

FULL-LENGTH ARTICLE**Exploring the Contribution of External School Quality Assurance in Improving Teaching and Learning in Primary Schools in Tanzania**Stanley Leo^{1*}, Rose Matete², Jacob Seni²¹The University of Dodoma, College of Education, Department of Educational Management and Policy Studies, Dodoma, Tanzania² The University of Dodoma, Department of Educational Foundations and Continuing Education, Dodoma, Tanzania.***Corresponding Author:** stanleyleo3@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

In an era where educational quality is paramount to national development, understanding the mechanisms that enhance teaching and learning is crucial. The purpose of this study was to explore the contribution of External School Quality Assurance (ESQA) in improving teaching and learning in primary schools in Buhigwe District in Tanzania. The study employed a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological research design. It involved a total of 34 participants, i.e., 1 District Education Officer (DEO), 1 District Chief School Quality Assurance Officer (DCSQA), 3 District School Quality Assurers, 1 Ward Education Officer (WEO), 4 head teachers, 03 District School Quality (DSQ) assurers and 24 teachers. Open-ended questionnaires, interviews, and documentary review were the data collection methods. Data was analysed through thematic and content analysis. The findings reveal that the ESQA played a crucial role in monitoring and evaluating the teaching and learning and it enhanced the teachers' accountability and commitment to the provision of quality education. Teachers noted that ESQA practices helped them towards the improvement of the schemes of work, lesson plans, and correction of the mistakes observed in teaching and learning. The findings indicated further that that ESQ assures provided the feedback through their reports and recommendations based on aspects that required improvements. However, challenges such as limited resources and insufficient staffing hindered the full potential of the ESQA system in school monitoring. It is argued in this study that ESQA significantly contributes to educational quality. For ESQA to be more effective, the government has to increase the number of qualified ESQ assurers and the provision of adequate funding and a means of transport for the ESQA department is equally imperative.

Keywords: External School Quality Assurance; Teaching and learning outcomes; Pupils' Academic performance

INTRODUCTION

The quality of education in Tanzania's primary schools has been a subject of increasing attention, particularly in light of the country's commitment towards achieving the universal primary education. ESQA mechanisms play a crucial role in enhancing teaching and learning. The establishment of school quality assurance (SQA), which was previously referred to as school inspectorate, can be traced back to France during the 18th century (Odjidja, 2023). Over time, this concept was adopted by various European countries and eventually expanded to other parts of the world during the 19th century (Allais, 2009). In the first stage, ESQA was a major factor in promoting accountability in the educational system (Matete, 2009). ESQA encompasses the organised evaluation of educational programmes and procedures to uphold and enhance the quality, fairness, and effectiveness (De Grauwe, 2007). The application of ESQA measures in primary schools aims to improve the teaching and learning, enhance

students' performance, teachers' professional development and promote the overall educational quality (Matete, 2021). ESQA approaches can include mechanisms that are external and internal to schools. External mechanisms usually are conducted at district or regional, zonal levels, national and/or large-scale student assessments. Internal mechanisms may include school self-evaluation, staff appraisal and classroom-based students' assessments. These mechanisms have different but complementary purposes (Fungilwa, 2021).

In developed countries such as in Germany, experiences indicate that there is a significant transformation in ESQA since the 1990s, shifting from a centralised system to school self-evaluation. This change aimed to enhance school performance and align it with international standards (Allais, 2009). Similarly, in the United Kingdom (UK), the development of school self-evaluation and action plans during the same period markedly improved the educational quality. The introduction of the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) inspection system in 1992 emphasized the importance of ensuring that schools deliver quality education while identifying areas that need improvement (Fungilwa, 2021). This approach has proven successful in elevating the quality of education across various institutions (De Grauwe, 2007; Aweso, 2023; Chalamila & Amos, 2024). African nations are increasingly adopting strategies to ensure that primary schools meet community needs and align with the national development goals. For instance, in Nigeria, primary education is recognised as a critical stage, prompting government's initiatives to enhance educational quality (Nicola, 1995).

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, was introduced in 1999, aiming to provide free and quality education for all Nigerian children, with school quality assurance as a key component (De Grauwe, 2007). Similarly, in Zambia, ESQA initiatives focus on motivating teachers to collaborate effectively, and ensuring high-quality instruction (Bouche, 2012). However, challenges such as a shortage of qualified personnel and inadequate communication hinder the delivery of quality education in these countries (Makiya & Ngirwa, 2022). ESQA team aids in enhancing curriculum implementation, the use of teaching and learning materials and methods, classroom management, monitoring and evaluation and provision of teachers' professional development (Kassim & Matete, 2023; Matete, 2009; MoEST, 2017). Tanzania has made efforts, like other countries, to ensure that primary education is provided in a way that it enables pupils to be innovative and creative for both their individual development and the development of the nation (Mahona & Pacho, 2021).

Various studies have been undertaken in SQA. See for example, Aweso (2023), Chalamila and Amos (2024), Dismas (2020), Fungilwa (2021) Setiadi et al. (2019), Mtitu et al. (2023). However, previous studies have concentrated on ISQA. Setiadi et al. (2019) examined the application of the ISQA system in Indonesia. Aweso's (2023) study in Ghana centred on ISQA policies and practices in colleges of education. The available studies in Tanzania also focused on the ISQA system. See, for example, studies by Mtitu et al. (2023), Chalamila and Amos (2024), and Dismas (2020). The study by Matete (2021) in Tanzania was concerned with the impact of school inspection on teaching and learning in primary schools which is the old name of the SQA. Fungilwa's (2021) study in Tanzania focused on the effectiveness of ISQA in improving teaching and learning in secondary schools. The extent to which ESQA can contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning in Tanzanian primary schools is not well undocumented and clearly studied. This study aimed to explore the contribution of ESQA towards the improvement of teaching and learning in primary schools in Tanzania. The key research question was: How can ESQA contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning in primary schools? The study did not consider the quality of buildings and the teachers although these are important aspects for improved teaching and learning in schools.

ESQA IN TANZANIA

In Tanzania, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) implemented a change in 2017, replacing "ordinary inspection" with "Quality Assurance" to foster constructive dialogue between external quality assurers and educators (URT, 2017; URT, 2018a). The National ESQA framework emphasizes collaboration in enhancing pupils' academic performance through a humanistic approach that promotes teamwork among educational educators (Matete, 2021). The Government of Tanzania has also made significant investment for educational improvement, such as the establishment of the Education Quality Assurance and Standards (EQAS) department (URT, 2018a). Yet, the effectiveness of ESQA mechanisms in ensuring high-quality instruction in public primary schools remains critical. Addressing challenges such as limited resources and insufficient qualified personnel will be essential for realizing the full potential of these initiatives in Tanzania's educational landscape.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Approach and Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach to understand how participants view the contribution of the ESQA team on the improvement of the pupils' academic performance in Tanzanian primary schools (Hirose & Creswell, 2023). Qualitative approach enables the collection of data on participants' natural settings, facilitating a deeper understanding of their lived experiences towards the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). A phenomenological research design was used to explore the contribution of ESQA in improving teaching and learning in primary schools. The reason for selecting this research approach and design was due to the requirement for data that reflect the viewpoint and experiences of the teachers on what ESQA system can do in schools (Cresswell, 2014). Qualitative research approach and phenomenological design allowed the participants to share their day-to-day experiences concerning the ESQA system in Tanzanian primary schools. However, qualitative findings are not generalisable although they can be transferred to areas with the same characteristics. It was necessary, therefore, to ensure that more methods of data collection were used to ensure that data collected communicated the findings.

Study area, Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

This study was carried out in Buhigwe District in Kigoma Region in Tanzania. Buhigwe District is one of the seven Local Government Councils that make up Kigoma Region. Other districts include, Kibondo, Kigoma, Ujiji Municipal, Uvinza, Kasulu Town Council, Kasulu District Council and Kakonko District. The reason for selecting this area was due to the fact that the council had good pupils' academic performance in the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) for three consecutive years, i.e., 2021, 2022 and 2023, with performance of about 77 per cent (2021), 69 per cent (2022) and about 75 per cent [2023] (NECTA, 2021). The study involved a sample of 34 participants, i.e., 1 DCSQAO, 3 DSQ assurers, 1 DEO, 1 WEO, 4 HTs and 24 teachers.

Data Collection Methods

The study employed open-ended questionnaires for teachers. Interviews were used to collect data from the DCSQAO, DSQ assurers, DEO, WEO, and head teachers, regarding their views on the contribution of ESQA in improving teaching and learning in Tanzanian primary schools.

Data analysis

The information obtained from natural settings was transcribed for analysis (Cresswell, 2012, 2014). Data analysis started by reading and re-reading, obtaining the initial codes, transcribing and then checking the similarities of the information collected following Braun and Clarke, 2006 six-phase

framework of conducting thematic analysis. Then, it was important to assemble them based on their relevance to the intended findings. As the interviews were conducted in Kiswahili language, data were translated into English language during data presentation. Content analysis was chosen because it allows the presentation of individual feelings through voices. All themes used in the data presentation were obtained from the repeated voices.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical issues associated with research were considered in this study. Before the data collection process commenced, the necessary research permit was obtained from the Directorate of Research, Publication and Consultancy, at the University of Dodoma. This permit was sent to the President Office-Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG) for formal introduction to the Kigoma Region Administrative Secretary (RAS). The granted research permit letter to conduct research, was submitted to Buhigwe District Executive Director (DED) as well as to the DEO to carry out a study in primary schools. Informed consent was obtained from each teacher, head teacher, and WEOs. Thus, no participant was forced to take part in the study. Participants were also assured about the confidentiality of the information and that the data given would be reported without disclosing their identity. Anonymity was ensured by assigning letters to the informants instead of their names. Plagiarism of ideas was equally avoided by acknowledging the source of information and giving the reference list.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Contribution of ESQA on Improving Teaching and Learning in Public Primary Schools

The study sought to explore the contribution of ESQA in improving teaching and learning in public primary schools in Tanzania. The respondents were asked to provide their views on whether the ESQA improves teaching and learning. The findings are presented based on eight themes. These are as follows; promotion of pupil's academic performance, provision of professional support to teachers, promotion of teachers' accountability, correction of mistakes observed during teaching and learning, provision of feedback and reporting, regular visits and supervision, provision of seminars to teacher on new syllabus and teaching skills and enhance appropriate use of professional academic documents and textbooks as presented here under.

Promotion of Pupil's Academic Performance

The study findings sought to explore the contribution of the ESQA team in enhancing the pupil's academic performance. The study revealed that the response of participants acknowledges that the ESQA team plays a catalyst in pupils' academic performance due to the professional support provided to teachers after classroom observation. Teachers stated that due to the ESQA team visit, they reminded the internal school quality assurance team to conduct regular assessments and monitoring in the teaching and learning process, checking how teachers use different teaching approaches, preparation of professional documents like lesson plans, scheme of works and lesson notes enhanced them to be accountable in their daily routine. This contributed much to the coverage of topics at a time, and usage of appropriate teaching and learning methodologies, hence the pupils' academic performance improved year after year due to effective monitoring and assessment quality assurance team. One teacher from "PS D" through an open-ended questionnaire commented:

The ESQA team has many impacts because my teaching and many activities have improved every day like the use of participatory methods, and preparation of professional documents (lesson plans, scheme of work) that directly affect pupils' academic performance.

Contrary to one teacher from “PS C” through an open questionnaire stated, the low performance of pupils in 2022 directly contributed to the shortage of teachers. This teacher justified this fact:

In our district, we are still faced with a small number of teachers compared to the required number. The rare visits of ESQ assurers contribute to the academic failure of pupils’ results in 2022.

In the same line of argument, the DEO officer during the interview had this to say:

The failure of standard seven examination results in 2022 was directly influenced by the lack of enough teachers and poor teaching and learning environment in our schools. Moreover, the increase of performance in 2023 was attributed with improved learning and teaching environment and close monitoring and supervision conducted by both internal and external quality assurance teams.

The Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) results from 2021 to 2023 indicated that pupils’ academic performance was good was above average for almost above 70 and almost all the pupils passed the final examinations (Table 1 & Table 2).

Table 1: Pupil’s Academic Performance in Buhigwe District (2021-2023)

YEAR	REGISTERED			SAT			PASSED			PERCENTAGE
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	
2021	2746	2951	5697	2633	2878	5511	2144	2104	4248	77.08
2022	3485	4048	7533	3429	3998	7427	2692	2420	5112	69.33
2023	3350	3991	7341	3282	3892	7174	2795	2642	5437	75.3

Source: DPPPEO Office (2024)

Table 2: PSLE Results in 4 Public Primary Schools from 2021 to 2023

SCHOOL	2021 GRADE					2022 GRADE					2023 GRADE				
	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E
School A	0	20	46	12	0	0	15	37	16	3	0	16	57	18	0
School B	0	1	20	27	0	0	11	25	3	0	0	5	30	1	0
School C	0	17	41	8	0	1	10	44	16	0	0	19	34	4	0
School D	0	2	25	15	0	0	24	28	12	2	0	8	39	4	0
Freq	0	40	132	62	0	1	60	134	47	5	0	48	160	27	0
%	0	10	33	16	0	0	15	34	12	1	0	12	40	7	0
	PASSED 234 (100%)					PASSED 242(98%)					PASSED 235(100%)				

Source: Field Data (2024)

The research findings indicated that the improvement of pupil’s academic performance in the district is subsequently with ESQA team in promoting relationship among ISQA and ESQA team, collaboration among teachers themselves, effective monitors of appropriate usage of appropriately teaching and learning methodologies, coverage of all topics at the right time and proper preparation of all professional documents. The findings are supported by a report of Ayeni (2011), as presented in the next section, which revealed that for pupils’ successful academic performance, teachers are reminded to maintain quality instruction during teaching and learning through use of different methodologies, time management and collaboration during classroom sessions. It was also supported by Njiku (2016) who found that pupils’ successful academic performance were due to regular cross checking of

teachers' professional documents and those documents were signed by head teachers every week to enhance teacher's accountability.

Provision of Professional Support to Teachers

The study intended to know if there was any professional support provided to teachers during ESQ assurers' visits. The study found that the ESQA system was a key factor in supporting and enhancing teachers' professional development and it also revealed that the existence of indoor training sessions aimed at enhancing teacher's pedagogical skills and academic proficiency to uphold high standards of teaching. The findings sought that indoor training is in place to enhance teaching quality, leading to effective learning and student evaluation. Teachers recognized that ESQA teams provide professional support to the teachers in areas where they are facing difficulties or challenges while teaching. Based on their observations and assessments, the ESQ assurers identify the specific area of concern for the teachers and offer guidance and recommendations to help them improve their instructional practices. It was also revealed in this study that when ESQ assurers visited the schools, they were able to provide valuable assistance in classifying and organizing complicated academic subjects. For example, through an open-ended questionnaire one teacher from "PS D" stated:

ESQ assurers provide knowledge on teaching and learning tactics, ways to handle the overcrowded class, professional ethics, updating changes in curriculum and syllabus, provision of many exercises, having bank of questions, use of good language and insisting us to improve ourselves through internal training known as Mafunzo Endelevu ya Walimu Kazini (MEWAKA).

The head teacher from "PS D" during the interview stated:

They actually provide support to teachers by advising teachers to make preparation of lesson plan for every period, scheme of work for every subject, lesson notes as well as preparation of teaching aids that comes from our natural setting.

One of the ESQ assurers stated during the interview that they were there to help the teachers improve the teaching and learning:

ESQ assurers are not enemies; instead, we are here to ensure the quality and address any mistakes made by teachers in their teaching and learning practices. Thus, there is no reason to fear. ESQ assurers typically emphasize methodological aspects such as establishing a conducive learning environment for effective teaching and advising teachers to guide students to enhance their focus in learning.

The above quotations demonstrate that ESQ assurers have a significant impact in emphasizing the importance of teachers being proficient in utilising suitable teaching methods and approaches. Effective professional development should be tailored to the specific needs and contexts of teachers, providing opportunities for active learning, collaboration, and reflection. It should expose teachers to evidence-based instructional strategies, emerging technologies and current trends in education. By engaging in professional development, teachers can strengthen their content expertise, improve their instructional delivery, and foster a growth mindset necessary to meet the evolving needs of diverse learners. Therefore, the study findings indicated that the ESQ assurers enhance professional support to teachers in public primary schools.

The study is in line with Shukia and Komba (2022) in Tanzania who stated that the ongoing professional development of teachers is essential as it reflects the caliber of teaching exhibited by educators, thereby influencing the learning process and the assessment of students. The study findings concur with Mtweve (2017) in Tanzania who found that there is no doubt that ESQA process actually

helps improve the quality of teaching and learning and influence academic performance of pupils. This is achieved by systematically monitoring the instructional processes within schools, guiding teachers to reach higher standards of teaching and objectively evaluating the overall teaching and learning. In the same vein, the study findings by Burra and Fanuel (2021) in Tanzania found that new teaching approaches and techniques in the education field are often introduced by ESQA. The ESQA process keeps teachers informed about the latest in the curriculum. As a result, the ESQA mechanism helps teachers maintain and improve the performance of the overall teaching and learning.

Moreover, these findings are in line with the study by Ayodele (2020) in South Africa who suggested that teachers must receive regular and potential professional development opportunities as others to promote their efficiency and effectiveness. According to Ayodele, the professional support provided to teachers improved teachers' skills and knowledge, teachers' accountability, and pupils' academic performance as teachers are supported on how to prepare the lesson plans, lesson notes, and teaching and learning materials. These results highlight the crucial role played by ESQ assurers. The findings of Mtitu et al. (2023), however, found that not all schools were visited and that teachers did not attend any professional development programmes. According to this study, teachers implemented the new educational reforms based only on their working experience. This suggests that while the quality of learner's activities, results analysis, and feedback delivery is maintained, the actual implementation of these activities is reliant on the teacher's personal experiences rather than updated training and knowledge.

Promotion of Teachers' Accountability

The study aimed to investigate if the implementation of the ESQA system had a positive impact on teachers' work performance in their working stations. The findings indicated that monitoring inculcates a sense of fear, respect, and commitment towards their day-to-day activities among teachers. It also promotes self-awareness and self-direction in helping teachers achieve the schools' goals. The presence of ESQ assurers' visits serves as a motivating factor for teachers to carry out their responsibilities diligently. Teachers who may be less active and weak are argued and supported to put in more effort in compliance with established rules and regulations. This indicates that ESQ assurers act as catalyst tools to compel teachers to fulfill their duties with effectiveness and efficiency. One of the teachers from "PS D" wrote in the open-ended questionnaire:

Exactly, regular visits to ESQ assurers make teachers commit to their responsibility, fear, punctuality, and respect for their jobs, improve teaching performance and be highly motivated to attain their job goals.

The WEO also said during the interview:

The teachers in our schools have changed their working performance from irresponsible to committed and accountable teachers. This has been contributed by regular visitation of ESQ assurers that created commitment, respect of teachers to their jobs, high performance, and achievement of their teaching and learning objectives.

Similarly, one of the teachers from "PS C" commented in the open-ended questionnaires:

ESQ assurers' visits are very important and very useful simply because they emphasize teachers' responsibilities, helping us to contribute towards achieving national educational goals and objectives. Teachers are motivated to work diligently due to the prospect of being assessed during visits.

In addition, one of ESQ assurers stated during the interview that they visited and monitored the teachers to encourage them work hard to cover the syllabi on time:

When we visit and assess the schools, we check and monitor the teaching stages of the lesson. We check the total number of periods that are allocated to the teaching per year. We discourage the slow teaching pace and each teacher is reminded to finish the scheme of work and subject syllabus on time. We encourage teachers to carry out their duties effectively. Sometimes, we tend to employ rules and regulations to ensure that teachers fulfill their responsibilities as required.

The evidence above indicates that the ESQA had stimulated teachers and pupils' accountability generally in the implementation of the school responsibilities and objectives. It has been revealed the ESQA practices have reduced teacher's irresponsibility cases such as improper preparation of lesson plans, and delays in attending class lessons. These findings align with Abubakr (2018) in Nigeria who found that SQAOs were useful for monitoring teacher attendance and showed that there was no loss of teaching periods counted from the teachers. In essence, the ESQA system has served as an extrinsic motivator, driving teachers to be more committed and accountable in the delivery of the educational curriculum

The findings are also in line with Fungilwa (2021) in Tanzania who revealed that the implementation of the SQA system has instilled a sense of responsibility and accountability among both teachers and students in the school. The study found that the establishment of this ISQA system has led to a reduction of indisciplinary cases, such as teachers' absenteeism in schools and other related problems. This, in turn, has had a positive effect on pupils' learning and academic performance. The ESQA system has also effectively promoted a culture of discipline, ownership, and commitment among the school community, ultimately contributing to the improvement of educational quality and pupils' learning. Thus, it generally appears that the ESQA system plays a cornerstone in fostering teacher's accountability.

Correction of Mistakes Observed during Teaching and Learning

The study found that ESQA practices had a great role in correcting mistakes and errors of teachers in teaching and learning. The findings indicated that teachers accepted that ESQ assurers observed and identified various mistakes especially those concerned with improper preparation of lesson plans, incorrect use of teaching and learning materials, and failure to follow curriculum guidelines. It was revealed that some teachers were unaware of the current syllabus which made them present their lessons incorrectly. This problem contributed to the provision of low-quality education. In addition, it was pointed out that ESQ assurers provided seminars, guidance, and counselling to teachers on the proper use of teaching tools as per the new syllabus that enhanced the clearing of mistakes done in previous lessons. One of the teachers from "PS C" wrote in the open-ended questionnaire:

Before the visits to ESQ assurers, I made a lot of mistakes during the preparation of lesson plans and methods of presenting lessons. I also faced some challenges on the new syllabus that contributed to improper preparation of lesson plans and teaching lessons that did not correspond to the requirements of the new syllabus.

Another teacher from “PS D” stated:

Yes, ESQ assurers help teachers to correct mistakes made during the teaching and learning process and preparation of teachers’ professional documents like lesson plans, schemes of work, and logbooks.

On the other side of the DEO during the interview said:

Yes, it is true. The ESQA reports comprise areas of strengths and weaknesses. So, the weak area enhances me as a leader to take action immediately for improvement and the area that is strength enables me to remind school leaders to make sure they maintain it.

Similarly, the DCSQAO said during the interview:

During my school visit, I observed that academic teacher commitments focused on the number of lesson plans prepared. So sometimes I did not understand! For example, many of the lesson plans are signed by academics but they have many mistakes. Even head teachers overlook these mistakes as there are no comments stated.

The responses above indicate that the ESQA visits in schools and classroom observations minimize the mistakes from teachers in teaching and learning. It was revealed that ESQ assurers conducted seminars to teachers on the mistakes observed and gave correct ways of preparing teaching lessons, lesson notes, teaching and learning media and other materials that were used in enhancing the lesson to be achieved to the learners efficiently and effectively.

The study findings by Secilia and Mwila (2022) in Tanzania revealed that ESQ assurers help teachers improve classroom management, teaching methodologies and other forms of assistance that promote learners’ academic performance are well organized and implemented in a good and conducive environment. The findings are also supported by Mamo and Nigussa (2019) in Ethiopia, who found that internal school supervision was perceived negatively by teachers and it was because the supervision failed to assist teachers in preparing their lesson plans. This also is in the same line with the study of Iroegbu and Eyo (2016) in Nigeria who revealed that educators must get comments for the mistakes observed during classroom observation such as mistakes that occurred in the preparation of professional documents, teaching, and learning stages.

Provision of Feedback and Reporting

The findings revealed that the visits of ESQ assurers in public primary schools observed some mistakes made by teachers specifically in teaching practices, preparation of teaching tools, and preparation of lesson plans. It was found that ESQ assurers took into account all mistakes observed during their visits and provided a correct way of preparing teaching tools and lesson plans. Moreover, the ESQ assurers acknowledged the strengths observed by teachers during teaching and emphasized teacher’s commitment.

This is made clear considering the responses of teachers who filled out the open-ended questionnaire provided to them. The participants state that, for effective ESQA in enhancing teaching and learning, they are reminded to provide feedback to teachers, WEO, DEO, and other education stakeholders at least two weeks after their visits. On the other hand, some teachers commented in the questionnaire that the ESQ assurers visit is useful if the feedback is sent to them after classroom observation, but if

not ESQ assurers do nothing and there would be no significant value to the ESQA department. One of the teachers from “PS A” wrote:

ESQA assurers conduct classroom observations to evaluate the teaching and learning and provide feedback for improvement purposes. In areas where mistakes are observed, they are corrected and we are reminded to take into account seriously. Obviously let me say, that for most of us mistakes occur in the preparation of lesson plans, teaching and learning and the absence of lesson notes that are current.

One of the teachers from “PS D” also wrote in the open-ended questionnaire saying:

ESQ assurers undertake the classroom assessment and have an opportunity to correct the teachers about the errors observed and they provide the feedback to us in the general staff meeting concerning the areas need improvements.

Contrary to the above statements, in the open-ended questionnaire, one of the teachers from “PS C” stated:

I do not know if ESQ assurers undertake classroom observation and offer feedback to teachers from what they have observed, because I have not witnessed any visit of them in our school since when I was recruited as a teacher.

The DEO through interview said:

It is true. The ESQ assurers' reports comprise areas of strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, the areas with weakness help me as a leader to take action immediately for improvement and the area that is strength enables me to remind school leaders to make sure that they maintain it. In fact, these reports help us to know areas that need improvement like academic matters, environment sanitation, administration areas as well as issues related to finance.

On the other side, the WEO during the interview stated that feedback after school assessment and monitoring is important for the improvement of the pupils' academic performance because it helps the teachers to know the areas that need corrections as well as improvements. The WEO also supported this statement during the interview and he said:

These reports indicate strengths and weaknesses and I appreciate the ESQA team's feedback because it helps me to check the effectiveness of implementing curriculum. The ESQA report shows whether teachers prepare teaching and learning materials effectively, examinations, and pupils' work provided to pupils if they reflect the competence-based curriculum approach. ESQA reports are sent too late, so it is better for school assessment and monitoring the report is supposed to be sent at least within two weeks this will enhance teachers to correct errors for academic improvement.

The study findings revealed that most teachers accepted that feedback after the ESQ assurers visit is provided to teachers. It was also revealed that the general meeting conducted by ESQ assurers has an effect on improving teaching and learning. Moreover, the study revealed that one teacher is not aware of ESQ assurers' visit and does not know anything if feedback is sent to teachers after the classroom observation. The study findings also tried to know more about this comment from the teacher of “PS

C” which stated that in three consecutive years since when he was employed at this “PS C” no visits of ESQA team to their school.

The findings concur with Matete (2021) who revealed that for better pupils’ academic performance ESQA team after classroom observation had to make sure that they provided constructive feedback to teachers for academic improvement as well as teachers’ accountability. The study findings by Mganga and Lekule (2021) in Tanzania found that after the ESQ assurers’ visits, it is the role of ESQ assurers to provide feedback at a time to educational stakeholders like government, teachers, and other well-educational well-wishers. It is also supported by Dismas (2020) who stated that quality assurers must ensure that the feedback of school visits is returned both to the government and other educational stakeholders. The participants have acknowledged that they receive feedback from ESQ assurers positively simply because the feedback enables them to take action immediately for better improvements in teaching and learning methodologies, preparation of lesson plans, use of teaching media at the right time to the right class, and observing time management.

Regular Visits and Supervision

The study findings show that the effective ESQA visit influences teachers' work performance and has an impact on pupil's academic performance in public primary schools in Tanzania. It has been revealed that for the ESQA team to be effective they are supposed to visit schools regularly at least twice per academic year. It was also revealed that ESQ assurers stated that they visited the schools once per academic year. the ESQA team's communication and constructive discussion with teachers leads to the improvement of ways of teaching and learning, teaching and learning materials, insisting provision of exercises for every period, information of subject period changes, correction of mistakes in the teaching and learning, proper preparation of lesson notes and plans, and how to motivate pupils for them to learn. During the interview one of the head teachers from “PS B” said ‘ESQ assurers visit our school once per academic year’. The WEO also confirmed the same and he said during the interview:

ESQ assurers visit my ward almost once per academic year, and there is one school in my ward which its geographical location is not friendly for transport so they mostly fail to reach there to visit that school. When they visit the school, they help teachers how to prepare a scheme of work, how to use the new syllabus effectively as well as support in the preparation of lesson plans and improvisational teaching and learning materials.

The DCQAO also said during the Interview:

We are able to visit 40 out of 89 public primary schools, which is not sufficient, and obviously, we visit schools once per academic year. This is because of geographical location and inadequate funds, inadequate ESQ assurers and a lack of transport.

The findings revealed that the regular visit of ESQ assurers is an important factor for better improvement of teaching and learning because they assess and monitor the proper use and management of academic documents by evaluating the quality and appropriateness of textbooks, supplementary materials, and reference books used in teaching. ESQ assurers provide teachers with clear criteria and guidance on how to select suitable textbooks, ensuring alignment with curriculum requirements. They also closely examine the actual use of academic documents and textbooks in the classroom and promptly intervene to discourage any misuse or improper practices. The teachers recognise the value of the detailed information and feedback provided by ESQ assurers regarding the appropriate utilisation of textbooks and other learning resources for better and improved teaching and

learning practices that ultimately pupils' academic improvement. The study findings are in line with Burra and Fanuel (2021) in Tanzania who found that monitoring and assessment serve as a valuable source of information, a means of commitment as well as a powerful driver for school academic performance. It is also concurrent with the study by Mtwewe (2017) in Tanzania who revealed that ESQ assurers' visits help schools maintain high standards of quality in education and administration, leading to improved academic performance for pupils and the school community as a whole.

Furthermore, the findings are supported by Wilian et al. (2020) in Indonesia who found that the regular visits and supervision of ESQ assurers in schools promote the optimal use of academic documents and textbooks, which in turn enhance the improvement of teaching and pupils' academic performance. The regular visits conducted by the ESQ assurers play a pivotal role in maintaining and improving the quality of education within schools. Frequent monitoring and evaluation of the schools allow the ESQ assurers to closely observe the teaching and learning, assess the learning environment, and the overall effectiveness of the school's operations. Through their feedback and recommendations, the ESQ assurers provide valuable insights that enable school leaders and teachers to identify strengths, address weaknesses, and implement targeted interventions. Moreover, the regular school visits by ESQ assurers contribute to the continuous enhancement of the quality of education, benefiting both the students and the broader educational system.

Provision of Seminars to Teacher on New Syllabus and Teaching Skills

The findings indicated that ESQ assurers provided seminars and counselling to teachers especially on new syllabus and curriculum, preparation of teaching and learning tools, lesson plans, teaching skills. The findings revealed that ESQ assurers assisted teachers on how to prepare lesson plans, and the teaching and learning materials. It was noted that proper use of teaching and learning and lesson plans contributed to pupils' understanding of what is taught. Seminars and counselling services provided to teachers by ESQ assurers enriched teachers' skills and competence in teaching, led to the improvement of pupils' academic performance. One of the teachers from "PS D" wrote in the open-ended questionnaire:

The ESQ assurers help us correct the mistakes made during the teaching and learning and in the whole process of the preparation of the teaching and learning tools. It was observed that we prepared our teaching tools incorrectly and we were taught by ESQ assures during the seminar how to prepare teaching tools properly.

The head teacher from "PS B" through the interview supported:

They provide professional support for instance in academic aspects such as the schemes of work, and lesson plans as we know in teachers' work, these are important professional documents. They also support us with guidance and counselling and they insist on collaboration among teachers. There is also an issue relating to training because academics is not a stone that can stay in one place so we have to upgrade our knowledge and skills to understand what is going on in the world currently. In my school, we have training that is conducted every Friday during sports and games sessions.

The same was stated by the DCSQAO during the interview, and he said:

I advise teachers concerning the preparation of schemes of work, how to use new syllabi effectively, preparation of lesson plans, and teaching and learning materials. During the school visit, I observed that academic teacher commitments focused on the number of lesson plans prepared. However, sometimes I do not understand as I see many of the lesson plans are signed by

academics but they have too many mistakes. Even head teachers overlook these mistakes, as there are no comments provided.

The findings suggest that the provision of seminars on syllabus and new skills improved teachers' work performance and pupils' academic performance in general. It was also revealed that through seminars and training sessions, ESQ assurers educate teachers on the difference between textbooks, supplementary books, and reference materials. The ESQ assurers share the established criteria and guidelines for selecting suitable textbooks that align with the curriculum and learning objectives. This helps teachers make informed decisions when choosing instructional materials.

These findings are in line with that of Godfrey's (2020) study in Tanzania who stated that the provision of regular seminars and training by school quality assurers emerges as a key mechanism for enhancing teachers' knowledge, skills, and practices in the proper utilisation of academic documents and instructional materials. These professional documents ultimately contribute to the improved pupils' academic performance. The findings also concur with the study by Mganga and Lekule (2021) in Tanzania who found that seminars and workshops were provided to teachers and non-teaching staff, which contributed to positive impact on pupils' academic performance and improved quality of education. The findings are related by Haris et al. (2018) in Indonesia who revealed that teachers were trained through seminars and different workshops that equipped teachers with knowledge and skills on leadership, guidance and counselling, proper use of available resources and curriculum implementation for better and successful pupils' learning performance.

Enhance Appropriate Use of Professional Academic Documents and Textbooks

The findings indicate that teachers recognized that monitoring and assessment done by ESQ assurers during the visitation improved the preparation and use of professional academic documents. This revealed that it is the responsibility of ESQ assurers to assess, monitor, and measure the usefulness of professional academic documents used in teaching and learning, in order to enhance academic performance. The study also found that if there is any misuse of professional academic documents, ESQ assurers promptly discourage it.

Moreover, teachers acknowledged that ESQ assurers provide detailed guidance on the appropriate use of textbooks. This determines that these officers have a thorough understanding of the textbooks used at different public primary school levels, and they ensure they are being utilised efficiently and effectively. One of the teachers from "PS D" commented in the open-ended questionnaire:

ESQ assurers serve as mentors for teachers, assisting us in developing lesson plans, lesson notes, and schemes of work, subject logbooks, and class journals. They serve as reminders for us to effectively provide many pupils exercises, as well as to ensure the completion of our scheme of works.

Similarly, the head teacher from "PS A" said during the interview:

Since I came here, the ESQ assurers emphasized academic aspects, teaching and learning aspects, and how teachers provide exercises for pupils. Not only that but also they check the administrative aspects as you know this is a government institution. For pupils' academic performance to be high there must be good leadership and ensure the school's source of funds is managed effectively such as capitation, and education self-reliance activities.

The WEO also supported during the interview by saying:

When ESQ assurers visit the schools they support teachers on how to prepare schemes of work, how to effectively use new syllabus as well as preparation of lesson plans and improvisation of teaching and learning materials.

One of the ESQ assurers also commented during the interview:

We check pupils' excesses to ensure that they provided with enough work, and are well marked and corrected at the right time. We also check the preparation of teachers' professional documents such as lesson plans, schemes of work, lesson notes and the availability of teaching and learning materials.

The findings indicated that the active involvement and supervision of ESQ assurers played a crucial role in improving the use and management of academic documents in public primary schools, ultimately supporting the improvement of educational quality and pupils' academic performance. The regular supervision and monitoring help identify any misuse or improper practices regarding academic documents. The ESQ assurers thoroughly evaluate the quality, appropriateness, and usefulness of the academic documents, such as lesson plans, assessment tools, and record-keeping materials used in the whole process of teaching and learning process for better pupils' academic performance. The findings are in line with Mcheka et al. (2024) in Tanzania who found supported effective quality assurance officers are ongoing, and daily intervention must focus on improving both working relationships and the teaching and learning processes. The goal of the school quality assurance team is to enable the growth and development of teachers and pupils, supervise, and monitor supported documents used in the process of teaching and learning, and have greater professional expertise. The findings are in line with Kagochi et al. (2019) in Kenya who highlighted that regular check-ups of class attendance, lesson plans, schemes of work, and other related documents must be well prepared as well signed by the management and sought that some of the institution do not make follow-up for these documents related to pupils academic performance.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this study we aimed to explore the contribution of ESQA towards the improvement of teaching and learning in primary schools in Tanzania. Based on key findings from this study, it can be concluded that ESQA played a potential role in enhancing teachers' improvement of the teaching and learning in the visited schools. It was noted that ESQA promoted teacher's accountability and helped them to be committed in their daily teaching routines. ESQA promoted the pupil's academic performance as teachers received a professional support. It was also found that ESQ assurers helped teachers in the correction of mistakes observed during teaching and learning, especially in schemes of work, lesson plans and logbooks. The findings further indicated that ESQ assures provided the feedback through their reports and recommendations based on aspects that required improvements. ESQ assurers, however, could not conduct regular visits in schools for the supervision of teaching and learning as they were few and they lacked the financial resources and means of transport to facilitate their school visits. It is recommended in this study that for ESQA to contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning in primary schools, the government has to increase the number of qualified ESQ assurers. There is also a need for the provision of adequate funds for the ESQA department and the provision of a means of transport is equally important if ESQA is to yield further gains towards quality provision of education to pupils.

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