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Contributions of Internal School Quality Assurance Teams Towards Improving Academic Performance In Primary Schools In Singida Municipal

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ABSTRACT

ISQAT enables teachers and pupils to adhere learning behaviors-in school process. However, the contribution of ISQAT towards academic performance depends on the effectiveness of its operations. It is necessary to examine the connection between ISQAT operations with the improvement of academic performance. Therefore, this study investigated the contributions of ISQAT towards improving academic performance in public primary schools. Employing case study design, the study sampled 50 respondents from Singida Municipal. The study revealed that ISQAT plays important roles in improving teaching methodologies, improvement of teacher's accountability and improvement of school self-evaluation.

Key Words: *Internal Schools Quality Assurance Teams, Academic Performance, and Public Primary Schools*

INTRODUCTION

ISQAT is one of the most effective factors in shaping education systems. Hence, the government has to structure better operation mechanisms of ISQAT in order to attain quality in education. ISQAT is among the most debated and important topic in education reforms. Internal School Quality Assurance is the process of monitoring, evaluating and reporting the agreed standards for all aspects of school life to ensure that good standards are attained and maintained [1]. In this study ISQAT is an assessment of ongoing school life in all aspects in a consistent, safe and fair manner for the purpose of improving quality in education to suit the need of the community.

Primary education serves as the foundation of all other educational background of any nation. Its output determines the success and failure of a nation's education system. Pupils are required to get best services in teaching and learning (quality education) to suit the demands of next stages after primary education (secondary school or vocational training education).

Education systems around the world are very complex and vary to a great extent across different countries; therefore, most of countries ensure that schools are meeting standards set out in National Qualification Framework more widely, with the purpose of stimulating and supporting school improvement and development. [2]. The provision of quality education is the main goal of each country across the world. However, this goal needs school quality assurance as the means that ensures on going improvement of teaching and learning which, in turn, helps learners to acquire the intended competencies.

Internal School Quality Assurance (ISQA) is the process undertaken at school level by the Hos/ HT/ Principle and the ISQAT/ School leadership team. Working as a team to monitor, evaluate, and report agreed quality standards for all aspects of school life. They will ensure that good standards are attained and maintained, learning outcome continuously improves, learners learn in a safe environment and community is encouraged to a part of a learning community [3]. The internal quality assurance system is a quality assurance system carried out by certain appointed teachers led by HT to supervise all components in the education unit particularly six domains of curriculum implementation in school life, namely; learners' achievement, the quality of teaching for good learning and assessment, the quality of curriculum in meeting learners' needs, the quality of leadership and management, the quality of environment and community engagement.

In the world, internal school quality assurance is the basis for provision of insights on how teaching and learning process can be meaningful and productive for both teachers and students. This approach focuses on improving quality education through closest supervision at the school. Internal school quality assurance service is also known as school

self-evaluation [4]. It is a continuous cycle of planning, executing, evaluating and following-up for improving the provision of quality of education that meets national standards. The roles of ISQA are related to the external school quality assurance of monitoring, assessing, evaluating and reporting the extent to which particular objectives have been attained in academic and non-academic school practices [5].

Few African countries have adopted internal school quality assurance. In South Africa, the Government implemented various education policies for restoration, reconstruction and transformation of the collective education system [6]. Among the important innovations made in education in South Africa was the establishment of the policy of whole school evaluation in 2003 for effective educational monitoring and evaluation. The internal school self-evaluation was established in this policy that obliged to raise the standards of performance in schools [7].

The role of ISQA in ensuring that schools provide quality education to learners is also performed in Sub-Saharan African countries. For example, in Nigeria schools and teachers receive important support from ISQA in terms of refining teaching and learning procedures and in turn schools meet the national education goals and objectives. Hence, South Africa, Kenya and Uganda ISQA have been the candle that increases the creativity of teachers and prepares schools for acceptable transformation for quality improvement even though they face some challenges during implementation and assessments.

In Tanzania, the government has been investing a lot of resources in the education sector through the fee free school education program. Never the less, the output / products (primary school graduates) are said to be of poor quality; they do not reflect the value for money that is spent MOEST (2019, 2020, 2021). This concern is shared by Mosha (2004) who argued that inefficiencies at school levels were common and resulted from lack of effective teacher management and effective supervision. Some measures including Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) and Literacy and Numeracy Education Support (LANES) program for primary schools were implemented to address and redress the problem of poor performance in Tanzania primary schools. Furthermore, the government under MoEST provided trainings national wide on roles and position of the internal school quality assurance teams (ISQAT) in schools in 2021.

Despite the remarkable initiatives, ISQAT practices are not yet effective in supporting pupils in public primary schools to meet set standards. Some pupils complete their primary education without mastering reading, writing, and arithmetic skills (3Rs).

Despite the effort done by the government to introduce ISQAT in schools on governing and providing quality education in primary schools, still the ISQAT has not succeeded to meet the objective of provision of quality education. Provision of quality education cannot be attained unless there is a well-established and effective management and administrative machinery of which according to the study is internal school quality assurance teams.

The study came to an interest of the researcher due to on-going poor performance in public primary schools in Singida municipal despite the various measures that have been undertaken by the governmental authorized units and non-governmental institutions under MoEST. Therefore, if this trend of poor performance continues, the Tanzania development vision of 2025, which envisages the total elimination of illiteracy by 2025, will not be achieved.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by human relation theory and scientific management theory. The theory was developed by Elton Mayo in 1930s. The human relation theory is a school of organizational thought which focuses on workers satisfaction, informal workplace organizations, and means of influencing employee productivity. Mayo Hawthorne considered workers as human with all social needs at work place. The theory had assume that if workers are given freedom, provided with the social needs and included in decisions making increase workers performance and in turn high productivity [8].

According to Thamarasserri [8], there are four assumptions in human relation theory that can be used in this study;

First, organization is to be viewed as social system (building relationship with key actors in the organization and involving them in decisions making). Second, workers are human beings with all human attributes (ensuring respect, recognition and freedom for performing duties).Third, informal elements provide organizational output (employees should be given freedom of socialization or communicating in informal organization). Fourth, organization has a social ethics instead of individual ethics (rules and regulations should be open to all individuals as they interact in the organization).

By considering theory assumptions, the theory has great relation to this study as follows; Firstly, in reviewing organization as social system, the theory guided the researcher in studying teachers' perception about the coverage of ISQA undertaking. Moreover, the theory helped the researcher to explore teachers' involvements in the establishment of ISQAT (selection of team members) at school. Also it helped the researcher to explore available relationship between ISQAT members and teachers. Secondly, the concept on workers are human beings with all human attributes was useful

in studying challenges facing the team and teachers' voice (suggestions) in improving the performance of ISQA. Thirdly, informal elements provide organizational output; the concept helped the researcher in investigating the contributions of ISQA in improving teachers' work performance. Fourthly, the concept of organization has a social ethics, helped to study how teachers developed a sense of preparing professional documents for excellence in teaching and learning.

Scientific Management Theory

The scientific management is concerned with how to manage work, teaching/ training and organizations more efficiently.

The scientific management theory was developed by Fredrick Taylor, an American engineer in his book, "The Principles of Scientific Management (1911)". This theory is sometimes known as Taylor system of management. It is the theory of management that analyses and synthesizes workflow process in improving labour productivity [9]. Taylor believed that decision based upon tradition and rules of thumb should be replaced by precise procedure developed after careful study of an individual at work. The main argument was that human beings by their nature, and in this case, workers are lazy and dislike work especially when working in groups. Workers as human beings will deliberately plan to do as little as they safely can. Also, because they have little desire for responsibility they would prefer to be directed [9].

The scientific management concept was carried over to school inspection/ supervision when teachers are viewed as the key implementers of the highly refined curriculum and teaching system [10,9]. Classroom supervision and observation were introduced as approaches for teachers' evaluation together with performance appraisal scheme based on specific targets [9]. The idea behind the introduction of close supervision practice was to ensure that teachers were teaching the way they were supposed to teach and they carefully followed the approved protocol and guidelines [10]. For example, they were needed to prepare the schemes of work extracted from the syllabus and prepare the lesson plans that followed the scheme of work.

The scientific management theory is related with this study in such way that, any managerial tactics, strategic and operational activity in an institution let say, public schools need to involve the strategic and standard procedures. Procedures which aim at improving the quality of education delivery while impacting those primary school pupils with knowledge which later on result in high performance, high understanding and even high ability for self-reliance life.

Research Methodology

This study was carried out in Singida Municipality. The study employed case study research design and a qualitative research approach. The sample size of the study was 50 respondents that included 3 head teachers, 1 DCSQAO, DEO, 18 Members of ISQAT, 3 academic teachers, 12 teachers and 12 pupils. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting a sample. Data were collected by interview field, observation, focus group discussion and documents review. The data collected (qualitative data) were analyzed through descriptive analysis.

Findings and Discussions

The Contribution of ISQAT towards Academic Performance of Pupils in Public Primary Schools

The first research objective of the study emphasized on the contribution of ISQAT towards academic performance of pupils in public primary schools, the researcher aimed to see the contributions of ISQAT towards improving academic performance of pupils in public primary schools. The respondents were required to write, discuss, see and talk face to face with the researcher. On this objective, the findings on the contributions of internal school quality assurance teams towards improving academic performance of pupils in public primary schools are presented below:

Improved teaching methodologies

Working to promote quality in an education setting depends largely on teaching methodologies employed by teachers in the class. Consequently, the opinions of respondents were sought on the contribution of ISQAT towards improving academic performance in primary schools. It was found that ISQAT contributes to improving teaching methodologies. According to one of the head teachers;

ISQAT improved teaching techniques to teachers in various ways including inviting teachers from neighboring schools to share with my teachers in academic matters and emphasizing team teaching in the class (Interview, HTs, Schools, 02/02/2023).

This finding was also confirmed by one of the academic teachers who said;

The ISQAT conducts regular assessment and provides advices on teaching and learning processes. It emphasize on participatory teaching methodologies. The teacher seems to be reluctant to change is reported in my office for more actions (Interview, Academic Teacher, School A, 28/02/2023).

Further information from focus group discussion shown that, internal school quality assurance team improved teaching methodologies. One ISQAT member had this to say;

When assessing teachers in the class, we take notes on strength and weakness of their teaching methodologies and advices them were possible (FGD, Members of ISQAT, School C, 08/03/2023).

The findings concur with the finding of Mwambapa [11] who stated that, school quality assurance improves teachers' professional skills. Thus, school quality assurance team is expected to ensure that, teachers are professionally equipped in performing their duties at school level. Participatory teaching techniques are highly applied as well as using teaching aids to improve pupils' understandings. Also the findings are in agreements with Matete [12] asserted that, school quality assurance help teachers to improve teaching and learning as school quality assurers provide professional on how to teach various subjects and on the proper use of teaching and learning materials. The school quality assurance reports are important for the improvement of teachers' performance. The report also indicates the strength and weakness of individual teacher. Therefore, the ISQAT serves as an agent towards teaching transformation in schools to suit modern education demands

Improved teachers' responsiveness in completing syllabus (improved teachers' accountability)

The introduction of ISQAT enhanced teachers' accountability that was never met before. Completion of syllabus on time provides a room to pupils for review of their lessons to cement memory. Accountability makes teaching program unbiased and inclusive, thus, helps to meet learning goals. It was found that ISQAT improved teachers' responsiveness in completing syllabus. One of the head teachers had the following to say;

The team assesses teachers regularly, thus makes teachers to be very active especially in completing syllabus. ISQAT is helpful in controlling teachers during teaching process, thus make them to cover all topics (Interview, HT, School B, 02/02/2023).

DEO added;

According to my visits in different schools, many teachers are reactive in teaching and learning process. Before the introduction of ISQAT head teachers were bringing the remedial time table of each classes for completion of previous syllabus, but now things are quite different as topics are covered timely (Interview, DEO, 09/03/2023).

In the same vein academic teachers had almost similar to teachers on responsiveness on completing syllabus improved due to ISQAT. In responding to this, one academic teacher had this to say;

Most teachers are committed in instruction and completion of the syllabus. All these are results of duties and responsibilities of ISQAT in school that brings positive impacts especially on individual teacher performances (Interview, Academic teacher, School A, 28/02/2023),

Further information from focus group discussion shown that, internal school quality assurance team improved teachers' responsiveness in completing syllabus at schools (improved teachers' accountability), One ISQAT member had this to say;

The team changed teachers and shaped them accordingly. There are no unnecessary emergencies, teachers are completing syllabus timely and get a chance to provide enough tests to pupils thus, it is the effect of ISQAT (FGD, Members of ISQAT, School C, 08/03/2023).

In the same vein one teacher had this to say;

The team makes regular assessment on our teaching and learning process. No teacher can go beyond his approved scheme of work. This make us complete the syllabus on time (FGD, Teacher, School B, 02/02/2023).

Moreover, in the field, the researcher observed the performance of ISQAT by passing through teaching documents including teachers' lesson plans, schemes of work, class journals and log books.

The findings concur with the study done by Fungilwa [13] indicated that ISQA system in schools has contributed towards monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in secondary schools. Accountability helps in instilling the pupils with passion and drive which makes them achieve their goals Therefore ISQA has enhanced teachers' accountability for their teaching through regular assessment that in turn improves quality education provision as well as better performance to their academic roles. Accountability is required in order to consider an occupation professional and its implementations that are put into practice make up a distinctive characteristic of professionalism [14]. Hence, teacher accountability is inseparable part of teacher professionalism. Paulson [15] classifies accountability as internal and external. External accountability is derived through a contractual mandate and inspection. Whereas internal accountability represents the self-regulation which teachers consider themselves as professionally responsible. Accountability of teachers can be organized through the system of external assessment while it can also be attained personally.

Improved pupils' academic performances in schools

ISQAT aimed to improve academic performance of the pupils. It struggles to accomplish that through various ways including monitoring of provision and marking of exercises, supervising pupils to master reading, writing and arithmetic and overall managing curriculum implementation. It was found that ISQAT improved pupils' academic performance. One of the head teachers declared;

Of course, the pupils' performances are increasing in our school, for example; number of pupils who do not know reading, writing and numeracy decreased due to the influence of ISQAT activities and its efforts. (Interview, HT, School C, 08/03/2023).

Also, one academic teacher added;

In our school, we see the effort of ISQAT even though faces a lot of challenges but still unmoved on their activities. It helps schools to boost pupils performances due to frequently follow up on pupils exercise books to determine if teachers are providing exercises, homework's, tests etc and that brings positive performance to pupils like change of behavior, increase of pupils performance in NECTA examinations (Interview, Academic teachers, Schools, 08/03/2023).

While DEO had this to say;

There are improvements of pupils' performance in schools after these teams started to work officially. Before the teams, pupils were suffering from mastery of writing, reading and counting till std V, but now most pupils master it at std V. Absolutely, there are no doubts on ISQAT works especially in teaching and learning process (Interview, DEO, 09/03/2023).

In addition, the review of documents provided by head teachers on report of follow up and assessment by ISQAT and other documents related to ISQAT. The findings revealed that since ISQAT started, there are changes of pupils' academic performances in schools due to frequently follow up and assessment done. Documents showed that progress of pupils' learning were grown in aspects such as reading, writing and numeracy (3Rs), hence internal and external examinations performances increased. Therefore, ISQATs tried to work effectively especially in preparation of teaching aids, learning materials and other teaching documents to improve pupils' performance.

The finding correspond with Makiya et al [16] who showed that visiting schools regularly, follow-up visits, releasing SQA feedback on time, friendly language, supporting professional development, visiting schools without prior information and involving teachers in school quality assurance (ISAQT) practices enhanced learning achievement. Regular visits make teachers and students attention in performing their academic roles. The much the concentration, the better the performance it becomes. Also the findings concur with Lyimo [17] argued that, the frequency of inspection ranged from one inspection to three inspections in one academic year contribute to academic achievement of the inspected schools as inspection enhance lesson preparation, student exercises and enforced teaching and learning principles. Previously, some pupils were completing primary education incompetent to 3Rs, but through introduction of ISQAT they all master 3Rs before getting to standard V.

Improvement of school self-evaluation

Improvement of school starts with school self-evaluation. School Self-evaluation is carried out in accordance with national policy on Whole School-Evaluation. The key areas of evaluation as prescribed by policy include; quality of teaching and learning, learners' achievement, quality of curriculum in meeting learners' needs, quality of leadership and administration, quality of environment for learners' safety and community engagements. The respondents revealed that most of schools have improved on self-evaluation that covers (six) 6 domains. Filling in school self-evaluation form (SSEF) is done by these teams and make appraisal before SQAOs visit from District. Therefore, school self-evaluation reflects the real situation or picture of school before DSQAOs to visit a school; hence it provides an overview of the school internally earlier. It was found that ISQAT improved school self-evaluation. DCSQAO had this to say;

In my office, we receive SSEF two times a year; these forms are filled in effectively by members of ISQAT. This means that ISQAT had improved in implementation of school self-evaluation; before the teams, some schools were unable to submit it and got penalized. Therefore, some errors within its limit are corrected earlier. Thus, it brings positive impacts in schools' life. (Interview, DCSQAO, 09/03/2023).

Further information from focus group discussion showed that the school had improved on making school self-evaluation and filling in SSEF. One member of ISQAT had this to say;

Our school is now able to fill in SSEF and making school self-evaluation. It is our responsibility as a team. We help the school to evaluate itself and find its way to improve according to the available human and material resources (Interview, Member of ISAQT, school A, 28/02/2023).

Moreover, from documents review brought by head teachers on school self-evaluation forms, the findings showed that there is improvement on filling in SSEF (School Self-Evaluation Form) after training of ISQAT from MoEST hence this showed members of ISQAT had improved on making assessment in all 6 domains that simplified workload before DSQAOs visit in schools. School self-evaluation brings awareness to all school staffs about strengths and weakness of school before being identified by DSQAOs from the district. Therefore, the collection and analysis of evaluation data is useful to schools to gain evidence to design future improvement plans. It is thus served by ISQAT.

The finding concurs with MacBeath [18] argued that if success at individual and school level is to be assured it follows that everyone in the school community carries some form of responsibility and accountability. That is most to be realized in practice if peoples' expectations of each other are understood and if there is a climate in the school which is receptive to critical review and improvement at all levels. School Self-evaluation serves six different purposes namely; politics management, accountability checks, professional development, organizational development, improvement of

teaching and enhancement of student learning, thus, if all these are achieved, the school can have better transformation. Also the findings correlate with Bubb and Earley [19] asserted that the importance of school leadership in in school self-evaluation promote school improvement. Therefore, SSEF helps to know how the currently school is performing. Which areas are requiring improvements? And measures to be taken for improving the school's performance.

CONCLUSION

Internal School Quality Assurance roles are becoming an increasingly important factor in success of education system. For this reason ISQAT operation should be fairly structured and increased to boost pupil's academic performance. The school with effective practice of ISQAT is in the right direction to motivate students to improve academic performance. It can be concluded that, to sustain the roles played by the ISQAT is to sustain the commitment towards enhancing the performance in public primary schools. However, as the performance of ISQAT is affected by a number of challenges including some teachers' refusal to subject their practices to the assessment of ISQAT, The progress in ISQATs records of success and threatened by the challenge of sustainability. Consequently, the challenges faced by ISQAT should be considered as elements that threaten educational achievements and overall quality in education sector.

Based on the result of the study, it can be recommended that obligatory standards (six domains) have to be maintained through regular and fairly assessments in schools by ISQAT. Opportunities for improving ISQAT operations can also be encouraged by provision of training to teachers regularly.

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