



Contribution of School Quality Assurance Services on Public Secondary Schools' Academic Achievements in Nyamagana District, Tanzania

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Abstract

This study investigated the views of stakeholders on the contribution of school quality assurance services to the academic achievements of public secondary schools in Nyamagana district, Tanzania. It employed a qualitative research approach with a descriptive research design. Purposive and random sampling techniques were used to select a sample of 40 respondents, including School Heads, Head of School Quality Assurers, School Academic Coordinators, and students. Data collection tools included interviews and focus group discussions. The findings indicated that school quality assurance services contribute to improved academic performance among students in public secondary schools. It was reported that implementing quality assurance enables a consistent assessment of teaching and learning strategies, enhances accountability among teachers and school administration, provides professional development opportunities for teachers, fosters a better learning environment, and provides positive feedback to teachers. It was concluded that SQA services are necessary to facilitate consistent assessment of teaching and learning strategies that contribute to improved academic performance among students in public secondary schools. The study recommends that government and public secondary schools should prioritize quality assurance services to enhance students' academic performance in public secondary schools.

Keywords: school quality assurance services, public secondary schools, academic achievements, quality standards.

Introduction

Quality assurance services in secondary education are an essential component in the provision and delivery of effective educational services and desirable learning outcomes. The central concern of quality assurance in schools is to ensure that the quality of education is continuously improved and sustained in order to transmit appropriate competencies, knowledge, skills, and attitudes to learners, thereby facilitating the achievement of intended educational outcomes (URT, 2017). It is widely acknowledged that quality teachers and effective instructional practices are fundamental pillars of a quality education system (Katete, 2023).

Globally, the concept of quality assurance and quality control in education has gained prominence as a key policy agenda. This focus emerged strongly during the UNESCO-organised World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, where representatives of the international community agreed that all countries should place greater emphasis on improving the achievement of recognised and measurable learning outcomes in schools (UNESCO, 1990; UNESCO, 2022). Since then, quality assurance and control in education have increasingly been recognised as significant policy perspectives aimed at enhancing accountability, effectiveness, and learning outcomes within education systems. On this basis, many countries have established quality assurance and control mechanisms that encompass setting appropriate learning and teaching goals, providing the necessary materials and intellectual resources to support the goals, regularly assessing and improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning, and evaluating the extent to which established targets are achieved (Katete, 2023). In the education sector, school quality assurance has therefore been widely practiced as a strategy for strengthening students' academic achievement (Paulo, 2022).

Empirical evidence from different contexts demonstrates the contribution of quality assurance systems to improved educational performance. For example, in Bangladesh, the implementation of School Quality Assurance (SQA) significantly contributed to improved secondary education performance, which increased from 71% in 2020 to 81% in 2022 (BANBEIS, 2023). In the United Kingdom, the establishment of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in the 1990s aimed at enhancing academic performance across the education system (QAA, 2018). Through systematic inspection visits conducted by education practitioners, schools in the United Kingdom recorded notable improvements in performance levels. Similarly, in North America, public secondary schools experienced improved

performance following the introduction of close supervision at the teaching level (Balohho, 2023).

In Africa, quality assurance has also been a major driver of educational reforms. In Nigeria, concern for quality assurance has been central to efforts aimed at improving educational standards. Ajayi and Adegbesan (2011) conceptualise quality as the totality of features of a process, product, or service that determine its ability to satisfy the expectations and perceptions of customers or clients, in this case students. They argue that quality is not merely an attribute of a final product or service, but a continuous process that emphasises internal systems, outputs, waste reduction, and productivity improvement. Supporting this view, Okorie and Okai (2024) report that effective implementation of quality assurance mechanisms in Rivers State, in Nigeria, has led to enhanced teaching and learning practices, improved students' performance, and increased accountability within educational institutions.

In Ethiopia, the introduction of school inspection services was closely associated with the implementation of a structured public education system (Fafunwa & Aisiku, 2022). However, the rapid expansion in the number of schools was not matched by a proportional increase in inspection officers, thereby complicating the effectiveness of inspection services (Ashagre & Furi, 2024). External pressures further prompted Ethiopia to establish a formal quality assurance system (Kufi, 2023; Mesfin, 2023). As noted by Nukpetsi et al. (2023), quality improvement in this context emerged more as a by-product of accountability requirements rather than as a deliberate control mechanism. Nonetheless, quality assurance became a recognised component of educational development in Ethiopia in 2003 following the establishment of a responsible agency and the enactment of higher education proclamations (Kufi, 2023).

In Tanzania, several institutional frameworks are responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of the secondary school curriculum in order to achieve improved academic performance. One such framework is the School Quality Assurance (SQA) unit, formerly known as the School Inspectorate. The SQA unit was established to ensure compliance with educational policies, laws, regulations, and standard-setting instruments in the delivery of basic education at all levels. According to URT (2017), SQA is a systematic process of promoting, supporting, and enforcing agreed quality standards across all aspects of school life to ensure that acceptable standards are attained and that continuous improvement is achieved through rigorous monitoring, evaluation, action-taking, and reporting.

School inspection, as part of quality assurance, is regarded as a fundamental practice for ensuring checks and balances in the delivery of education through close monitoring and feedback mechanisms (JMT, 2006). In Tanzania, the success of curriculum implementation is commonly measured through learners' performance in both formative and summative assessments, which reflect the extent to which intended skills, knowledge, and attitudes have been imparted (Semlugu, 2018). At the secondary education level, curriculum goal attainment is formally assessed by the National Examinations Council of Tanzania (NECTA) through the Certificate of Secondary Education Examinations (CSEE) and the Advanced Certificate of Secondary Education Examinations (ACSEE) (Burra & Fanuel, 2021).

Chakupewa (2018), despite the aforementioned mechanisms, Tanzania has experienced prolonged public concern regarding unsatisfactory examination performance at both CSEE and ACSEE levels. This poor performance has been attributed to multiple factors, including shortages of qualified teachers particularly in science subjects ineffective teaching strategies, inadequate learning resources such as textbooks, libraries, and laboratories, as well as insufficient school inspections. The challenge of declining academic performance is also acknowledged in the Education and Training Policy (ETP) of 2014, which reports a sharp decline in secondary school examination pass rates from 90% in 2007 to 43% in 2012 (URT, 2014).

To address the challenges and improve students' academic performance, regular and effective External School Quality Assurance (ESQA) services are essential, particularly in influencing teachers' work performance, which directly affects learners' academic outcomes (Tarimo & Mrema, 2025). Studies indicate that effective communication and constructive professional dialogue between ESQA teams and teachers contribute to improved teaching and learning practices. These include better use of teaching and learning materials, provision of exercises for each lesson period, adherence to subject period allocations, correction of instructional shortcomings, proper preparation of lesson plans and notes, and enhanced strategies for motivating students to learn (Leo et al., 2024). In addition, school heads play a critical role in ensuring effective teaching through regular follow-up of classroom practices using students' exercise books and class journals (Kibona, 2015).

Further evidence from Tanzania shows that quality assurance mechanisms contribute to identifying contextual factors affecting academic performance. For instance, a study by Makoye (2014) on students' academic performance under the implementation of the Secondary Education Development Plan (SEDP I) in

Nyamagana District revealed challenges that School Quality Assurance Committees consistently reported included poor teaching and learning environments characterised by inadequate classrooms, textbooks, laboratories, and library facilities significantly affected students' performance.

This situation underscores the critical role of quality assurance services in education. Quality assurance ensures that minimum standards for educational resources and facilities are met, thereby creating a conducive learning environment. Through regular evaluations and assessments, quality assurance frameworks are able to identify areas requiring improvement, including infrastructure and the availability of teaching and learning materials (Suleiman & Otieno, 2022). However, according to a report by HakiElimu (2015), poor learning environments in Tanzanian secondary schools are often linked to inadequate funding of planned activities, misallocation of resources, limited stakeholder participation, and delays in fund disbursement.

In response to these challenges, it has been recommended that the successful implementation of school academic programmes should prioritise adequate funding and effective financial management, sensitisation of key stakeholders in school programme and project management, regular in-service teacher training to enhance teaching methodologies and professional skills, and the training of more teachers in mathematics and science subjects to address existing shortages.

Recent studies further affirm the positive role of School Quality Assurance (SQA) in improving students' academic performance. Research by Leo et al. (2024) and Ng'hoboko (2024) indicates that effective SQA implementation enhances curriculum alignment with learning objectives, promotes the use of effective instructional strategies, strengthens assessment practices, and improves support services for both teachers and students. As a result, the academic performance of secondary school leavers in Tanzania has shown notable improvement, increasing from 77% in 2016 to 87.79% in 2022 (Mwanahanja, 2024).

Generally, as reflected in the preceding discussion on global, regional, and national experiences of quality assurance in education, studies in the literature have focused on various aspects related to educational development and quality. Many of these studies have examined teachers' perceptions of their professional development, the effectiveness of headteachers in monitoring teaching and learning processes, the roles of school principals, and the supervision and instructional practices of both teachers and headteachers in public and private primary and secondary schools. Other studies have investigated factors influencing students' academic performance at the

college level, as well as the availability and progress of teaching and learning resources. In addition, some research has focused on the impact of the school learning environment on the quality of education in secondary schools. Furthermore, several studies have explored how school quality assurance services contribute to students' academic performance in districts such as Mafia, Ilala, and Babati. However, there has been no research focusing specifically on stakeholders' views regarding the contribution of school quality assurance services to the academic achievement of public secondary schools in Nyamagana District. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap, guided by the research question: *What are stakeholders' views on the contribution of school quality assurance services in improving students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Nyamagana District?*

Methodology

This paper employed a qualitative research methodology to explore the views of stakeholders regarding the contribution of school quality assurance services to the academic achievements of public secondary schools in the Nyamagana district. A descriptive research design was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' perspectives and experiences, offering richer insights into the impact of quality assurance services on academic performance (Smith & Brown, 2023). This was achieved by transcribing interviews and focus group discussions to provide a comprehensive overview of the stakeholders' views on the contribution of school quality assurance services in improving students' academic performance. The target population consisted of 40 respondents from 5 out of 35 public secondary schools in the Nyamagana district, Tanzania, which were randomly selected. Purposive sampling was used to choose 5 school heads, 5 Head of School Quality Assurance (SQA) Units, and 5 School Academic Coordinators. In addition, random sampling was employed to select 25 students from a total of 6,713 students.

An interview guide was used to collect data from the Head of Schools, Head of the SQA Unit, teachers, and School Academic Coordinators. Additionally, the study utilized focus group discussions (FGDs) to gather data from students. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the collected data. Their responses were summarized to get categories and descriptions given in narratives. The study was conducted from May to June 2025. The researcher asked the Mwanza City Executive Director (Nyamagana district) for permission to collect data from the target population while adhering to ethical guidelines, considering the participants' concerns about their privacy, confidentiality, as well as their free and informed

consent. Anonymity was ensured by assigning letters “A”, “B”, “C”, “D”, and “E” to represent the schools instead of their names.

Results and Discussion

This section presents results and discussion on the contribution of SQA practices to public secondary schools’ academic achievements.

Promotion of Students’ Academic Performance

The study revealed that participants acknowledged that the SQA acts as a catalyst in students’ academic performance due to the professional support provided to teachers after classroom observation. Teachers stated that due to regular SQA practices, they are reminded to use different teaching methods, preparation of professional documents like lesson plans, scheme of works and lesson notes, which in turn 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 students’ academic performance improved year after year. One School Academic Coordinator from school “E”, through an interview, commented:

SQA practice has helped teachers improve their teaching, and many activities have been happening every day, such as using participatory methods, providing monthly tests for students, and preparing professional documents like lesson plans and schemes of work that directly influence students’ academic performance. For example, our school in 2023 had a GPA of 4.0008, which was a GRADE D (SATISFACTORY), but due to regular SQA practice in 2024, our school improved to a GPA of 3.5380, which is a GRADE C (GOOD). *(Data from the field: 18/5/ 2025).*

The results in Certificate of Secondary Education Examinations (CSEE) of 2024 indicated that students’ academic performance was good compared to those of 2023, which were satisfactory. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Students' Academic Performance in Selected Schools in Nyamagana district

S/N	School	Year	Exam Centre GPA	Grade	Remarks
1	A	2023	3.9355	D	Satisfactory
		2024	3.3866	C	Good
2	B	2023	3.8484	D	Satisfactory
		2024	3.4837	C	Good
3	C	2023	3.6827	D	Satisfactory
		2024	3.3828	C	Good
4	D	2023	3.4383	C	Good
		2024	3.4404	C	Good
5	E	2023	4.0008	D	Satisfactory
		2024	3.5380	C	Good

Source: National Examination Council of Tanzania (NECTA) – 2023 & 2024

The research findings indicated that the improvement of students' academic performance from 2023 to 2024 is improving due to SQA practice, which enhances collaboration among teachers themselves, effective monitoring, appropriate usage of 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 study conducted by Phillymon (2020), who found that regular inspections made by SQA officers provide advice and instructions to teachers rely on government policies, regulations, programs, and strategies in order for students to acquire quality education and achieve better results. Additionally, their inspection helped teachers to be updated with current strategies and plans needed to be implemented by government due the changes of curriculum and technologies. It was also supported by Njiku (2016), who found that students' successful academic performance was due to regular cross-checking of teachers' professional documents, and those documents were signed by head teachers every week to enhance teachers' accountability. Moreover, these findings were in line with previous study conducted by Kambuga and Dadi (2015) that inspection and supervision have long been and still was a major tool used by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) to improve the standards and quality of education with the purpose of enhancing professional support to teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning at all levels of education.

Improves Teachers' Accountability

Through interview from the School Quality Assurance Officer, Heads of School and teachers it was revealed that quality assurance frameworks enhance accountability among school teachers and administration. This was revealed by one of the School Quality Assurance Officers who said:

.... Yes, in my opinion, quality assurance services can really help improve students' academic performance when they are done well. These practices help to increase accountability among teachers, meaning teachers become more serious and responsible in doing their work. They prepare better lessons, follow the curriculum properly, and make sure that students are learning. This leads to better teaching, and as a result, students understand more and perform better in their exams (*Data from the field:21/5/ 2025*).

The study findings concur with Leo et, al (2024), who revealed 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 SQA 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 SQA assurers act as catalyst tools to compel teachers to fulfil their duties with effectiveness and efficiency hence improve students' academic performance. The study findings align with those of Balohho (2023), who demonstrated that internal quality assurance services enhance the use of effective teaching methodologies. These practices also involve preparing thorough teaching notes and lesson plans that accurately reflect the curriculum, ultimately having a significant impact on students' academic performance. The findings are also supported by Aduwa (2004) that the improved supervision in terms of supporting teaching methodology contributed greatly to the students' academic performance. That said, that the best performance in academic achievement for secondary schools was the result of the improved supervision carried out by professionals in the education sector.

Moreover, an interview with one of the Heads of School reported:

..... I have a culture of supervising classroom instruction by actively moving around the room. Additionally, I regularly review quality assurance reports from my SQA officer, assessing teachers' schemes of work and lesson plans. If I identify any issues, I meet with the teacher to discuss them. This approach promotes accountability among teachers and helps improve students' academic performance. (*Data from the field:22/5/ 2025*).

These findings concur with Kibona (2015), who found that school heads were supervising classroom instruction by marking regular assessments on teachers' schemes of work and lesson plans. Similarly, Lunenburg (2010) states that it is the responsibilities for the school heads to supervise classroom instruction, which includes syllabus interpretation, selection of teaching techniques, and the use of teaching and learning materials, lesson delivery, assessment and evaluation of learning achievements.

Furthermore, an interview with one of the teachers from school "B" said:

Sure, regular SQA make teachers commit to their responsibility. They attend periods, become punctual at school, and respect for their jobs, and improve teaching performance to attain student's academic performance. *(Data from the field:26/5/ 2025).*

These findings align with Abubakr (2018) in Nigeria who found that regular SQA practices were useful for monitoring teacher attendance and showed that there was no loss of teaching periods counted from the teachers. 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 to teachers so as to improve students' academic performance.

These findings were supported by focus group discussion with students who commented the following:

.....It is true that when teachers know about an inspection, they give us more tests and provide corrections to help us pass national examinations..... *(Data from the field:19/5/ 2025).*

Students agreed with the idea that inspection (SQA) motivates teachers to perform better. They observed a positive change in teacher behaviour whenever inspection was expected or had just occurred, which in turn benefits students. The finding appears to relate to that of Kirkpatrick (2009) who explains that external evaluations, such as school inspections, act as motivators for teachers to improve their instructional performance, especially when tied to accountability measures.

Provision of Professional Support to Teachers

The findings gained from academic coordinators indicated that school quality assurance services often include professional development opportunities for teachers. When teachers are well-trained and supported, they can implement effective teaching methods, which directly contribute to improved students' outcomes and overall

academic achievements. During the interview with one of the academic coordinators had this to say:

After evaluation, we have seen improvements in the scheme of work, lesson preparation, learning environment, and discipline among teachers and students. This has a significant contribution to students' academic performance since the strengthening of inspections; we have seen over a 10% increase in Form Two national examination performance within two years.

This finding supports the results of Paulo (2022), who argues that the influence of school quality assurance services, such as classroom observation, school organization, student evaluations, and professional management of teachers, leads to academic achievements in secondary schools. The researcher found that some teachers were not preparing schemes of work and lesson plans. However, during school inspections, they were informed about the importance of these documents, which are crucial for effective teaching. Schemes and lesson plans provide structure and direction, ensure curriculum coverage, and ultimately enhance students' academic performance. Following the implementation of quality assurance services, teachers began preparing these documents. Additionally, these findings align with those of Liwael (2015), who discovered that schools that undergo regular inspections perform better academically. There is a correlation between the frequency of inspections and academic achievement. Similar literature indicates that school quality assurance services focus on providing professional support to teachers and improving core educational processes. These enhancements directly influence the quality of teaching and learning, ultimately leading to better academic outcomes for students (Ehren & Vischer, 2008).

Enhanced Learning Environment

Findings from academic coordinators and students indicated that school quality assurance services enhance learning environment. Quality assurance services in schools promote a positive and supportive learning environment. By focusing on continuous improvement, schools can foster a culture of academic excellence, leading to better students' engagement, motivation and performance.

During the interview; one of the academic coordinators had this to say:

Quality assurance services are essential in developing a vibrant learning environment. When we prioritize continuous improvement, it not only enhances our teaching methods but also significantly boosts student engagement and performance. *(Data from the field:23/5/ 2025).*

Moreover, students supported these findings, which were captured by discussion with students from one school, who reported that:

We really notice a difference when our teachers get feedback from the quality assurance report. It feels like they care about improving, and that makes us want to do our best, too. The support we get from our school's quality practices helps us feel safe and encouraged. Our learning environment is always getting better, for instance, one of our teachers started to use a computer and a projector during teaching. This new way of teaching was interesting and motivated us to participate more in class. We believe that when our school focuses on quality assurance, it shows us that learning is important. It makes us feel like our education truly matters. The continuous improvement efforts really make a difference in how we learn. *(Data from the field:23/5/ 2025).*

This current finding appears to relate to that of UNICEF (2014) noted that effective school quality assurance services contribute to the availability of qualified teachers and good-quality instructional materials, such as textbooks. Additionally, these practices enhance the use of technological resources and positively influence both teacher satisfaction and motivation, as well as students' academic performance.

Provision of Feedback and Reporting

The findings revealed that SQA practice in public secondary schools observed some mistakes made by teachers specifically in teaching, preparation of teaching tools, preparation of lesson plans and preparation of students' academic report and documentation. It was found that SQA assurers took into account all mistakes observed during their visits and provided a correct way of preparing teaching tools, lesson plans and documenting students' academic report. Moreover, the SQA assurers acknowledged the strengths observed by teachers during teaching and emphasized teacher's commitment. During the interview with one teacher from reported that:

SQA assessors conduct classroom observations to evaluate teaching and learning, providing feedback for improvement. When mistakes are identified, they are addressed, and we are reminded to take them seriously. As a class teacher, I previously prepared and documented students' academic results incorrectly; however, I have since learned the proper methods for preparing and documenting these results. *(Data from the field:14/5/ 2025).*

The findings are supported by Leo et al. (2024), who revealed that teachers view feedback from the SQA positively because it allows them to make immediate improvements in their teaching and learning methods. This feedback helps them enhance their lesson preparation, utilize teaching media effectively for the

appropriate classes at the right times, manage their time efficiently during periods, and prepare good academic reports.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The results indicate that the SQA practices contribute to improved academic performance among students in public secondary schools. This is achieved through the implementation of quality assurance services, which facilitate consistent assessment of teaching and learning strategies. Regular evaluations and feedback help identify areas for improvement, ensuring that educational standards are upheld and that students receive the necessary support to succeed. By adopting consistent evaluation methods, schools can guarantee fair and comprehensive assessments for all students. This leads to enhanced academic practices, such as maintaining syllabus coverage, conducting timely assessments, and following structured lesson plans. Additionally, SQA practices promote teacher accountability, encouraging educators (teachers) to employ effective teaching methods. These practices also involve preparing detailed teaching notes and lesson plans that accurately reflect the curriculum, which ultimately has a significant impact on students' academic performance. Furthermore, SQA practices contribute to academic success through the professional development of teachers. When teachers are well-trained and supported, they are more likely to use effective teaching methods, which directly leads to improved students' outcomes and overall academic achievements. Moreover, SQA promotes a positive and supportive learning environment by emphasizing continuous improvement. As a result, schools foster a culture of academic excellence, leading to greater student engagement, motivation, and performance. Also, SQA practices facilitate the provision of feedback to teachers, helping them identify and address specific issues in their teaching practices, lesson preparation, and the development of students' academic reports and documentation. The government and public secondary schools should prioritize quality assurance services to enhance students' academic performance in public secondary schools.

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