommendations to the individual. This finding supports a study by Mbunga (2022), whose findings revealed that the majority of the interviewed secondary school teachers have positive perceptions of the quality assurance feedback reports and that they facilitate their profession growth and improvement of teaching and learning in secondary schools. Machumu (2012) mentioned that despite the positive attitude of teachers towards school inspection, some officers still had traditional elements to approach the process, making it conservative and reluctant to change. Kasanda (2015) recommended that SQAOs should change their behavior from top down to horizontal to create a better relationship between teachers and officers.

With respect to the study, teachers' positive perception enables easier conduction of the process, as it makes the teachers prepare to wholly accept the changes that may come as a result of the assessment. It also helps the officers give honest reviews and give them clarity during observation and assessment as well as avoid bias when giving recommendation and feedback. This brings a general advantage to the school and enhances both the teaching process and learning outcomes.

3. Teachers' Preparation for SQA Visits

The preparatory process of teachers was one of the topics of interest of the researcher under this objective. The way teachers perceive the process depends entirely on how they prepare themselves for the process. Teachers were interviewed on whether they received information prior to the visit. The heads of school all informed that information was given three or sometimes two days before the visit by receiving a letter from the SQA office, and words were communicated within the school to all teachers through different methods depending on the school. Teachers, on the other hand, had more to say on the matter, arguing that information was not necessary as the teachers were always ready and prepared, others that information was well received and on time to allow them to fully prepare, while others mentioned that there was not enough time to prepare themselves for the assessment as the information came in too late to do so.

One respondent, a classroom teacher from school A, mentioned:

"It is not always that the information is given to all teachers, sometimes we are informed three days before the SQAOs arrive while other times it is more of a surprise, we are not informed prior to the visit and hence some individuals are usually not fully prepared and hence panic during assessment" (Interviewee 4, June 2023).

In addition, a respondent from school D mentioned:

"We are informed that there will be inspection sometime this week, or even sometime this month so stay prepared, that is the only information we get and it is not a specific one; hence, we don't know when exactly the assessment will be conducted. This may

keep some of us on edge, worried or excited, hence affecting our performance” (Interviewee 22, June 2023).

Some individuals commented that whether or not they are informed of the visit, there is not much difference because as a professional educator, one should always be prepared to be assessed at any given moment. It is one of the professional ethics to have all the documents needed available and ready all the time, prepare for each session properly and have all the teaching materials ready beforehand.

In contrast, another respondent stated:

“It isn’t a big deal going through external quality assurance assessment in our school, especially for the teachers, because as a school, we have an internal quality assurance team that works hand in hand with the academic team and management to ensure that the learning environment is maintained and improved when necessary and that teachers follow their professional code of conduct and are held responsible for their action. Hence, the process of external school quality assurance assessment is made easy for both teachers and SQAOs” (Interviewee 14, June 2023).

In light of the above quotation, a study by Haule (2012) recommended that there was a need to introduce a SSE system so that the data from that system may help feed the inspection report.

Generally, all respondents agree that internal quality assurance in schools makes the process of school quality assurance easier and less tense for teachers, school heads and SQAOs. This is because through internal school quality assurance, or the SSE as others may call it, the school maintains an up-to-date atmosphere, that is, good management and administration systems, adequate and efficient resources and facilities, and updated and prepared staff, especially teachers, enhancing the teaching process and thus making learning an effective and efficient process for students, resulting in improved learning outcomes. It was recommended by most respondents to emphasize the importance of having an internal quality assurance team in every school, a team that will be responsible for checking the coordination of other staff members to ensure their accountability and effectiveness. The SSE system will help to prepare both teachers and the administration as well as management for the larger process that involves SQAOs and thus reduce the burden on both the school and officers.

CONCLUSION

The school quality assurance feedback report holds significant implications for the overall process of teaching and learning. The feedback report serves as a valuable tool for assessing the effectiveness of educational practices and making informed decisions for improvement. It is therefore important to deliver feedback in time to make amendments in the system before going further along the decaying route. However, despite having an advantage of surprise visits for assessment, the study argues that prior information before the actual assessment visit is important to help the teachers and school have an

acceptance attitude towards the recommendations and the process as a whole. Last, it was concluded that implementing different recommendations, given at both discussion after assessment and in the feedback report, is key to promoting the teaching process and hence improving the learning outcomes of students in society.

The assignment of more officers in the school quality assurance directorate ensures their competence and accountability before putting them in office to reduce the workload of officers and enhance effective and efficient assessment and feedback to improve the school quality assurance process. There should be accountable staff members to avoid incompetence and misguidance as well as bias. Additionally, more time should be spent in a single school per visit to allow all teachers to go through the assessment process, including having at least two fully observed classroom sessions to obtain the actual situation of one's ability in the classroom. This will not only help teachers be more comfortable but also allow them to be willing to accept corrections and recommendations that they receive. Schools should adapt to the SSE system that will provide them internal evaluation before the SQAOs make visits. This will enable them to better prepare for the larger assessment but will also put them in a good position to improve learning outcomes in a shorter time frame.

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